AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS

46 ORIGINAL STORIES EDITED BY HARLAN ELLISON

Illustrations by Ed Emshwiller

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. . . and baby makes three.

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INTRODUCTION

An Assault of New Dreamers

Dumas wrote *The Three Musketeers* in 1844. Popular demand compelled him to write two sequels, *Vingt Ans Après* in 1845 and *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* in 1848. Arthur Conan Doyle grew tired of Sherlock Holmes and ended his career as a criminologist (as well as that of Professor Moriarty as a master criminal) with a tumble over the Reichenbach Falls in "The Final Problem." The public would have none of it. Doyle, pressed to the wall, revived his immortal sleuth three years later with "The Adventure of the Empty House." In 1959 Evan S. Connell, Jr. wrote *Mrs. Bridge* and it became an instant classic of contemporary fiction. No sequel was possible, but the name became a literary catchphrase, and in 1969 Mr. Connell wrote *Mr. Bridge*. The creators of Captain America killed off that star-spangled warrior for Democracy and the American Way near the end of World War II. In the early Sixties the Sub-Mariner, Prince Namor of Atlantis, found Cap floating around perfectly preserved in a block of ice, and revived him. Isaac Asimov has had to suffer sequelization many times. No one will let him stop telling stories of Dr. Susan Calvin and her U.S. Robots and Mechanical Men, Inc.; stories of the Foundation; stories of Lije Bailey and R. Daneel Olivaw. Ike is resigned. They have lives of their own.

I did not want to edit another *Dangerous Visions*.

A man may enter the Valley of the Shadow once because he has a taste for danger or because he simply doesn't recognize the terrain. But once having gone and come back, only a fool returns. In November of 1965 I began work on what I thought would be an interesting little project, the creation of an anthology of new stories, in a new mode, for the field of speculative fiction. Four and a half years later, fifty thousand hardcovers and God only knows how many paperbacks later, *Dangerous Visions* has become a landmark (for once my ego-dreams came true) and somehow,

magically, as though it had a life of *its* own, *Dangerous Visions* has forced the creation of a companion volume, bigger than the original, and I sit here in lonely desperation, trying to beat a publication deadline, writing another Introduction. We both arrive at the same conclusion: I am a monumental fool.

Let me tell you how it happened.

No, wait a minute. Let me first tell you what *Dangerous Visions* did, apart from selling more copies of an sf anthology than any other in recent memory.

First, the awards.

Fritz Leiber's "Gonna Roll the Bones" and Chip Delany's "Aye, and Gomorrah . . ." won the 1967 Nebula Awards of the Science Fiction Writers of America in the categories of best novelette and best short story, respectively—incidentally beating out nominees by this editor in both categories. (Seldom has a man so willingly aided his executioners.)

At the 26th World SF Convention in Oakland, in 1968, Philip José Farmer tied for the Hugo Award in the Best Novella category with "Riders of the Purple Wage" from *Dangerous Visions* (for purists, he tied with Anne McCaffrey's "Weyr Search"); and Fritz took a Hugo with "Gonna Roll the Bones" for Best Novelette. (I got two Hugos that year, so I didn't feel the need to bitch or begrudge.)

And the Oakland convention gave me a plaque for editing "the most significant and controversial sf book published in 1967."

Dangerous Visions appeared on BOOK WORLD's list of the best paperbacks of 1969. It was reprinted by the Science Fiction Book Club and sold over 45,000 copies. The Literary Guild offered it as a bonus selection. It has had—or will shortly have—translations or editions in Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Spain, Italy and France. It almost single-handedly helped bring into being a counter-revolutionary movement in the genre called "The Second Foundation," dedicated to eradicating all that *Dangerous Visions* stood for. Whatever that is.

I personally received over two thousand letters from readers of the book ranging from a telegram from an influential New York editor who said *Congratulations on publication day of the most important sf book of the decade* to a Mrs. S. Blittmon of Philadelphia who wrote, in part: "When I picked up your book 'Dangerous Visions' at the library & read the 2 introductions I thought it was going to be great. I cannot tell you how sick I feel after reading [and she named two stories, one my own]. You say you had a Jewish grandmother (so did I) but I think not; she must have been Viet Cong, otherwise how could you think of such atrocities. Shame, shame

on you! Science fiction should be beautiful. With your mind (?) you should be cleaning latrines & that's too nice. Sincerely . . ."

Go please the world.

Mostly, everyone was dazzled and delighted. The men and women who contributed the thirty-three original stories for *Dangerous Visions* went where no one had gone before and came back whispering of new tomorrows, many of them in ways the field of speculative fiction had never thought possible. Many people said my intention of publishing stories that were unpublishable in the commercial magazine markets because of taboos and editorial restrictions was only partially achieved. Others said only seventy per cent of the stories were top-grade. Others said sixty-two per cent, and one fan magazine found only twelve per cent of merit. Somehow, for all the pissing and moaning, the book managed to sell like ice cubes in Rio, managed to stand the field on its ear and alter its direction, managed to puff the prides of the writers who appeared therein, and became, as I say, a landmark. Ask anyone.

But when the dust settled, I was about eighteen hundred dollars out of pocket.

Through no frugality on the part of Doubleday, our publisher, I assure you. Strictly due to my own grandiose belief that the book was never big enough, never startling enough, never innovative enough. So I spent and spent. And as I said, when the dust cleared, I was in the hole. To date, I haven't yet hit the black on *Dangerous Visions* and I'm still repaying author Larry Niven for the loan he gave the book to purchase the last few stories. It doesn't matter. It was a prideful thing to assemble that book.

Only one author has vocally confessed to being upset with his participation in the project. I learned of that discontent only recently, and at risk of annoying the author and his agent, I really *must* relay the anecdote.

J.G. Ballard—easily one of the most innovative and serious contributors to the genre of speculative fiction—mentioned in an interview that he considered *Dangerous Visions* a hypocritical volume because I had asked writers to submit stories they felt could not be published in the traditional markets due to controversial content or approach, but when presented with it I had rejected "The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race."

The interview, in a magazine called *Cypher*, quoted Jim Ballard as saying I had rejected the story—ostensibly written specially for *Dangerous Visions*—on the grounds it would offend too many American readers.

When I read that item, I was horrified and stricken with a sinking-gut feeling . . . for I'd never *seen* the story. Though Ballard had, indeed, written it for the book, his agent in New York, instead of sending it on to

me here in Los Angeles, had made a prejudgment that the story was offensive, and drawered it till they could return it to Ballard. Whether or not they contrived to advise Ballard I'd bounced it, I do not know, to this day. Subsequently, Michael Moorcock published the story in *New Worlds* in England, and it instantly drew the praise it deserved.

As one of the most exciting and controversial stories written in the field in recent memory, it would have been perfect for *Dangerous Visions*, and when I learned that I'd missed buying the piece because of a wholly unjustified clerical judgment, I ground my teeth in frustration. But to be accused of hypocrisy on top of the loss, was more than I could bear. Jim Ballard's story "The Recognition" in *Dangerous Visions* was a good story, a laudable piece of fantasy, but it simply wasn't in the same time-zone with "Downhill Motor Race," one of the germinal stories of the past decade.

When I met Jim Ballard—in Rio de Janeiro in March of 1969—we rehashed what had happened, and I thought we'd gotten the matter discussed, with mutual commiseration. Then came that *Cypher* quote. And though I've written him reminding him of the circumstances surrounding the "submission" of the story, there's been no reply. So if any of you out there run into J.G. Ballard, would you kinda sorta tell him what happened? I'd hate for him, or any of you, to grow much older thinking I was stupid enough to reject a story that clearly brilliant and noteworthy.

I've been known to be stupid, but I refuse to cop to a charge of brain damage.

And while we're on the subject of my stupidity, I have to own up to stupidity in having arbitrarily denied a space in *Dangerous Visions* to Thomas Disch, whose work these past four years has elevated him to the top level of sf writers. Because of personal blindness, I rejected a Disch story that *should* have been in the book and, when later I got to know Tom better, regretted my prejudice bitterly.

Fortunately, Disch is a better man than your now-humble editor, and he has written for *this* volume an even better story. We'll get to that in due time, but the mention of that omission on my part brings us to the next phase of this introduction:

Why another *Dangerous Visions* collection?

Well, Disch is one reason. Piers Anthony is another. And the forty other writers herein nail it down finally.

Even so, even though there were handfuls of authors who never made it into *Dangerous Visions*, I was quite literally dragged, kicking and screaming, to *Again, Dangerous Visions*. I'll tell you about it.

After DV came out (you'll excuse me if I resort to initialese; the book

is long enough as it stands, over 250,000 words, without having to write out *Dangerous Visions* every time), in 1967, and the memory of what aggravation it had been to get the damned thing together had faded from Doubleday editor Larry Ashmead's mind, he considered the sales figures, added them to the amount of prestige the book had brought to the otherwise foundering Doubleday empire, and he decided there should be a companion volume.

I am too much the gentleman to comment on the history of congenital insanity in the Ashmead ancestry, save to report Larry is inordinately proud of a spinster Ashmead aunt who was said to have had repeated carnal knowledge of a catamaran, and a paternal great-grandfather who introduced the peanut-butter-and-tuna-fish ice cream sundae in the Hebrides.

For my part, I was still recuperating from DV, both physically and financially. The high praise and bitter denunciations of the book were totaling at that time, and I was sitting back, breathing deeply, and thinking how good it was that the entire DV affair was ended. That was early in June of 1968.

The phone rang.

It was Ashmead.

"Hi, Harlan!" He always opens his conversations that way with me. As though he's really genuinely pleased to be talking to me. Sneaky sonofabitch.

"Hi, Larry," I responded, "what's happening? How's the latest Allen Drury disaster doing?"

"Making a fortune," he said.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, actually taking money for *dreck* like that. Why don't you get into a decent line of work, like racehorse doping or pre-pubescent white slavery?"

"We also publish Irving Stone, Leon Uris and Taylor Caldwell. Any one of whom makes more than you make in a year, in any five minute period."

"I only wish on you plagues of mice, locusts, salamanders, Irving Wallace, Jacqueline Susann and Harold Robbins. Also you should never be able to get a good point on your pencils." I'd have wished Erich Segal on him, but who knew about *that* horror in 1968? We Jews have a fine mind for curses.

"Just called to tell you we're putting DV out of print."

"Terrific," I said. "It's the hottest selling anthology in sf history, nothing but rave reviews, colleges are starting to use it as a text and you put it out of print. What corporate genius came up with *that* one?"

"It's Doubleday policy."

"That's what Adolf Eichmann said. Do you broast chickens on the side?"

"How'd you like to do another *Dangerous Visions?*"

I hung up on him.

He called me back. "We were cut off."

"We weren't cut off. I hung up on you."

"Oh. What I said was: 'How'd you like to do another *Dangerous Visions?*'"

I hung up on him again.

So he called me back again and before I could say anything he screamed very shrilly, "DON'T HANG UP ON ME!"

"Okay," I said, "I won't hang up on you, but don't *you* use filthy language to me over the phone. I'm of a delicate nature."

"But why *not?* I think it would be a marvelous idea."

"I'll hang up on you again."

"Think of all the writers who've been influenced by the book. Writers who need that kind of showcase, writers who need a break, writers who want to spread their wings, writers who . . ."

"Ashmead, knock it off. I used that hype on *you* when I was trying to sell you *Dangerous Visions* in '65."

"I know. I was using the memo you sent me. You misspelled fledgling."

"Go away, I'm retired from the editing business."

But he persisted. Lawrence Ashmead is a very persistent man. Anyone who publishes Asimov has *learned* to be persistent. Also comatose.

So I decided the surest, quickest way to scare him off was to demand three times as much money as Doubleday had ever offered for a science fiction book. So I demanded it. (No, I'm not going to tell you how much that was, so stop bugging me.)

"It's a deal!" Larry chirruped. When he has swallowed a canary he *always* chirrups.

. I sank instantly and completely out of sight in a funk of watertight absoluteness.

"You has done me, Ashmead," I muttered, chewing my armpit. I felt like a satyr condemned to a hell of sex-crazed nymphomaniacs, each with her own special spirochete or Oriental fungus.

"Just remember how happy you were when DV won all those awards," he said. "Don't you remember how happy you were?" My mind's camera quickly flashed the memory behind my eyes. I remembered those Nebula citations Larry and I had picked up for the award-winning Leiber and Delany stories. I saw again my expression. It didn't look happy to me. It looked like a man who has just eaten a ripe persimmon. It looked like this:



Photo by Jay Kay Klein

I shrugged away the ghastly after-image of myself (in corrupted missionary tuxedo shirt and ludicrous facial stricture), of Ashmead (dapper, smug, already plotting my future horror) and said, "Okay, I'll do another volume of the damned thing, *but I'll do it at my own pace.* You have *got* to promise on the lives of your cats that you won't *noodge* me about deadlines. I can take ten years if I want to."

"Sure, Harlan," he said. The voice of the asp.

On June 28th, 1968 the contracts were signed and I began soliciting manuscripts for the book you now hold in your hands. Or propped against your belly. Or whatever.

(As an aside, I also made sure no book club or paperback editions of *Again, Dangerous Visions* could be sold without my agreement, thereby assuring that the writers who contributed to this volume would have a good long trade edition run for their royalties before those deadbeats among you who wait for cheaper editions could obtain marked-down incarnations. The point of this aside is to assure those of you reading this book over the shoulders of your friends, that you won't be obtaining a cheapo version for some time, so you'd better rush out right now and buy

this edition at full-price. Or rip it off from the bookstore. Either way it counts for full royalties.)

As I got into the editing of this book, I found my greatest joy was in seeing stories by new writers who were just starting to flex their literary muscles. An only slightly less joyful joy was in seeing older writers, who'd established reputations for doing one certain kind of story, trying something new.

The word had gotten around because of DV that asking for really far-reaching innovative fiction was not mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. And (despite what happened with Ballard) the writers responded.

As a consequence, I find this second book in the DV trilogy *much* more daring and, well, "dangerous" than the first. Lupoff and Anthony and Nelson and Vonnegut and O'Donnell and Bernott and Parra and Tiptree get it on in ways I don't think would have been possible before the advent of *Dangerous Visions.*

Now I realize that smacks of hoopla, and I've been pilloried repeatedly in the fan press for steadfastly and endlessly committing the crime. Understanding in front that this explanation contains not one scintilla of defense, let me advise all who will review or comment on *this* DV that I will do it again—the hyper-ventilating hurrah—because whatever uglies are laid at *my* door, it gets the word out for the rest of the men and women in this book. You see, in a very real sense, I am the custodian of this wonderland. It is my responsibility to see that every writer in this book gets the widest possible exposure for his or her work. It is a trust which I assume with considerable gratitude, and with a naked intent to smash down doors and bang on drums and buttonhole critics and beat on the ears of potential readers till they scream all right, all right, already, I'll *read* it . . . and then first-story writers in this book like Evelyn Lief and Ken McCullough and Jim Hemesath will have their chance, as well as established names like Ursula Le Guin and Ben Bova and Tom Sherred.

It's not the gentlemanly way to do it, I suppose, but in a world where Evelyn Lief and Al Parra have to compete with Jacqueline Susann and Erich Segal, having the services of a flack commando can be a necessary evil.

How it pains my mother to hear me called evil.

The introduction to *Dangerous Visions* talked about that book (hopefully) being the opening shot of a revolution in the literary genre of speculative fiction. From that simple phrase came endless reams of criticism and artificial controversy. The phrase gave birth to another phrase: The New Wave.

A few words should be expended here on the subject.

We are a small but closely-tied community, we readers and writers of sf. We fight and love and honor and hate one another the way any small family does, and whenever one of us has the audacity to suggest that things here in the household might be run a little differently, ah, then we have recrimination, vitriol, backbiting, remorse. Danger threatens. Ta-rahhh! The lancers lurch to the rescue. The dragoons deploy. The hussars hurtle forward. To protect the reputations of Arthur C. Clarke and Hal Clement and Robert Heinlein. Oh, come *on!* Is someone putting us on? Does Norman Spinrad *really* threaten Isaac Asimov? Can John Jeremy Pierce truly believe that? No one in his right mind ever said "the new wave," whatever the hell that might be, was going to drive Murray Leinster or Poul Anderson or Frank Herbert off the printed page. In fact, Frank will have a story in *The Last Dangerous Visions.* (More about that later. Let's stick to the subject.) Poul was in the original DV. It's all bullshit. (Oops. There go a hundred library sales of this book. Ah well.)

The New Wave is as much myth as The Old Wave, unless we choose to postulate The Old Wave as forming back around the time of Aristophanes and cresting out with, say, Randall Garrett.

It's all bullshit, kiddies, and let's hear no more about it.

DV and A,DV are composed of almost a *hundred* New Waves, each one just a single writer in depth, and each one going its own way, against the tides. Take it or leave it, we are a family of mavericks and toads and pteranodons, and I cannot see *any*one driving Bob Heinlein *any*where he doesn't want to go.

Does it parse? Hopefully.

Onward.

Even casual observers of the DV series will see that no one who appeared in DV appears in this book. Nor will any of those found in DV or A,DV be found in the final book of the trilogy, *The Last Dangerous Visions.* When I took on the job of editing this second book, and said there would be no repeats, I was advised I'd lost my mind, there weren't —simply weren't—enough *other* good writers to fill out a second book. Bullshit again, my children. Not only were there enough to fill *this* book with more writers than we saw in DV, but the overflow had to be put into a third volume. And we *still* haven't used up the riches.

When DV was published, I thought I'd gathered in all the important writers. But since then Piers Anthony and Gregory Benford and Richard Lupoff and Gene Wolfe and Thomas Disch and the amazing James Tip-

tree, Jr. have burst on us, and there are more where *they* came from. Ours is a field of constant growth, of fresh thoughts and new dreams. Were I to edit a DV every month for the next ten years I wouldn't be able to keep up with the influx of writers.

So why, the question will be asked, are certain writers conspicuous by their absence? Why no Bester, why no de Camp, why no Heinlein, why no George P. Elliott or Wilson Tucker or Alexei Panshin? Because I've asked each of these writers at least once, and most many times, to contribute to the books, but things just didn't work out. Bob Heinlein is into new novels and he hasn't been well. Alfred Bester is editing *Holiday*. George Elliott was offered a better showcase and more money by *Esquire* and he quite rightly took the deal. Alex Panshin tried to please me with a story but I didn't like it, probably because I had to read it in a restaurant in the company of twenty shrieking sf writers and their ladies (as well as some shrieking sf writers who were, themselves, ladies) and I was half coherent from an oncoming flu bout . . . but then again, maybe it just wasn't a very good story. In any case, he didn't try me again, for which I'm sorry. Alex is a fine writer.

As for Wilson Tucker, well, that's another story:

I don't know whether you've ever heard of Richard Geis, but in the event you aren't that much into sf, he is a very talented writer who also edited a magazine called *Science Fiction Review* for many years. It was a gathering-place and watering-hole for fans and professionals, where opinion and information was offered in between the name-calling. Well, in issue #32 of SFR, in August of 1969, Piers Anthony got into a hassle with Wilson (Bob) Tucker, and the following extract from an Anthony letter appeared:

"In reply to my urging that he publish a good new sf story in *Again, Dangerous Visions* (so as not to let the volume go entirely to pot by being filled with the crud of neo writers like me), Bob Tucker says he would not have a fair chance with Harlan Ellison . . . Since it is important to me that Tucker be in that volume, I am forced to rear back on my hind limbs and tackle the bull by the balls:

"Harlan Ellison—are you there? I challenge you, by the authority vested in me as one of the youngest and turkiest of the young turks, to publish the excellent sf story Bob Tucker offers you for *Again, Dangerous Visions*, to pay him at least 3¢ per word against hard and paper royalties, and not to tamper with one single word in it. (You may say what you please in your introduction, however.) Kindly signify your abject acceptance of these rigorous terms by so stating publicly in this fanzine.

"OK, Bob, you're on your own now. Submit your story. (I always like to

give the tired old timers a helping hand in coping with today's more demanding market.)"

Well, Piers did it again.

Foot in mouth, he did a no-no.

Understand, I have nothing but respect for most of what Piers has written these last five years, but if he thinks that kind of challenge really incites either Tucker or me, he's wrong. I'd been in contact with Tucker long before Piers set his teeth on edge. In fact, Bob had submitted an excellent short novel for my consideration. After reading and enjoying it, however, I reluctantly came to the conclusion it was not right for this book.

Again understand, it was a *good* book. It just wasn't offbeat enough for *this* particular madhouse. It could have been published by any mainstream publisher (unlike Piers's story or Lupoff's or Nelson's or Vonnegut's) and so I *very* reluctantly returned it to Tucker. Since then, Bob has written and seen published to wide acclaim, *The Year of the Quiet Sun,* a novel that should have satisfied Piers as to Tucker's continued strength as a writer.

But you see, that's an example of the kind of challenge the DV books have come to represent, and it explains with one instance why some writers are not present here.

Randy Garrett isn't here because, though he called one frantic November night and tried to hype me into sending him an advance against a story he *would* write, he never submitted a manuscript.

Barry Weissman isn't here because his submission, a short story about a snot vampire was too vomitous even for *me!* You want to know what taboo turns me right around: snot vampires. *Now* pillory the editor for a closed mind.

Alfred Bester isn't here because he hasn't been writing fiction, and Arthur C. Clarke isn't here because he made this movie with Kubrick and he's just now getting back into fiction, and Algis Budrys isn't here because . . . well, that's another story. But forty-two marvelous writers *are* here, and maybe another fifty will appear in *The Last Dangerous Visions* and perhaps even a few of the men and women I've mentioned here will pull free and submit something before TLDV closes.

But one shot is all anyone gets. The DV writers aren't represented a second time here in A,DV because they had their chance, and most of them took it. With all the gunslinging newcomers coming at us, we have very little time to wait for others to get a second-wind. And besides, some of those stories they've written for the DV books can win awards when they show up in *Orbit* or *Quark* or *New Worlds* or *Infinity* or the other

all-original anthologies that have proliferated since publishers saw how well DV did. (At this point we pause to let the generosity of my nature saturate the air. No, thank you, a shpritz of Glade will *not* be necessary.)

It occurs to me at this point in the general introduction that a word or three might be proffered about my introductions. Opinion is split. Critics who review the book, and fans who read it, seem divided neatly into two camps: those who dote on the introductions and feel they offer amusing and insightful asides on the writers and their work; and those who flat-out despise the supplementary material that surrounds the fiction. The former view is typified by readers like Sherry Colston of Hannibal, Ohio who wrote, "I relished the candid verbosity in your *Dangerous Visions* prefaces. If you can't do anything else, you can communicate." The latter position is defined by comments like those of Mr. Edmund Cooper, a writer of considerable talent himself, who said (in the London *Sunday Times* of 2 May 71, reviewing the English edition of DV, containing the first half of the American edition, the second part to come later in the year): "*Dangerous Visions* does not seem to contain any dangerous visions. It does contain one foreword, two introductions, and sixteen stories, each with an introduction and afterword." Mr. Cooper didn't think much of the book, but in as brief a review as he gave it, to dote on the supplementary material strikes me as putting him in the latter group of introduction-assayers.

As a well-known chowderhead has said, let me make one thing perfectly clear. People who don't care for the introductions should skip over them. It's that simple, really. They come free. There are over a quarter of a million words of fiction in this book, each word paid for and consequently reflected in the price you pay for the total volume. The introductory stuff is written by me, and I write it free of charge. I sit here for endless days and hammer out lead-ins to the stories that include as complete biographical and bibliographical information as the writers have provided me, and I spice it up with personal reminiscence and observations about the authors. Putting aside the purely factual information, there's maybe another forty thousand words of absolutely free wordage, provided for your possible amusement and edification. If introductions—and notably *my* introductions—bug you . . . turn to the stories. I don't like *Bonanza* much, but unlike the people who drove *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* off the air because it tinkered with their ideas of what other folks should view, I simply twiddle the dial and get another program.

Because of the mixed reactions to the introductions, I had serious thoughts about simply presenting the stories without any attendant gim-

crackery. But it occurred to me that that was censoring the pleasures of one group to satisfy the prejudices of another, and frankly, that idea stinks on ice. So in advance, to those fan critics and newspaperfolk who'll be getting this book for review (and most of you get the *entire* tome for free, so who the hell gave *you* the right to bitch?) may I suggest you worry about evaluating the fiction and leave the curlicues and gingerbread to those who care about such things? I mayn't? Well . . .

And for those of you who are curious as to why I spend all this time *do*ing the introductions, when I only get banged on the head for my trouble, understand this: I *enjoy* writing about my friends, about the writers of sf, about the real and very fallible human beings behind those flawless fictions. And as long as I'm going in debt, spending years cobbling up this monster, I'm damned well going to enjoy myself while I'm about it.

There is much to be said for making oneself as happy as possible. Even if it means making Edmund Cooper miserable.

Let's see, what else is there to talk about? I guess I should do some lofty number about how sf has come of age and how Kurt Vonnegut is on the cover of *Saturday Review* and how some of us are even asked to lecture at institutions of higher education, and all the textbooks now featuring sf stories along with Thomas Hardy and George Eliot, and all that jive, but frankly it's a drag; this is a book of good stories (I think), and you were all called here this evening to enjoy them. So I'll skip all the proofs that speculative fiction is hotter than sliced bread, and make just a few comments about TLDV, and we can all pass on through to the KEYNOTE ENTRY by Mr. Heidenry and the stories that follow him.

The Last Dangerous Visions will be published, God willing, approximately six months after this book. It was never really intended as a third volume. What happened was that when A,DV hit half a million words and seemed not to be within containment, Ashmead and I decided rather than making A,DV a boxed set of two books that would cost a small fortune, we'd split the already-purchased wordage down the middle and bring out a final volume six months after this one.

In that book will be such authors as Clifford Simak, Wyman Guin, Doris Pitkin Buck, Graham Hall, Chan Davis, Mack Reynolds, Avram Davidson, Ron Goulart, Fred Saberhagen, Charles Platt, Anne McCaffrey, John Jakes, Michael Moorcock, Howard Fast, James Gunn, Frank Herbert, Thomas Scortia, Robert Sheckley, Gordon Dickson and a gaggle of others. I'm waiting on stories from Daniel Keyes and a new kid named James Sutherland and Laurence Yep and a few more, but this is only a partial taste. There will be novels by Richard Wilson and John Christo-

pher (yeah, that's right, full novels) and short stories by Bertram Chandler and Franklin Fisher, and really fine work by newcomers like Vonda McIntyre and Octavia Estelle Butler and George Alec Effinger and Steve Herbst and Russell Bates and . . .

I grow excited. Let me compose myself.

The four and more years since DV hit have been electric ones for our little field of literary endeavor. Previously, anthologies tended to contain almost exclusively the work of "recognized names" in the genre. Damon Knight's *Orbit* series and Chip Delany's *Quark* series and the others, and DV, made it obvious that names are no longer the important commodity we have to sell. The newer writers, the ones who grew up on sf since the Forties, these are the ones who are taking our carefully-nurtured ideas and turning them inside out to show us visions of tomorrows we never dreamed ourselves.

We're constantly being assaulted by these new dreamers, and if nothing else is accomplished by the DV books, it will be satisfying to me merely to know that by the time all three volumes are racked on your shelf—pushing off everything else there with size if not quality—we'll have given half a hundred young turks their turn.

Hopefully, somewhere in this book there are more Hugo and Nebula winners, but that isn't the important dream. The important one is that herein contained are names you may never have heard before, of men and women who will dazzle and delight you, not merely for the time it takes to read this book (or as *Liberty* magazine would have put it in 1937: reading time, 2 years—6 months—2 weeks—11 days—19 hours—45 minutes—13 seconds) but for all the years to come in which speculative fiction will figure more and more prominently as a fiction for our times.

In case you hadn't noticed, there are ugly and evil things happening all around us, and while I'm not wimp enough to think the answer lies solely with everyone under-30, I believe very firmly that our best hope lies with the *young in imagination,* and they are the ones for whom and to whom sf speaks most clearly.

For them, for the new dreamers, this book is sent on its way with enormous amounts of love by the writers, artists, designers, editors and ancillary folk who made it all happen, and with great weariness by its editor,

HARLAN ELLISON
Sherman Oaks, California
6 May 1971

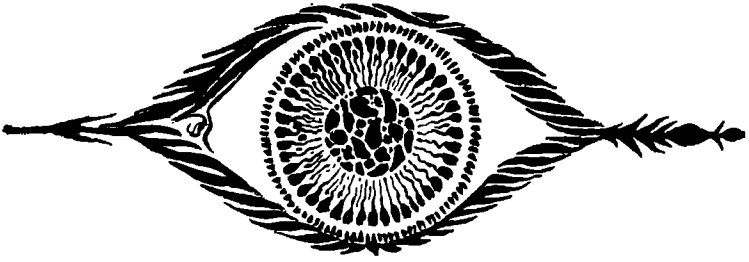
Once again, the Editor wishes to express his gratitude to, and acknowledge the assistance of, the many writers, editors, agents and aficionados of speculative fiction and *Dangerous Visions,* whose contributions of time, money, suggestions and empathy, and whose response to the original project (necessitating a companion volume), made this book possible:

Mr. Lawrence P. Ashmead
Ms. Judith Glushanok
Ms. Julia Coopersmith
Ms. Diane Cleaver
Mr. Ed Bryant
Mr. George P. Elliott
Mr. Ed Emshwiller
Ms. Louise Farr
Ms. Janet Freer
Ms. Virginia Kidd
Mr. Damon Knight
Professor Willis E. McNelly
Mr. Robert P. Mills
Mr. Ted Chichak
Mr. Richard Posner
Mr. Charles Platt
Mr. Michael Moorcock
Ms. Barbara Silverberg
Mr. Robert Silverberg
Mr. Norman Spinrad
Mr. James Sutherland
Ms. Michele Tempesta
Ms. Helen Wells
Mr. Ted White
Ms. Kate Wilhelm
Dr. Robin Scott Wilson

As with all projects of this size and scope, stretching over five years, the aid and kindness of many people blurs together at the rushed last moments as one roseate glow of encouragement. Thomas Disch and David Gerrold and Harry Harrison recommended writers; Lester del Rey and Judy-

Lynn Benjamin del Rey of *Galaxy* offered invaluable suggestions and encouragement; only Don Congdon gave me a hard time. If I've overlooked giving any their due, chalk it up to exhaustion and encroaching senility.

HARLAN ELLISON
Sherman Oaks, California
11 November 71





Introducing a "keynote entry" is the sheerest Newcastle-coaling. By its very nature, the piece is intended to set the tone and mood for what is to follow. And yet, symmetry is much to be desired; a certain reliability of order; and why should John Heidenry get jobbed out of a few words of introduction just because he wrote a surreal set-piece that somewhichway cornerstones the intent and attitude of the book? Surely we can't begrudge him such a miniscule pleasure; his due, in fact.

Heidenry came to me late in the assemblage of this book via Larry Ashmead of Doubleday.

The chain of goodword put in for Heidenry illustrates the incestuous nature of the New York publishing daisy-chain. Mr. Heidenry was Managing Editor of Herder and Herder in New York, publishers of weighty tomes on theology and philosophy. He writes various stuff on the side. Not the least stuff are three novels he describes as "a lovely dream-flecked pastoral romance, another (for practice) on the black days of fear and trembling, and a third on which I am still receiving mystical revelations." In some arcane manner beyond explication, Mr. Heidenry came to the attention of Miss Elizabeth Bartelme at Doubleday; and though Heidenry had no contract for the books—he says he doesn't want to submit outlines or sample chapters, the fool—Miss Bartelme took an interest in his work and mentioned him to Ashmead. So Ashmead looked at some of it and wrote to me, suggesting Heidenry might be a good bet. So when Mr. Heidenry sent me "The Counterpoint of View" I knew who he was. I was enthused about the piece, and wanted to include it, but the money had run out.

So I let Larry know the sad state of affairs, and he suggested the cost of buying the story might be equivalent to a good meal bought by him, as my editor, for me, as his author, at one of the posher watering-holes in Manhattan. So he put Heidenry on the expense account as a lunch date with me, and sent me his personal check, and now I've spilled it all and Nelson Doubleday will fire Larry, which serves him right for pushing me on deadlines.

But that's how Heidenry came to lead off this book.

"The Counterpoint of View" is his first actual *story*, though he tells me he has always considered himself a writer, in the manner of Andre Gide who expected others to know from a mere glance at his eyes that he was an artist. (He is allegedly working on a second short story, however,

working-titled "Yaw, Dizzy," which, to use a sort of metaphor, is about "the time Arthur Rimbaud used to play right field for the old St. Louis Browns.")

Though I have not pressed Heidenry on this last—discretion being next to cleanliness, which as we all know lives next door to godliness, thereby depreciating the land values in the neighborhood—I feel it incumbent on me to urge all readers who enjoy what follows to petition Doubleday to give him a contract or two, and some cash, without his having to submit some sample sides of beef.

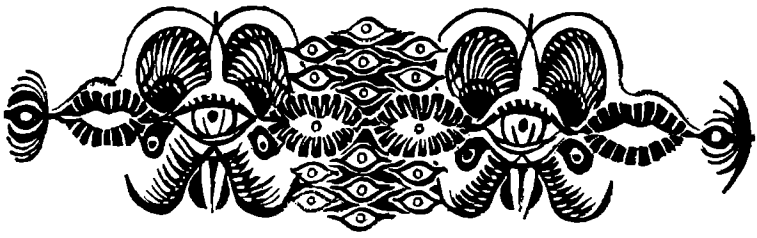
Speaking of beef, here are John Heidenry's particulars: born in St. Louis, Missouri, on May 15, 1939; mediocre education; started reading books in nineteenth year; decided to study theology, and majored in same at St. Louis University; swears he never intended to be a priest (man who'd screw around with God like that can't be believed nohow); completed studies but declined degree; mediocre education; 1960–61, super-simultaneous editor of *Social Justice Review, Catholic Women's Journal* and *The Call to Catholic Youth,* three monthlies with a combined circulation of 3000; 1961, a charming change-of-pace, a breakdown and some time spent in New Orleans (having spent some time in New Orleans myself, on tour with Three Dog Night, I can assure you it is a fine and juicy town in which to recover from a breakdown while acquiring an altogether different and more debilitating breakdown); 1962–63, super-writer for *St. Louis Review;* wrote practically everything but the editorials (Heidenry assures me it is a generally good paper . . . except for the editorial page); 1971, finished a novel titled *Dearly Beloved,* became unemployed, and began accepting alms; married and father of three children, thereby helping to insure not only his status as a solid Catholic, but an expansion of the circulation of *The Call to Catholic Youth.*

The final entry necessary here to flesh out Heidenry for you is an excerpt from a marvelous Nabokovian analysis he wrote for *The Commonweal* in May of 1969. Titled "Vladimir in Dreamland," section one reads as follows:

> Vla-di-mir: the tip of the tongue taking a trip down the palate to stop, at three, on the teeth: Vla. De. Mirror. You can always count on a Nabonut for a fancy prose style.

And quite apart from the utter fecundity of the keynote item you are about to read, so you shouldn't think this editor is merely trying to maintain the nepotism of the New York editorial ingroup, the editors of *The Commonweal*—light-years above and beyond the reach of corruption, as we all know—identified John in a one-line *précis,* as follows: "John Heidenry is at work on a famous novel."

More distinguished a keynote speaker we could not have found had we engaged the Pope himself.



· **KEYNOTE ENTRY:**

John Heidenry

THE COUNTERPOINT OF VIEW

Enacraos, one of the scholars of Tlön, the most heretical—and wisest—hermeneutist of his time, discovered, perhaps accidentally, during his research into obscure Massoretic palimpsests relating to the *qabbalah* and its apocrypha, that William Shakespeare was indeed among the company of translators assigned by James I of England in the early 1600's to work out a new version of the Scriptures, so that "it may speake like it selfe." He enlisted as one of his five proofs the translation of Psalm 46, where undeniably Shakespeare had signatured his composition with the forty-sixth words counting from both beginning and end. (A sixth proof has since been offered by an anonymous Tlönian computer: that the chance of those two words, *shake* and *spear*, falling into their respective positions by haphazard versification was 4,600,000,000 to 1. That larger number, the computer reasoned, did not even exist in Shakespeare's day.)

At the same time that Shakespeare was introducing[1] cryptography into English letters (having earlier practiced with fictional fiction in *The Comedy of Errors* and other plays), in Spain, land of dark and dangerous experiments, Miguel Saavedra de Cervantes had already begun to allude to characters who had read the actual book of which they were a part, and knew its author. This involution into artifice reached its culmination in recent years with Pierre Menard's heroic attempt—without reading into the life of Cervantes or the history of Spanish culture—to recreate the poetical experience of Cervantes himself: to produce a few pages of manuscript which would coincide, word for word and line for line, with the *Quixote*. Menard's superior text was the first example of art successfully imitating, and finally transcending, mere art.

During its complex and imperspicuous development into *genre* there were times (as Enacraos has shown) when fantastic writing was the idio-

syncrasy of philosophy, and lost to art: most ingeniously in the lucid speculations of the neo-Platonic divine, George Berkeley, who attained such mastery that of his subtleties Hume could say, "they admit of no answer and produce no conviction."[2] Intermittently too there were hiatus and regression: the ornate skill cheapened into gaudy technique, the clear optic exchanged for (as in Lewis Carroll) the looking glass and jabberwocky. Yet in the brave and finally pitiful person of Edgar Allan Poe—in his essay on cipher writing and in his grotesque, enigmatical tales—the true awful possibilities of illusory truth were, if scantly established, asserted nonetheless for evermore. Poe, at last no longer able to persevere in his investigations, turned finally to the saner unrealities of laudanum and alcohol; —dying, at five o'clock in the morning of October 7, 1849, with the cry, "God help my poor soul!"

Other practitioners of this subterfuge or art are, of course, Shams Joist, the newclear punman, who split the syllable of reality; Vladimir Nabokov, assembler of Zembla and dissembler of deceit; and Jorge Luis Borges himself.

Enacraos, in an appendix to his edition of *The Targum of Onkelos and Its Massoretic Revision,* both anticipated and defined the direction of literary art in his enumeration of the one hundred and three primary types of ambiguity, and in his formulation of the "trifold principle of moving viewpoint," the first and last parts of which read, "Everything that is what it seems is what it seems it is not that is not." By not punctuating his dictum, Enacraos was able to give it both many truths and many lies. Jorge Luis Borges, reflecting on the feat of Menard, saw a further logical insinuation of fantastic writing. Menard's achievement, he has suggested, prompts us to read, for instance, the *Odyssey* as though it were posterior to the *Aeneid;* the *Imitatio Christi* as though it were the work of Louis Ferdinand Celine or James Joyce. Yet a more frightening possibility—revealed now to the world for the first time, plagiarized from secret Tlönian analysis which even that land's most liberal censors would not allow to be published—is that the reader of language becomes its writer, and the writer the reader.

Let us take as our example the nearest piece of writing at hand—this fiction. Supposedly, in the ordinary space-time continuum, I am its writer and you the reader. But in the Enacraotic scheme of things, things are not only what they scheme to be, but are, or can be (among other things), precisely the opposite. Anagrammatic resolution of the opening paragraph shows thus that in the first and third sentences I have given evidence that it is not myself alone who is at work composing these words. A textual refraction of paragraph 2 clearly raises the likelihood of the reader's iden-

tity coinciding with my own; and (inexorably) the deciphered transcription of paragraphs 3, 4, 5, and 7, and the title of this tale, irrefutably verifies the premonition that I am not, in fact, its author, and that you, the reader, probably are. (I say *probably* because certain details of the solution point also to a contradictory and utterly fantastic alternative. I have come to my conclusion, however, proceeding upon the basis of Sherlock Holmes's observation that when you have excluded the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.)

Thus now that I have finished "writing"—inflected, punctuated, parenthesized to the counterpoint of having neither identity nor purpose nor even knowledge—I propose to sit back and read this story at my ease and learn just what it is that you (its true and onlie author) wish to have me know.

NOTES

[1] Chaucer's sage puzzles and palindromes are, of course, though pleasing, innocently contrived.

[2] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section XII, Part I, note. William Butler Yeats had very nearly the same insight, writing of his kinsman, "Though he [Berkeley] could not describe mystery—his age had no fitting language—his suave glittering sentences suggest it. We feel perhaps for the first time that eternity is always at our heels or hidden from our eyes by the thickness of a door." Introduction to J. M. Hone and M. M. Rossi, *Bishop Berkeley. His Life, Writings, and Philosophy* (London, Faber & Faber Ltd, 1931), pp. xxi–xxii.

Afterword:

I have lost track of this story, but think I wrote it in 1612. There was a third footnote, excised in deference to some ambiguous rules of style, or stylish rules of ambiguity, which inquired into Ben Jonson's perhaps patriotic, but certainly treacherous reasons for denigrating Shakespeare's immense knowledge of Latin and Greek—or of any language for that matter.

Alternate titles for this little tale are *The Counterview of Counterpoint* and *The Viewpoint of View*. These at any rate are the only ones that I have been told about.

Further information on this story, or on Joseph Conrad, or preferably on the lost land of Raintree County, may be gotten by writing to my father in care of the Imperial Bar, 10th and Pine Streets, St. Louis, Missouri; or by visiting him personally on Wednesday mornings from ten o'clock till noon.



Introduction to CHING WITCH!

In the ghastly, seemingly endless and (quite obviously to me) artificial brouhaha about "old wave science fiction" vs. "new wave speculative fiction," the majority of those putting in their unnecessary comments have overlooked one salient and saddening fact. By creating a paper tiger and fleshing it with reams of copy so it *seemed* a threat, many older, long-established writers have taken unto themselves feelings of inadequacy. On half a dozen occasions during the preparations for DV and A,DV when I approached men and women who had been my personal favorites when I was doing the reading necessary to catch up with the field since 1926, I was confronted with a shamefaced (again the word pops up), saddening response that "I can't write that new stuff."

Three of the most potent, formative talents in our genre in the Forties, refused even to *attempt* a story for these volumes, having convinced themselves that they were fit only to write what they'd been writing for years; that no one wanted to see them experiment; that if they *tried* some experimental writing, they'd fail miserably. No amount of cajoling or reassurance could sway them from that sad state of mind.

I conceive of it as the greatest single evil of the "new/old wave" nonsense. And I suggest to those writers that they consider now Ross Rocklynne.

Ross Rocklynne is fifty-seven years old. He was born during the First Balkan War in which Montenegro, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia fought Turkey. He was born in the year President Francisco Madero of Mexico was murdered by Huerta and civil war broke out between Huerta's and Carranza's forces, resulting in Pancho Villa's taking over as a dictator in the north. Woodrow Wilson was President of the United States when Ross was born, the year King George of Greece was assassinated. That was 1913, just one year before Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, were assassinated at Sarajevo. Ross contends he was conceived at the same time as Tarzan, sometime in 1912. Fifty-seven years old, friends and self-deprecating writers.

The first Rocklynne story to appear in print was "Man of Iron," a short piece in *Astounding Stories* for August of 1935. He was twenty-two at the time. I encountered Rocklynne's work late in the game, 1951, when I read with considerable awe, "Revolt of the Devil Star" in the now-defunct *Imagination: Stories of SF & Fantasy*, a story about sentient stars. It was well beyond the terms and intents of what was being written in the field. It

was—Ross will excuse the phrase, I hope—very *avant-garde.* It was also exquisitely written. I rummaged through used magazine shops in Cleveland to find other Rocklynne stories and read with delight "Jackdaw," "Collision Course," "The Bottled Men," "Exile to Centauri," "Time Wants a Skeleton" and later, others in magazines whose names are merely memories to the young writers of today: *Planet Stories, Future Science Fiction, Startling Stories;* Archduke Ferdinand, Woodrow Wilson, Francisco Madero.

The latest story by Rocklynne to appear in print is the one that follows. "Ching Witch!" is as fresh and original and *now* as anything turned out by the young turks I tout so heavily in these pages.

Most men fifty-seven years old whom I encounter, spend their time telling me what a sorry state the youth of today are in, how no one has any respect for law and order, how Dr. Spock has created generations of sniveling, self-indulgent, anarchistic snots. When I met Ross Rocklynne, at last, five years ago, I thought he was in his thirties and somehow had acquired the secret of mastery over aging. He is as young and forthright and forward-looking in his view of life as the most *au courant* campus intellectual.

Is there a message in the life-style of Ross Rocklynne for the writers who said they couldn't write for A,DV because they were too old-time? Is that message clearly present for those of us who think we're with it today and forever "of our time"?

In the event the reader misses the deep respect of the editor for Rocklynne in these words, let me hasten to add it goes far beyond the fact that the editor is 5′5″ and Rocklynne is 6′2″; the testament of constant growth to which Ross Rocklynne's life attests is solidly encapsulated in the story that follows, written with a talent and insight denied to many of the younger writers whom we laud regularly.

I would say more about Rocklynne, but the biographical information he sent me for this introduction is so fine, so much *of the man,* that I think no one could introduce you to the creator of "Ching Witch!" better than the creator himself.

Snotnoses of the world, I give you Ross Rocklynne the man . . . after which Ross Rocklynne the writer will speak his marvelous piece.

"In 1953 L. Sprague de Camp wrote me for information for his book SCIENCE-FICTION HANDBOOK. I stalled. At the time I was studying under a black-bearded guru, and my vows precluded discussion of the ego. Besides, I thought it ridiculous that Sprague wanted to write about me, as I had stopped writing; I wished he wouldn't. Back came another request. Egomania leaked through, and I finally wrote a weak-kneed account of myself. Sprague returned a postcard which was a fire hazard, saying I had been one of eighteen writers on whom he'd intended to devote a chapter, but my contribution had arrived far too late, so that now he could only

insert my name. I suppose it's too late to apologize, but looking back, I would have appreciated being a chapter in that book. At the time, however, the world was coming to an end. Being dramatic about it (mystery herewith injected) I died for more than ten years. The black-bearded guru became white-bearded and I had achieved neither death nor rebirth. Still, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky and the eastern pantheon are the pivots of my Beliefs today; that and the Teaching of the black-bearded one who became white-bearded. But I departed with What I Knew, or Thought I Knew, and went to see what was Outside. Science fiction was.

"I was conceived when Tarzan was. (Philip José Farmer overlooked this angle.) I was no Tarzan, being red-headed and freckled and starting out kind of plump. Nonetheless, at age seven I was swinging through the trees over the old canal which ran through Cincinnati and saw a canal boat being pulled by mules. This could make a person historical. I was the almost typical barefoot boy roaming a vast yard composed of woods, meadows, dairy, canal, and lands beyond.

"At home, my father, a machinist, entered an occasional story contest. He also invented; and worked at the problem of perpetual motion. One invention, which was not developed or patented by him, was the hydroplane, which he thought might lift ships out of the water to escape World War I torpedoes. Another device was the half-gear, which though it revolved in one direction, caused a back-and-forth motion in the mechanism to which it was attached; I saw this one at work in a General Motors exhibit in New York City in 1939.

"Later my father and I developed two inventions and sold the rights to *Popular Mechanics* for $3.00 apiece: the funnel-shaped keyhole, and the upside-down pocket.

"My mother was a hard-working and conscientious woman who in the evenings played the piano, or the mandolin in duet with my father on the guitar. Holidays such as Christmas and Easter always had all the trimmings of candle-lighted trees and eggs, and always gifts. Today, she maintains the early traditions. When crossword puzzles came in, she worked the first one; still does them. This interest in words therefore cuts across three or four generations, for my two sons have no trouble beating almost anybody at Scrabble.

"At age twelve, the product-sob-of-a-broken-home, I was placed into a boys' school called the Kappa Sigma Pi where I stayed five years. A Tarzan-like friend threw me about in an effort to develop my skinny self. He also introduced me to the Edgar Rice Burroughs books, which became a fixation. At night in bed we threw feathered darts at each other across the room until one lodged in my chest. We also crawled and leaped at night on the steep outside of the old building, an art which was called 'ramification.'

"In that same school I inherited a subscription to *Amazing Stories*. The

covers were by Frank R. Paul, who, unknown to our present culture, invented color and knee-pants. I entered, at this age level, a manuscript in the new *Science Wonder Stories* cover contest.

"New York City, 1939. First World Science Fiction Convention. There are fans here who will become big names. People here I will know right up to the present, and others I will meet again for the first time in thirty years at the Baycon in '68. Now comes 1940 and the Chicon. Charles R. Tanner, Dale Tarr and I, who did not then realize we were one of the early fan groups ('The Hell Pavers'), made the Chicago scene. And then, for me, marriage. California. War work. There were interims of writing, these interims being productive in other fields beside science fiction.

"But an old nervous ailment began recharging its batteries. There were two sons. Four years work in story analysis at Warner Bros. Then divorce. I worked for a literary agency. My brain grew peach fuzz. A variety of work was to follow, selling and repairing sewing machines, driving and dispatching for a taxi outfit, operating machines in a machine shop, salesman in an art shop, a brief stint lumbering.

"Suddenly: 1950, and dear old Ron cleared the way for all of us in *Astounding*, and I was well into dianetics. From there it was only a step or two to the black-bearded guru who became white-bearded. Suddenly, again: it was 1964, and I was walking *free* in Westlake Park. By mid-1967 I started, slowly, to write again. It came about like this, a brilliant thought, 'I betcha I could write a story and have it published. I *betcha!*'

"Writing is still slow. The story I like in the morning is hateful at night. The see-saw is time-consuming, and often I think I had better look for some other kind of fun, except that I've already been on the merry-go-round. So I don't know. I should mention one writing project having to do with my study of the somesthetic senses (using myself as the authentic and self-authorized laboratory). The somesthetic senses tell us about what goes on inside our bodies, and are pressure, pain, and warmth or cold. Our old ideas on the meaning of pain, for instance, will be reversed in this here now book I'm thinking about. It will be shown that the pain and the injury, or the pain and the illness, are opposite things. The pain is investigative and coordinating, not only a 'warning.' As such it could be used on purpose to reverse some changes in morphology. This set of ideas would be presented as a tool some people might find useful. I ride the see-saw on this one, too."

Ellison again. There is an old Chinese curse that wishes on the recipient that he "live in interesting times." In these days and nights during which we find ourselves (as Rod McKuen would phrase it, God help us) "trapped in the angry," we live in the most interesting times of all. Wilson and Sarajevo seem, and are, far behind us in what was, even as hostile as it might have been, a much quieter time. We tend to accept as truth the proposition that if we aren't deeply committed to change and action, we have no soul.

Ross Rocklynne grew up in that quieter time and has, by his own words, paid his dues. But he is not a shouter or an antagonist or even a jingoistic radical. He is merely, and with substantial glory, a fine writer who has come through all the years of his life with his talent intact, as now he unarguably proves.



Ross Rocklynne

CHING WITCH!

The tintinabula was very ching that night, just before old Earth blew.

The dance appropriately enough was the ching-maya.

Captain Ratch Chug pin-wheeled, somewhere up there in the misty blue-green of the dance-globe. He threw his hip up in the crawfish modification of the dance which he himself had invented just last week in Rangoon, right in the middle of the war. To his own distaste, he heard his purr-engine wind up when the bundle of groomed pink flesh hanging onto his fingertips glowed her delight.

"You are ching," she squealed rather noisily into his pointy ear, "ching," but this was merely part of the dance and may not have been admiration at all. There is no question but that the slitted glitter of his eyes was a fascination to her, though, no less than the fabulous whiskery waxed mustache he wore in defiance of all the customs. "How ching," she hooted dreamily, free-falling against him from five feet up at the convulsive re-echoing conclusion of the tintinabular construction. She would give him thirty seconds of her life lying here, and during this time he could say pretty much what he pleased.

"How's 'bout going off this planet with me?" was what Chug said, the air around him warbling and humming the last notes of that ching wappo.

"How far off this planet with you?" she pouted, calculating, using the

final echoes of uranium-borrowed music to ride the question in. "Just how far would you say, old man of space? How far?" That was ten seconds right there!

"Ten light years, no less."

Chug was startled. Something had started screaming at him, inside him. "To Zephyrus!" he cried.

Then he caught himself. He crooned, enticing, "Voyage with me to the god of the south!"

His runty thick brown fingers, curved of claw, tightened around her naked pink shoulders so that her eyes smiled and her pouty sweet lips writhed.

"What's the tear drops for, man of space? What are they, tears for me, 'cause you know I ain't going with you? You got the face of a crazy. This dance is over. You used your thirty. I go find another man."

"You ain't got time to find another man," he moaned, letting the tears squeeze out. "They pulled *that lever!* The war's gonna be over! Earth's gonna blow! I'm getting off!

"You got to go with me, young pink thing. I ain't no human, you know, one-fifth of me ain't, and there ain't nobody like me on Earth, and that's the reason I *know!* Coming with me? How's about it, you gonna keep that pink skin? You won't regret it. I'm nice, you'll like me, and there ain't no time for me to find another squud. Give up!"

But no approach would work. She slid away still pink, and he watched her float in the reduced field toward a group of watching couples, who smiled at what seemed a familiar scene. Chug pulled his shiny black and green 2nd Repellor Corps uniform jacket down around his trim hips, and kicked himself smartly by habit toward the floating bar.

Lights glinted in racing rippling patterns off glasses and goblets as the bar whirled around him in an improvised dance-step which enticed the numb Captain Ratch Chug into an allemande left. He stopped that, and ordered two drinks. The tomatoed bartender paid him, but Chug left the cards hanging, and drank fast. Then he began to cry in earnest, his thin pocked brown face worked, and his teeth began chattering; and his nose twitched as the ends of his whiskery mustache vibrated. He left the great room, and went toward the spaceport about three miles up.

"I'm gonna be dancing and watching Earth in the mirror when she blows," vowed Chug, staring at his swollen eyes and vexed lips. "When the first alphas and gammas hit, I'm gonna be doing a Hopi rain jig. Or the Lambeth Walk. Maybe the Bunny Hop! That's what I think of you, ol' Earth. So give me another drink."

He had reduced his speed to just below a light. His fast track from Earth was a dotted line as the ship sewed itself in and out of space. Earthlight soon would catch up with him. He drank the drinks the tomatoed equipment dutifully prepared. Wowie, he thought, dreaming. That ching-maya was a wappo! But how about the Irish Lilt? Particularly when you got a tomato knows how to manufacture good Irish whipskey—let's try again, ol' man of space, Irich whiskey. About that time, he saw old Earth blow. Captain Ratch Chug, late of the late 2nd Repellor Corps, saw it blow in the pick-up mirror. He cried horribly, in spite of the fact he didn't give a damn. Also, he didn't dance. And he told the tomato to quit making those stupid drinks. And he turned off the mirror, thinking of the young pink thing.

She wasn't very pink.

Her fault.

Captain Ratch Chug made a correction in his flight to Zephyrus, setting his effective speed at one and one-half times the speed of light, this being commensurate with his fuel supply.

Chug would arrive on Zephyrus how many years before the wave-front of fractured light arrived from Earth? Interesting question.

Just before he went into his long sleep, Chug lay weeping alcoholically on his pallet. Suddenly he shouted at the winding tubes of freezing gel advancing toward him, "What the hell! There's other planets, and other women to play with! And that's what I'm gonna be doing a good long time before I break the news to them Zephrans. I tell you, this is a sad business. I feel like hell!"

Zephyrus was named after the gentle and lovable god of the south wind, because it was the only human-populated planet south of the ecliptic plane.

Earth was on the outs with Zephyrus—had been for one hundred and three years. No Earth ship climbing the thready beams of space had pulled itself to Zephyrus in all that time. Furthermore, Earth had disrupted its communicator systems, making it a radio-hole in the sky so far as Zephyrus was concerned, and had departed with all its high-speed ships and the secrets of manufacturing same. Zephyrus was isolated!

Why was this? Simple. Make up all the fancy political and socio-economic reasons you want to, it all boils down to the prime fact that Earth people, every man, woman, and child of them, were mean, sneaky, commercial, undernourished and puny, and pleasure-loving. Not fun-loving —pleasure-loving. The Zephrans were noble, generous, tall, godly, and worshipful of the Mother Planet. Naturally they were an affront to the worthless, degraded Earthlings, so the Earthlings snubbed them out of

practical existence. This was not a kind thing to do, but that was old Earth for you.

The sight of an Earth ship coming to the Zephran skies woke up the whole planet. It was as if every person on that planet bloomed, turning his petals toward the vast surprise. Not that they were flower-people, don't get me wrong; they were as human as you or I—or as human as we used to be; (but that's another story.)

"Hail Zephrans," said Chug weakly as the last remnants of the preserving gel slid away. "I bring you greetings from the home planet. As the solely constituted representative of Earth—" But he hadn't meant to say that. He was still drunk, his alcoholic state having been preserved intact by the process. He arose staggering.

A pleasant voice now said: "We hear you, Earthman. We'll get your ship docked in—oh, say an hour; so why not lie down again and sleep it off?"

"*What?*"

Chug felt his back arching.

He felt curling sensations in his fingernails.

"Look," he said. "Whoever you—"

"You're drunk, son," interrupted the pleasant voice. "But that's all right. That's just between you and me. And we aren't going to tell anybody, are we? Of course not, old chap, old buddy."

"Whyn't you talk *English!*" Chug spat. "You got a hell of a accent." He weaved under the bright lights in his cabin filled with a ghastly surprise. First, there was that arching of his spine, and the feeling of claws on the ends of his fingers. He'd overcome that! He had, had! But now it was back, the first time somebody caught him at a disadvantage. Second, here was this supposedly worshipful Zephran, who wasn't worshipful at all, but was blowing a distinct north wind.

"You ain't no Zephran!"

"But also I ain't no Earthling," the other said. "Please listen, my dear man. I'm entrusted with the task of bringing your ship in. It is not my purpose to spoil your little game."

"WHAT GAME? What the hell game you talking about?" There it was again—and Chug almost wept—the feeling of long eye-teeth, of lips drawn back; damn damn damn.

"Oh my." The other sighed and rolled his eyes; it was a gesture that had to be there. "Look, son. Do it *my* way. Get yourself sobered up and cleaned up. Look smart! Back straight! Shoes shined! Hup!"

"Oh-h-h-h-h," groaned Chug, sagging to a seat droop-shouldered.

"Be not alarmed, dear boy. Zephran society is eagerly awaiting you. My,

what a treasure you will be to the worshipful elders and teeming teenagers of Zephyrus who even now are assembling to welcome you!

"One hour."

The blankness following this gave ample indication that communication had been cut off.

One hundred top-ranking Zephrans variously stood or sat in the great auditorium of the floating winged palace of the mayor of the city of Matchley. Chug, having been transported in style from his ship on, naturally, a winged green horse, stood facing them. Thin television screens, also equipped with wings, dipped and dived by the hundreds through the air and each screen was packed with intent teenage faces.

Captain Ratch Chug, late of the 2nd Repellor Corps, was a triumph! He looked splendid. Where else in the universe could you find anybody wearing a uniform these days, and particularly a uniform edged and pinked in gold and red, and with moppish epaulets that as they swung seemed to beat out a martial air? Nowhere but on someone from Earth, because that was the only place anybody had wars.

Chug was striking a pose. Something was humming away inside him, the product of a vast, anticipatory content. He stood gracefully with one polished boot stiffly ahead of the other one. He twirled and twirled his dandy whiskery waxed mustache. His eyes glittered and appraised and swept the murmuring crowds of notables, as well as the clouds of bewinged thin television screens bursting with the excited faces of worshiping Zephran teenagers. He felt fine for now, having overcome for the moment his terrible grief over the blow-up of Mother Earth, and he was determined to bask in the glowing worship these Zephrans radiated.

He already had been asked some questions, all about Earth.

"Wars? Wars? Nope, ain't no more wars on Earth," Chug answered truthfully.

"This is splendid," he was told.

(Everybody on the planet was listening to this conversation, except that it was the gort season, and therefore a hundred thousand Zephrans were out hunting gorts. These gorts—however, that is not a part of this story.)

"What can you tell us in general terms about the possible future relations of Earth and Zephyrus?"

"The relations will be the very best," Chug assured them. Ya damn betcha: No Earth.

"Is it perhaps true that you, acting for Earth, will return to us the secret of faster-than-light ships?"

A question to flutter the heart. Avowed Chug, crossing a finger, "I aim to give it to ya!"

"Is it perhaps true that our ships will then be allowed in Earth's skies?"

"Better not make it for a couple Zephran years!" Chug said, hastily computing. "And approach kinda slow in case there's some kind of—er—flare-up!"

"Then our age-old offense against the Mother World has been forgiven?"

"Ain't nobody holding a thing against ya!"

His questioner, an elderly and most handsome man who was in the position of mayor of the welcoming city of Matchley, said apologetically, "If you will speak more slowly. The refinements of the mother tongue have been lost to us."

While he talked, while he equivocated, the contented purring in Chug stopped. In fact, his purr-engine had been running down for some time. Because there was someone in this room who made his fur—*what the hell!* —who made his skin crawl. He knew who it was: the non-Zephran who had brought his ship in and who had made unkind remarks that no Zephran would make to a worshiped Earthling. Where was he, who was he?

In that crowd of worshiping faces, Chug had no idea.

If he could just find somebody who wasn't worshiping him.

Just then a small warm hand slipped into Chug's hand. Startled at first, he looked down into the peachiest face he had ever seen; peachy and creamy and plump all the way down to its pink toes. "Why, hu*llo!*" said Chug, showing his delight at this intrusion by instantly clicking around facing her, and giving her all the attention he had given the officials crowding the room. "I am delighted!" he said for emphasis. It never failed! Here he was, crowding forty, and a bachelor, and this eighteen-year-old knew what he was: she *knew!*

"Hi hi," she said. "Ips!"

"Ips!" said Chug.

"Rightly. What we want to know, we, the teeming teenagers of our worshiping planet, what we want to know is, what does it on Earth?"

"What—uh—*does* it?"

"Yah. Flickly. What's the WORD?"

"The word," said Chug. "Hah! The WORD!?? Ah." Out of his intuition, he desperately selected the answer. "Ching—that's the word!"

"Ching!" she screamed on sudden tip-toe, then clapping her hand over her mouth. "Halla-hoo! I'm sorry!" she said to the assembled officials who nonetheless watched her and listened to her with what seemed a supreme

indulgence. She raised her voice again, however, and she had one of those healthy, tingly, musical female voices that could knock over fences.

"Hah, all witches," she shouted. "Ching's the WORD! That's what does it!"

The bewinged television screens flipped and sailed and a myriad thin screams sounded.

Chug realized she must be getting her message across to all the teenagers on the planet; (except those who might be out hunting gorts).

"This is miraculous," she said, still snuggling her warm hand in his. "You've come all the way from Earth to give us the WORD. Already ching is the big thing. I myself am already a ching-witch, if you follow. My name is Alise."

"And my name is Humpty Dumpty."

"Break a leg," she acknowledged. "By any chance, Sir Chug, would you happen to know, uh, *just one Earth dance?*"

"Just one? I ain't no peanut-vender, girl! Watch this!" Chug's legs moved in entrechat and cabriole, his feet and knees jiggered, and his arms were all over, finally clapping his hips. "See that? Up in the air and down on the ground, all in one breath." She became very faint at this. Her eyes crossed. Chug took the opportunity to try to settle a nagging fear. He turned smartly to his host, the mayor of Matchley.

"As you can see, sir," he began, "I ain't up on the pecking order in this situation. Here are you gentlemen, and here's this very ching young lady, really a credit to the teeming teenagers of Zephyrus—"

"There is really no difficulty, here," he was assured. "Our teenagers are alert, kind, and intelligent, and outnumber us. Ips!"

"Ips," said Chug, and was fascinated by the chorus of "ips" that ran around the room. Moreover, the mayor of Matchley's feet were tapping, and his eyes were bright and glistening as if in anticipation, or some other emotion Chug failed to recognize. Chug's own feet were tingling. His fingers were feeling a little snappy. Zephyrus, what a place. "Mr. Mayor," he hummed, "you people were ching before *I* ever got here. And I'm glad of that, I'm glad of that."

"He's glad of that, he's glad of that," hummed Alise, by this time standing very close and examining his chest medals.

"And I want to thank you, yes, all of you, indeed I do, before I demonstrate, before I do, a few of the more popular dance numbers they used to have—well, that they got on Earth. But in particular I would like to thank the wappo gentleman who brought my ship to dock."

"Wappo," mused Alise warmly. *"Wappo!"* Her index finger shot up into the air.

"And I would like to thank him personal," amended Chug, tapping his foot unconsciously to some hot music suddenly coming from *somewhere!*

Chug's host nodded somewhat dubiously, and spoke to an aide; who moved a few steps to another aide, who then spoke to his aide, who disappeared through a door. A minute later another aide hurried back into the room, and spoke hurriedly to the mayor, who then began to turn very red. The elements of the small comic opera did not escape Chug.

What the hell! he thought, astonished. They run questions around in circles. Nobody knows nothing. "Your pardon, sir," he said out loud while he felt his fingers snapping uncontrollably in his head, "it don't matter right now, not when we got to show this here young miss some of the vital folk dances of old Earth. But—"

"You see," the mayor of Matchley said, wiping his face, "nobody seems to know *who* was on the landing board at that hour. Now on a civilized planet like Earth, tomatoed equipment would have brought your craft in, but here on Zephyrus we still work—sometimes as much as an hour a day. It's possible that some records have been kept, and that the man or woman who brought you in—"

"A man!" said Chug. "A man's voice!"

"Well, perhaps not, Sir Chug, if you'll pardon me. You see, the voder is usually programmed in the masculine range—"

Chug felt giddy. Of a sudden his population of possible enemies was doubled. Somebody who was *very knowledgeable* knew things about him. How much did that person know? Maybe old Chug better give up and give them the bad news. About Earth. About there ain't no Earth, kiddies, there ain't no ching dances, there ain't no Earth left to forgive you! Then what becomes of old Chug? Old Chug—a dried-out piece of Earth dung, that's what! He almost wept at the thought.

But the way things were—ah!

He snapped his fingers and twittered his feet to the beat of the invisible music that ching-witch Alise turned on.

The way things were, he was a hot-shot and duly constituted representative of Earth's billions. Let it be.

"Let it be," he told his charmed audience who were watching his twittering feet and quite forgetting that they were notables greeting the duly constituted representative of Earth's billions. "Let it be," said Chug, becoming motionless in a slight crouch. "That's the name of the newest hot-shot dance on old Earth. You don't do *nothing!* You do all your dancing with your thinking, and your thinking moves your muscles around inside 'til you think you're gonna tear apart.

"The tintinabula is tearing the air apart meanwhile, and then we come

to the last eight bars, and that's when we can let go. We're wound up like springs, and we go flying up in the air, if the anti-gravs are on, pinwheeling and gyring and gimbaling in the wabe.

"And then there's the ching-honey-cha-cha."

"Ching-honey-cha-cha!" screamed Alise, clapping her hand to her mouth. "Halla-hoo! I'm sorry!" she said to everybody.

"The ching-honey-cha-cha goes like this," said Chug, calling it out in rhythm. "Begging your pardon, Your Honor."

"Ips, ips," protested His Honor the mayor. "We quite understand." He pressed back, creating a space.

"Come on in, young pink thing," droned Chug, snapping his fingers. "Watch my feet. You come on in now."

Alise came in. That girl knew what she was doing. She and old Chug danced for the whole planet, except for the gort-hunters. Alise came in and knew what she was doing. Those feet with the peachy pink toes had been around.

Alise was under his ching, giggling, her thready red hair scalloped in front to the unexpected shape of two devil's horns.

"Sir Chug, you got the pointiest ears!"

That was unsettling.

"Not *that* pointy," said Chug, growling. "You watch your language, miss."

"Pointy!" giggled Alise. "Like a cat!"

"I got claws, too, if you wanna know. And you're gonna get scratched!"

"I've been scratched before, mister! You got sharper claws?"

So that was the way it was gonna be.

That *was* the way it was with Sir Captain Ratch Chug and the ching-witch Alise.

Alise was a witch, besides being very ching, and you could well believe it if you had seen them nights taking off on degravitized brooms whizzing through the sky to their rendezvous with ching teenagers who wore faddy black peaked hats and twirled sorcerers' mustachios. Sir Captain Ratch Chug, sallow and pocked of face, runty and stunted, mean and sneaky to the core, was a fair representative of the glory of old Earth. The Zephran kids in no time at all reflected this significant collision with another and superior culture by wearing smart uniforms, sporting pointy ears, and looking sallow.

"I'm gonna crash!" moaned Chug early in his Zephran career steering his broom one night over the spitting sparkling lights of Puckley, a fun-city run by teenagers. "We're gravving down too fast!"

"All the extra lives *you* got," the whizzing Alise informed him, "you don't have to worry!"

"*What!*" gasped Chug. "*Who's* got extra lives?"

"*You* have, else you wouldn't *purr afterwards!* Halla-hoo," cried the whizzing Alise to the packed teenagers on the roof below as she upended and landed with Chug safe behind her. "Hah, all witches! Tonight Sir Captain Ratch Chug of the worshiped Mother World brings us the California Schottishe! The Badger Gavotte! The Patty Cake Polka! The Ching-adaidy-do! Position, varsouvienne!"

"I don't know no Badger Gavotte," snarled Chug in her peachy pink ear. "How come you know what I don't know half the time?"

"I know," said Alise, bobbing her hairy horns wisely, "I read it in a book in a place I happen to know name of Flora," as the worshipful Zephran kids swarmed around and the 4/4 beat took over.

So that was the way it was, until hyacinthus-time.

Hyacinthus-time, however, was of the future, and Chug was by his nature very much of the present.

A lot could be said about the life of Sir Captain Ratch Chug on the planet Zephyrus. He was the sensation of the season and the season after that, and then the one after that. What he did was to sustain a pitch, and just before it broke bring in some drums; and then he wouldn't let those drums get quite off the ground until he was manufacturing new sounds. In fact, he did help some music technicians build a tintinabula (translates random atomic motion into orchestrated sound) just so he could dance the ching-maya. Those split sounds drove the Zephran kids wild.

"All is illusion," Chug told the Zephran kids. "That's what the ching-maya and the tintinabula are telling you. You don't really hear that music, you don't really do them steps. The sound is just split up to sound in your head, and what you think is motion is just repetitive creation."

"All hail Chug the guru!" cried the sometimes too-spirited Alise.

Chug lived in a palace, a floating palace, with big golden eagle wings that flapped him around the planet. Quite a sight. Of course, the flapping wings were illusion too, because anti-gravs were built into the wings and everytime they flapped they nullified gravity in certain directions so that he went where he wanted to or up or down.

He was down most of the time, sampling the wild social life of the planet. But he was up much of the time too, receiving visitors, all of whom worshiped him. He had thirty rooms to receive people in, rooms thick with the green and yellow furs of gorts on floors and walls, and with big roomy couches, and pillows of soft eider in every corner, and numerous mirrors

which caught slanting beams of soft and sometimes whirling light proceeding out of mysterious alcoves set into the ceilings and walls. Here and there were pools with fountains where fish swam, and cages where canaries flew, and goldfish bowls. Truly, Chug's palace was a place to relax in. And Chug, when he wasn't out bringing Earth culture to Zephyrus, or conferring with historians, or fending off some of the delicately probing inquiries of Zephran scientists, usually could be found relaxing, his purr-engine revved up, sunk into a couch surrounded by pillows, or in bed with eyes half-closed, listening for the soundless approach of a servant announcing visitors. Ah, Chug was happy happy happy. *This* was what he had been looking for all his life.

Only sour note was that non-Zephran, whoever he-she was, who knew *all about him.*

Ugh! Better forget that.

Until Earth's wave-front of tell-tale light caught up with him and wrote across the sky for all to see:

LIAR!

And so, at last, came hyacinthus-time.

"You're such a fibber," said Alise, peachier than ever and two Zephran years (equal to one Earth year) older. "Last night you was out *prowling* —catting around, as it were; and you told me you was having a interview with the scientist fellas. That's all right."

"Well," said Chug. "Come here."

"Thank you," said Alise.

Indeed he had been out prowling and catting around but it had been with the scientist fellas themselves after an exhausting interview. They went into a whiz-bar where the worshipful Zephrans fought to buy him drinks. What with the drinks and the fact that the whiz-bar actually was whizzing through the air with fascinating changes of liquor-sloshing grav-speed Chug almost offered to take them for a ride in his faster-than-light space-ship!

He groaned to think about it.

"*Then* what happened?" asked Alise, delightfully pulling at his whiskery mustache. "What happened after you said you wouldn't?"

"Nothing happened!"

Except somebody ordered drinks from the tomato and everybody in the bar crowded around toasting Chug, the revered man from the Mother World.

"What *kind* of a drink?"

"A Blue Hyacinth."

"To Sir Captain Ratch Chug!" the worshipful Zephrans cried, hoisting the drinks high, and after that the revellers worshipfully helped Chug back to his sky-high home, and flew for a while outside his door chanting a drunken song which went, "AI! AI! AI!"

"Flickly," said Alise, "I never heard of no song like that, and I never heard of no drink like that! Tomorrow night at the Skitterly festival we'll order Blue Hyacinths and find somebody that knows AI! AI! AI!"

"No!" said Chug, stiffening. "Look, girl, I do the ordering and I do the singing. I don't want no Blue Hyacinth and I don't want no song that goes AI! AI! AI!"

"Why not?" asked Alise. "What's wrong with a Blue Hyacinthus?" she asked, mispronouncing. "What's wrong with a song goes AI! AI! AI!" she asked, crooning into his pointy ear so it sounded like a Greek lament.

Hyacinthus! Hyacinthus! Hyacinthus! Very nearly inaudible, the name beat against Chug's micro-consciousness with the chat-a-chat flutter of tiny wings.

Then he awoke one morning and things were very bad.

Hyacinthus!

He was feeling it. Something wrong, not like before old Earth blew, but something different. Like music, old music, thinly off in the distance, calling him awake like a broken bugle. Like the old days, when the screamers were coming!

Here he was, safe, high above the city in his floating flying palace, halfway out of his lovely dreams, and something was terribly wrong.

"Hi hi, Old Hump," said Alise, sitting with a thump on his bed with its golden coverlets while he opened a slitted eye.

"You used to call me Sir Chug," said Chug. "Now you call me Old Hump. What you got there?"

"I brung you a present," said Alise, who prided herself on having learned the new *lingua* Ge which Chug brought to this planet almost three Earth years ago. "It's that bowl of goldfish you was admiring in the shop in Stickley last weeklette when we was on that party where you taught us worshipful Zephrans the Charleston."

"The Charleston? That wasn't supposed to be for six months," he groaned out loud, sitting up. "I was drunk! I'm gonna run out of dances!"

"You know lots of dances." Alise patted her red hairy horns and turned a mirror on to view herself in. "What about the Jarabe Tapatio? That's the Mexican Hat dance."

"I know! But how do *you* know?"

"I read it in a book, up on a planet I know named Flora."

"Flora! Ain't no planet named Flora!"

"It's a kind of invisible planet which I just happen to know. Then there's the Chug Step. Kinda pushy."

He glared.

"Then," she went on, one-half an eye on him, "there's a waltz they had in a place they used to call Denmark called Little Man In A Fix."

"WHAT?"

Here was this girl, this peachy, creamy girl, this adored, lovely, once-in-a-lifetime girl, needling and prodding him. He was certain of it. She knew things about him! She was the one who brought his ship in! It couldn't be; no, no!

"How's about some square dances?" she asked brightly. "There's one called Somebody Goofed!

"How's about Birdie In A Cage?" She chanted, talking it up,

> "Up and down and around and around
> Allemande left and allemande aye
> Ingo, Bingo, six penny high,
> Big cat *little* cat
> Root hog or DIE!

"Besides," she said, catching one of his astounded eyes in the mirror, "do you *have* six months?"

"Do I have six months," Chug croaked from a dry throat.

The tiny wings were the pinions of bats, flapping in the caverns of his intuition. Hyacinthus, they flapped, before he was able to close off the hideous sound.

"Whaddya mean, do I have six months?" he snarled, swinging out of bed in his silken glitter of mandarin pajamas. Then in fright he squeezed the thought back. HYACINTHUS!!

"And whaddya mean, giving me *goldfish for a present?*" he gasped. "I'm onto you, girl. You're after me. You always have been!

"Here I am, the most respected man on the planet. I'm a goldmine of information about the Mother World. Savants have written books about me. I'm important. Big. Beloved. I've changed the cultural life of the teeming teenagers of Zephyrus. Given 'em fads, whooped 'em up, taught 'em jitterbugging—"

She was under his chin and pressing his nose in with a curved forefinger. She cooed, "I know. You're a cool cat."

"And whaddya give me?" he raved. "Goldfish!"

"But you *like* goldfish!"

"Only to look at!"

"That's what I brung 'em for, to look at. What else do you do with 'em?"

"Eat 'em!" snarled Chug. "Like I'm gonna eat you one of these days!"

She giggled. "You *are* a cat," she said. "I knowed that when I first seen you. They took your mom and dad's chromosomes and tweezered in some cat genes, now didn't they? You come out of a laboratory, Old Hump. You come out mewing and spitting and clawing. Then they passed a law because they didn't want any more human cats.

"You're a cat, Old Hump. And that's the reason you always land on your feet!"

Old Chug was on his feet and stalking and circling and spitting and pulling frustratedly at the long hairs of his dandy, waxed, whiskery mustache.

"You're a little bit telepathic?" he inquired.

"A little bit," she admitted. "Like you! Flickly, you *know* when there's trouble ahead—like now.

"Wanna meet my father?"

"I guess I better," said Chug trailing stupidly after her through the thirty rooms of his cushion-strewn furry-rugged palace with its whispering tinkling fountains and its shiny gold canary cages where he had lived his dream of purring contentment when he had been able to stop thinking of that demon wave-front of shattered Earth's light catching up with him! Now! soon!—it would all explode out of time, like the plaint of a brook, like the juice of a leaf!

Soon Alise was lashing her horse-and-buggy across the sunny skies of Zephyrus. Every time those anti-grav hooves kicked at the air the buggy shot ahead. "Gee!" cried Alise, hanging onto the reins. "Haw!" she said, and "Haw!" again for a left U-turn, and finally, "Whoa!" The motors quieted down.

Alise's father had horns growing out of his head.

"They aren't real horns," the slim father confessed shyly, taking off his head-piece and hanging it on an air-peg where it bobbed fitfully. "My real ones were sawed off when they sent us from Flora to study the cultural life of Zephyrus."

"Flora was nowhere," said Alise helpfully, standing close to Chug and stroking his arm. "We didn't have nothing to do. *Nothing.* We come here, flickly, to bring back some dances and some fads and *wild* things. And guess what, Old Hump? We found you! Wasn't we lucky?"

Chug was sweating, gazing upon these two who gazed back upon him benignly and pleasantly and most alarmingly. He attempted to move away from Alise and her stroking hand.

"Aw," she said, her peachy pink lips drooping. Chug sat weakly down,

his head throbbing. Now he was really feeling it, the terrible thing that had gone wrong with his world. "Flora," he muttered.

"Yes," said the father in his shy manner. "Flora, wife of Zephyrus, but divorced for some time, as it were. We keep our planet shielded from the Zephrans, invisible to them, one might say, to keep them from destroying us."

Chug's head came up. "Zephrans? Destroy you?"

"Oh, yes," said Alise, happily placing herself on Chug's knee and diddling her fingers under his ear. "The Zephrans would tear us apart like that if they knew we were on their planet. So we had to saw off our horns.

"Oh, yes. We grow horns. Something about the climate, I'm sure."

Chug looked askance at the beauteous head and then shuddered his glance away. "The Zephrans are noble, gentle, tall, courteous and godly. They wouldn't hurt anybody!"

Both Alise and her father laughed gently.

"Hyacinthus," said the father, removing his headpiece from the air-peg and placing it back on his head and then turning on a mirror while he fitted it. "Surely you remember the Greek god Zephyrus who was jealous of Hyacinthus and caused his death. Zephrans think of Earth as Hyacinthus."

Chug was ill. He looked past Alise into the mirror, where he saw the horned man who suddenly looked very sinister. "You're him," cried Chug hysterically, all his accumulated fears centered on this apparition. "The one who brung me in." He leaped up as if to flee a terrible danger, but caught Alise so she wouldn't fall and stood trembling.

"Yes," said the father, nodding, and smiling inwardly as if at himself. "You'll forgive me my rudeness, but it was necessary to sharpen you up so you could put on a convincing show."

"WHAT show?" Chug cried.

"Oh," said the father, flinching. "That again."

Alise snuggled against the mandarin pajamas Chug still wore. She said dreamily, "We knew all about you, but it didn't matter. You were what we were looking for, so we tested you. Here on Zephyrus. But it's time to go now. To Flora. You'll probably grow horns. You understand, Hyacinthus?"

"Don't call me Hyacinthus!" Chug pushed her away, spitting his fury. His hair again felt as if it were standing up like fur, and again he could feel retractile muscles pulling at his fingernails. He crouched and arched his back and lashed out a paw at the smiling peachy pink girl.

"Zephrans ain't gonna kill *me!*" he said. "Zephrans worship me!"

"Their worship was a barrier to keep you from penetrating to their

hate. You were too quick to drink the Blue Hyacinth," said the father, now seeming not quite so shy.

His finger ran sharply through the air and the mirror in which he ostensibly was admiring himself turned into a television screen.

"All over the planet the word has gone out," he said. "Hyacinthus, they are screaming, Hyacinthus!"

Chug could not believe eyes or ears. He was looking at his floating palace with its lazy golden eagle wings. It was surrounded by winged cars, and the cars were full of worshipful Zephrans.

They were not too worshipful.

"Hyacinthus!" they were screaming. Weapons in their hands were discharging projectiles and rays at the floating palace. "Hyacinthus!" the terrible screaming came. Chug's palace was coming down.

Tears were in Chug's eyes. Sympathetically Alise petted the back of his head.

"They've been hating us for a long time," she said, "but they've been hating Earth *longer*! They've been out into space, Old Hump. While you were entertaining us worshipful teenagers and making things really ching, they were stealing the faster-than-light secret from your ship. They've seen Earth explode at last—only about six months from here. They know you've been fooling them. They know they don't have to be afraid of Earth anymore.

"We're going back to Flora, Old Hump. The teeming teenagers of Flora need fads, dances, and songs and a tintinabula or two. Everybody will love you. You can come and go as you please. Stay out at night and yowl, as it were. Ips."

"Ips," said Chug weakly. He was drained, watching the destruction of his august mansion of the air. Then he could watch no longer. The doom he had closed out of his mind for so long at last was upon him. His purr-engine seemed dead, Earth was gone, and what was left? Strangely enough, plenty and everything. Almost as fast as old Chug reached bottom, he started back up. Uncomplicated by worry and fear, a new destiny beckoned.

Already he was beginning to hum again. Already, the dread moment of betrayal from the hateful Zephrans was being put behind him. He opened an eye, sadly, to watch the burning eagle wings.

Moreover, maybe that witch Alise at last saw in him a person of talents and importance.

He hoped.

"You'll go with us?" cried Alise, steepling her hands entreatingly under his nose.

"Let it be," sighed Chug blackly as his palace crashed.

"Let it be," cried Alise, whirling into an excited pirouette and fouette, then flinging herself into old Chug's arms for an ecstatic sashay. "You'll love your new home, Old Hump. You'll be warm and cozy, and we'll take care of you—"

Chug preened a bit, but dour experience flashed signals. "You mean," he inquired suspiciously, "you're gonna take me to Flora like some blue-ribbon, prize-winning *cat*?"

"Halla-hoo!" cried Alise wide-eyed. "We wasn't thinking of no *prize*-winning cat! What we had in mind was, more like a house-pet!"

(So that was the way it was gonna be.)

Afterword:

Haight-Ashbury, 1966. I visited there for 10 days in November of that year, staying in a semi-hippie type apartment run by my two sons and one other. One son worked, the other went to school at San Francisco State, and the other boy worked at night and tried to sleep during the day. Bodies came and went at all hours. There was a stereo. The cow-moo voice of Bob Dylan blew on the wind; and Joan Baez guitared. After the first shock, I appreciated both of them and do. There was also Mozart, Beethoven, Bach, played quiet. There was food eaten by anybody and provided by anybody. Disarray in kitchen and bedroom was the rule; suddenly someone would clean up the joint. Pot there was not (that I knew). The older son handed me a stack of Marvel comics and remarked, incredibly, that Stan Lee and what he was saying was part of the religion of the Berkeley/Haight-Ashbury scene. I was entranced with The Hulk, with Prince Namor of Atlantis, with The Fantastic Four, with Doctor Strange, the Mighty Thor, and others. I lay on the bed face close to the floor and read and glutted myself in leisure.

On the first day, a Sunday, that I was there, I walked with sons and their friends drinking beer down to the Panhandle of Golden Gate Park where a love-in was in progress. The flower children were beginning now. Girls with painted faces and bare soiled feet. Naked-to-the-waist painted men gyrating in dances to strange Eastern instruments. Paints, brushes, and frames with paper thumb-tacked on them were there for those who wanted to express themselves artistically. A rock band tore the air. Couples danced, roiled, sprawled. Older people, very cubic like me, looked on. Children ran, screamed, danced, sang, automatically knew what their thing was: anybody over ten had to think it out.

On the second day, the older son hesitantly asked if I minded riding pillion on the motorcycle. "It's the only transportation we've got." I did

mind. As the motorcycle started off, me tethered behind, it made a sound which went "ratch-chug." My son explained, his voice blowin' back in the wind, "The kind of sound you can expect from our machine-oriented culture." We chugged on down Cole St., past the psychedelic shops and the little food shops and ice-cream shops run by young people with humble shoulders and Indian head-dress, young and older girls smiling hopefully that love had come to stay, not knowing that the cycle would swing as it does with all things—but that's another story.

The next day, having plenty of time, and having chased a tomcat off the back porch where it was stealing the little cat's food, I sat down with a typewriter and some paper and without too much trouble wrote ten silly pages. My older son read the pages, and jolted me with, Did I get my inspiration from the Marvel Comics? "Not that I know of," I replied. Younger son said, "You going back to writing, Dad? Maybe you should finish this one." I told him I definitely would finish it . . . someday; that was a promise.

The above indicates how the elements of the story may have fused together. The story is not supposed to have any theme, or any significance, nor does it seem to attempt to solve any social problems. I tried *not* to make it timely.

The story was finished up, and rewritten a bit for *Again, Dangerous Visions,* but it was not the story I started to write. That story dealt with a priest who scoffed at the idea of light-speed being the limiting velocity in our universe, and with God's help got to Alpha Centauri in *no time at all.* The difficulties in this theme became enormous, and I turned to the almost forgotten ten pages turned out in a lost San Francisco world. To Keith and Jeff, here 'tis.



Introduction to
THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST:

The problem isn't *what* to say about the incredible Ursula Le Guin, it's where to *start*.

Should I, he said, begin with the observation that she is without question the most elegant writer in the sf world? Perhaps. If for no other reason, then surely to expand on the proposition that on certain people in this life a gift of grace and *style* is bestowed that makes all the rest of us look like garden slugs. Being in Ursula's company for any extended period is an enriching experience, but one gets the impression that oneself and everyone else in the room are on the grace level of a paraplegic's basketball team being trained by Fred Astaire.

She is witty, strong, emphatic and empathic, wise, knowledgeable, easy-going and electric, seraphic, gracious, sanguine and sane. Without sacrificing the finest scintilla of femininity she dominates a group with her not inconsiderable strengths as an individual; it is Ursula Le Guin, as a model, I'm sure, women's liberationists are most striving to emulate. In short, she's dynamite.

She also smokes a pipe . . . in private.

She also writes one helluva stick.

Ursula won a Nebula and Hugo in 1970 for her novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*. You've read it, of course, so there's no need to dwell on its level of excellence. Yet it can truly be said, no award in that category in recent years has done the Nebula—or Hugo—more credit.

Ursula Kroeber Le Guin was born in Berkeley, California in 1929; daughter of anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber and Theodora K. Kroeber, author of *Ishi in Two Worlds, The Inland Whale,* and several other tomes of an equally awe-inspiring nature. (Interestingly enough, I find my own listing in *Contemporary Authors,* volumes 5–8, along with Ursula's mother's listing. But no Ursula. Would someone kindly point out their oversight to them.)

Ursula grew up in Berkeley and in the Napa Valley. She received her B.A. from Radcliffe and her Masters from Columbia, in French and Italian Renaissance literature.

She met and married Charles A. Le Guin (pronounced *Luh Gwinn*) while they were both on Fulbrights in France. He is now a Professor of French History at Portland State College, Oregon; they have lived in Portland for ten years. They have three children: Elisabeth, Caroline, Theodore.

In 1968–69, Ursula and her husband went on sabbatical to England; they returned in July of 1969, to Portland, but out of the journey came some marvelous letters, portions of which I include here as examples of purest Ursula.

Here's an example:

"You know London buses have 2 storeys with a sort of half-circular staircase, smoking allowed on the top deck—in winter, between Woodbines & Bronchitis, it's like an Advanced T.B. Ward crossed with a Sauna Bath on fire, all lurching through dark Dickensian alleys jammed with Minicars and Miniskirts—Well, you never get up the stairs before the bus plunges off again, so the conductor/tress shouts, 'Eol pridi daeneow!' or 'Eoldon toit luv!'—or, if West Indian, sings out in the picturesque native dialect (English), 'Hold on pretty tight now!' And if you don't, you've *had* it. There's no door."

Or how about this summation of the English encounter: "We were on sabbatical, except the kids, who went to the local school and got a splendid education and a Cockney accent. We lived in a drab old North London borough called Islington, long rows of high houses like dirty toffees all stuck together staring at the row of dirty toffees opposite. By the time we left, we found these streets very beautiful, and inhaled the exhaust gases of a double-decker red London bus deeply, like sea air. This was essentially a result of the kindliness of the English (including Pakistani Indian Greek Italian, etc.) among whom we lived in Islington. It was the Spirit we were breathing in. London air causes asthma in many, but it is worth it. The English are slightly more civilized than anyone else has yet been. Also England is a good country for introverts; they have a place in society for the introvert, which the United States has not. In fact there is a place in London for everything; you can find what you want there, from organized diabolical perversity *à la* Baron Charlus, to the kind of lollipops that change color as you proceed inwards. I mean it has *everything*. But the best thing, the finest thing, is the kindliness."

Kindliness is something of a central concern with Ursula Le Guin, and as soon as I tend to her bibliography here, I'll tell you of a gratuitous kindness she did me which sums up for me the wonder of Le Guin.

Apart from *The Left Hand of Darkness* and the brilliant *Playboy* story, "Nine Lives," Ursula Le Guin has written the following novels (all available in Ace paperback editions): *Rocannon's World, Planet of Exile, City of Illusions* and *A Wizard of Earthsea.* These in addition to poems in various of the "little" magazines and short stories in magazines and collections like QUARK and ORBIT. Her latest titles are *The Tombs of Atuan* (Atheneum) and *The Lathe of Heaven* (Scribner's). That taken care of, let me tell you an Ursulincident that made me forever her slave.

In 1970, in Berkeley, the Science Fiction Writers of America saw fit to award both Ursula and myself Nebula awards, which I've mentioned be-

fore (not only to assert *her* gloriousness, but to balm my own ego-needs as well). One splendid evening during that Nebula weekend was spent in the company of Ursula, sf-writer Norman Spinrad, Ms. Terry Champagne (author of the world's foremost cockroach horror sf story), the ever-popular Ms. Louise Farr, and a couple that memory vaguely reminds me were Greg Benford and his lovely wife. We went to an Afghanistani restaurant where, to my again flawed memory, I did *not* cause a scene, thereby making it an historic occasion. And afterward, we went up into the Berkeley hills to the magnificent all-wood home of Ursula's mother. Seeing the latter, it is easy to understand where the former obtained her elegance and style. It was one of the most pleasant evenings I've ever spent, rife with *bon mots* and lucid conversation, but I had the undercurrent feeling (totally self-generated, I assure you) that I was a guttersnipe among royalty. Nothing in the manner of Ursula or her family contributed to forming that little nubbin of self-flagellation . . . it was just one of the many niggling little doubts about personal worthiness that all of us have when we are in the company of the very talented, the very beautiful, the very rich or the very landed gentry. It interfered in no way with my enjoyment of the evening.

The next night, when the Nebulas were awarded, a ceremony of singular traumatic content, Ursula Le Guin proved by one single gesture how senseless it is for even the most secure of us to harbor such lack of self-worth.

Among the nominees sitting in that small dining room at the Claremont Hotel that night, were Norman Spinrad (who was up against Ursula with his novel *Bug Jack Barron*), Fritz Leiber (who was vying with me for the novella Nebula with his "Ship of Shadows"), Chip Delany, Greg Benford and Norman again, all up against Ursula's "Nine Lives" for the novelette award, and Larry Niven (whose short story "Not Long Before the End" was up against my "Shattered Like A Glass Goblin"). It was a tense situation. When Ursula's *The Left Hand of Darkness* beat out Zelazny, Brunner, Silverberg, Vonnegut and Spinrad . . . Norman went into a funk that spread its miasmic pall throughout the time-zone. When I copped mine, a very lovely lady sitting with Fritz Leiber burst into tears and Karen Anderson, author and wife of Poul Anderson, looked as though she wanted to cut my throat. When Samuel R. Delany took the novelette Nebula, Greg and Ursula were a study in conflicting emotions, and Norman went under the table. Thank God Silverberg grabbed the short story award, because Larry Niven would have cheerfully knifed me, had I won two that night. Those of us who were there—Ursula, Chip and myself—(Silverberg accepted his award at the East Coast banquet in New York, safe from his competition) slunk up and took our trophies with a few mumbled, embarrassed words, and crawled away again. All in all, it was horrendous. Never have I felt so guilty winning an award.

Shortly thereafter, when the crowd broke up into small groups, I detached myself from the well-wishers to go over and congratulate Ursula on winning what was surely the first of many awards to come. She was sitting at a table with a clot of people standing around. Her Nebula was on the table. Mine was in my arms. Hers was prettier than mine. I switched them. (Since our names and the stories we'd written to win the trophies were engraved on the plinth of each, it was clearly a gag of the moment.) I waited for that moment when Ursula would realize she had my Nebula and I had hers, and it would be my way of saying good-for-you. But that moment never came.

One of the ladies standing there, a lady with a penchant for hysteria, began shrieking at the top of her lungs, "Ursula! Ursula! He stole your Nebula! He stole your Nebula, Ursula, Ursula!!!" and she began weeping convulsively.

I panicked and quickly switched them back as Ursula, suddenly jerked into a wild scene, tried to get her bearings to establish what was happening.

"Hey, take it easy, it was only a joke," I said to the trembling lady, "they're both Nebulas, you know."

To which the lady responded, "Yes, but *hers* is for a *novel*, not a story." Since I have never won an award for a novel—and the lady knew it—that was what we of the jet set call a consummate downer. It dropped a shroud over the joy of the evening, such as it was, and added to Fritz Leiber's companion's tears, it made me feel like a pound and a half of mandrill shit.

I started to lurch away, when I felt a hand on my arm. It was Ursula. I looked back down at her and she was staring at me with an expression that said I understand, forget it, it doesn't matter what she says, all's right with the world.

It instantly brought me up like the Goodyear blimp. And it saved the evening for me.

One gesture of kindliness, that tells more about Ursula K. Le Guin than all the biographies anyone could write.

And as a final note, check the placement of her very long and very fine novella in these pages. It is the second actual *story* in the book (Heidenry's is, as stated, a keynote entry). The wise editor, I was informed early in my career as a compiler of anthologies, puts his very strongest stuff at the beginning and the end of the book. I started off with the Rocklynne because of its strength and because of his personal meaning for the field. And since I had three extra-long pieces for inclusion here, one to start, one in the middle, and one to close, I wanted to make it a story that would zonk the readership.

Her wonderfulness aside, it am the words of Ursula Le Guin what wins the heart and memory, and the hot spot in this book.



Ursula K. Le Guin

THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST

1.

Two pieces of yesterday were in Captain Davidson's mind when he woke, and he lay looking at them in the darkness for a while. One up: the new shipload of women had arrived. Believe it or not. They were here, in Centralville, twenty-seven lightyears from Earth by NAFAL and four hours from Smith Camp by hopper, the second batch of breeding females for the New Tahiti Colony, all sound and clean, 212 head of prime human stock. Or prime enough, anyhow. One down: the report from Dump Island of crop failures, massive erosion, a wipe-out. The line of 212 buxom beddable breasty little figures faded from Davidson's mind as he saw rain pouring down onto ploughed dirt, churning it to mud, thinning the mud to a red broth that ran down rocks into the rainbeaten sea. The erosion had begun before he left Dump Island to run Smith Camp, and being gifted with an exceptional visual memory, the kind they called eidetic, he could recall it now all too clearly. It looked like that bigdome Kees was right and you had to leave a lot of trees standing where you planned to put farms. But he still couldn't see why a soybean farm needed to waste a lot of space on trees if the land was managed really scientifically. It wasn't like that in Ohio; if you wanted corn you grew corn, and no space wasted on trees and stuff. But then Earth was a tamed planet and New Tahiti wasn't. That's what he was here for: to tame it. If Dump Island was just rocks and gullies now, then scratch it; start over on a new island and do better. Can't keep us down, we're Men. You'll learn what that means pretty soon, you godforsaken damn planet, Davidson thought, and he grinned a little in the darkness of the hut, for he liked challenges. Thinking Men, he thought Women, and again the line of little figures began to sway through his mind, smiling, jiggling.

"Ben!" he roared, sitting up and swinging his bare feet onto the bare floor. "Hot water get-ready, hurry-up-quick!" The roar woke him satisfy-

ingly. He stretched and scratched his chest and pulled on his shorts and strode out of the hut into the sunlit clearing all in one easy series of motions. A big, hard-muscled man, he enjoyed using his well-trained body. Ben, his creechie, had the water ready and steaming over the fire, as usual, and was squatting staring at nothing, as usual. Creechies never slept, they just sat and stared. "Breakfast. Hurry-up-quick!" Davidson said, picking up his razor from the rough board table where the creechie had laid it out ready with a towel and a propped-up mirror.

There was a lot to be done today, since he'd decided, that last minute before getting up, to fly down to Central and see the new women for himself. They wouldn't last long, 212 among over two thousand men, and like the first batch probably most of them were Colony Brides, and only twenty or thirty had come as Recreation Staff; but those babies were real good greedy girls and he intended to be first in line with at least one of them this time. He grinned on the left, the right cheek remaining stiff to the whining razor.

The old creechie was moseying round taking an hour to bring his breakfast from the cookhouse. "Hurry-up-quick!" Davidson yelled, and Ben pushed his boneless saunter into a walk. Ben was about a meter high and his back fur was more white than green; he was old, and dumb even for a creechie, but Davidson knew how to handle him. A lot of men couldn't handle creechies worth a damn, but Davidson had never had trouble with them; he could tame any of them, if it was worth the effort. It wasn't, though. Get enough humans here, build machines and robots, make farms and cities, and nobody would need the creechies any more. And a good thing too. For this world, New Tahiti, was literally made for men. Cleaned up and cleaned out, the dark forests cut down for open fields of grain, the primeval murk and savagery and ignorance wiped out, it would be a paradise, a real Eden. A better world than worn-out Earth. And it would be his world. For that's what Don Davidson was, way down deep inside him: a world-tamer. He wasn't a boastful man, but he knew his own size. It just happened to be the way he was made. He knew what he wanted, and how to get it. And he always got it.

Breakfast landed warm in his belly. His good mood wasn't spoiled even by the sight of Kees Van Sten coming towards him, fat, white, and worried, his eyes sticking out like blue golf-balls.

"Don," Kees said without greeting, "the loggers have been hunting red deer in the Strips again. There are eighteen pair of antlers in the back room of the Lounge."

"Nobody ever stopped poachers from poaching, Kees."

"You can stop them. That's why we live under martial law, that's why the Army runs this colony. To keep the laws."

A frontal attack from Fatty Bigdome! It was almost funny. "All right," Davidson said reasonably, "I could stop 'em. But look, it's the men I'm looking after; that's my job, like you said. And it's the men that count. Not the animals. If a little extra-legal hunting helps the men get through this godforsaken life, then I intend to blink. They've got to have some recreation."

"They have games, sports, hobbies, films, teletapes of every major sporting event of the past century, liquor, marijuana, hallies, and a fresh batch of women at Central. For those unsatisfied by the Army's rather unimaginative arrangements for hygienic homosexuality. They are spoiled rotten, your frontier heroes, and they don't need to exterminate a rare native species 'for recreation.' If you don't act, I must record a major infraction of Ecological Protocols in my report to Captain Gosse."

"You can do that if you see fit, Kees," said Davidson, who never lost his temper. It was sort of pathetic the way a euro like Kees got all red in the face when he lost control of his emotions. "That's your job, after all. I won't hold it against you; they can do the arguing at Central and decide who's right. See, you want to keep this place just like it is, actually, Kees. Like one big National Forest. To look at, to study. Great, you're a spesh. But see we're just ordinary joes getting the work done. Earth needs wood, needs it bad. We find wood on New Tahiti. So—we're loggers. See, where we differ is that with you Earth doesn't come first, actually. With me it does."

Kees looked at him sideways out of those blue golf-ball eyes. "Does it? You want to make this world into Earth's image, eh? A desert of cement?"

"When I say Earth, Kees, I mean people. Men. You worry about deer and trees and fibreweed, fine, that's your thing. But I like to see things in perspective, from the top down, and the top, so far, is humans. We're here, now; and so this world's going to go our way. Like it or not, it's a fact you have to face; it happens to be the way things are. Listen, Kees, I'm going to hop down to Central and take a look at the new colonists. Want to come along?"

"No thanks, Captain Davidson," the spesh said, going on towards the Lab hut. He was really mad. All upset about those damn deer. They were great animals, all right. Davidson's vivid memory recalled the first one he had seen, here on Smith Land, a big red shadow, two meters at the shoulder, a crown of narrow golden antlers, a fleet, brave beast, the finest game-animal imaginable. Back on Earth they were using robodeer even in the High Rockies and Himalaya Parks now, the real ones were about gone.

These things were a hunter's dream. So they'd be hunted. Hell, even the wild creechies hunted them, with their lousy little bows. The deer would be hunted because that's what they were there for. But poor old bleeding-heart Kees couldn't see it. He was actually a smart fellow, but not realistic, not tough-minded enough. He didn't see that you've got to play on the winning side or else you lose. And it's Man that wins, every time. The old Conquistador.

Davidson strode on through the settlement, morning sunlight in his eyes, the smell of sawn wood and woodsmoke sweet on the warm air. Things looked pretty neat, for a logging camp. The two hundred men here had tamed a fair patch of wilderness in just three E-months. Smith Camp: a couple of big corruplast geodesics, forty timber huts built by creechie-labor, the sawmill, the burner trailing a blue plume over acres of logs and cut lumber; uphill, the airfield and the big prefab hangar for helicopters and heavy machinery. That was all. But when they came here there had been nothing. Trees. A dark huddle and jumble and tangle of trees, endless, meaningless. A sluggish river overhung and choked by trees, a few creechie-warrens hidden among the trees, some red deer, hairy monkeys, birds. And trees. Roots, boles, branches, twigs, leaves, leaves overhead and underfoot and in your face and in your eyes, endless leaves on endless trees.

New Tahiti was mostly water, warm shallow seas broken here and there by reefs, islets, archipelagoes, and the five big Lands that lay in a 2500-kilo arc across the Northwest Quartersphere. And all those flecks and blobs of land were covered with trees. Ocean: forest. That was your choice on New Tahiti. Water and sunlight, or darkness and leaves.

But men were here now to end the darkness, and turn the tree-jumble into clean sawn planks, more prized on Earth than gold. Literally, because gold could be got from seawater and from under the Antarctic ice, but wood could not; wood came only from trees. And it was a really necessary luxury on Earth. So the alien forests became wood. Two hundred men with robosaws and haulers had already cut eight mile-wide Strips on Smith Land, in three months. The stumps of the Strip nearest camp were already white and punky; chemically treated, they would have fallen into fertile ash by the time the permanent colonists, the farmers, came to settle Smith Land. All the farmers would have to do was plant seeds and let 'em sprout.

It had been done once before. That was a queer thing, and the proof, actually, that New Tahiti was intended for humans to take over. All the stuff here had come from Earth, about a million years ago, and the evolution had followed so close a path that you recognised things at once: pine,

oak, walnut, chestnut, fir, holly, apple, ash; deer, bird, mouse, cat, squirrel, monkey. The humanoids on Hain-Davenant of course claimed they'd done it at the same time as they colonised Earth, but if you listened to those ETs you'd find they claimed to have settled every planet in the Galaxy and invented everything from sex to thumbtacks. The theories about Atlantis were a lot more realistic, and this might well be a lost Atlantean colony. But the humans had died out. And the nearest thing that had developed from the monkey line to replace them was the creechie—a meter tall and covered with green fur. As ETs they were about standard, but as men they were a bust, they just hadn't made it. Give 'em another million years, maybe. But the Conquistadors had arrived first. Evolution moved now not at the pace of a random mutation once a millennium, but with the speed of the starships of the Terran Fleet.

"Hey Captain!"

Davidson turned, only a microsecond late in his reaction, but that was late enough to annoy him. There was something about this damn planet, its gold sunlight and hazy sky, its mild winds smelling of leafmould and pollen, something that made you daydream. You mooched along thinking about conquistadors and destiny and stuff, till you were acting as thick and slow as a creechie. "Morning, Ok!" he said crisply to the logging foreman.

Black and tough as wire rope, Oknanawi Nabo was Kees's physical opposite, but he had the same worried look. "You got half a minute?"

"Sure. What's eating you, Ok?"

"The little bastards."

They leaned their backsides on a split rail fence. Davidson lit his first reefer of the day. Sunlight, smoke-blued, slanted warm across the air. The forest behind camp, a quarter-mile-wide uncut strip, was full of the faint, ceaseless, cracking, chuckling, stirring, whirring, silvery noises that woods in the morning are full of. It might have been Idaho in 1950, this clearing. Or Kentucky in 1830. Or Gaul in 50 B.C. "Te-whet," said a distant bird.

"I'd like to get rid of 'em, Captain."

"The creechies? How d'you mean, Ok?"

"Just let 'em go. I can't get enough work out of 'em in the mill to make up for their keep. Or for their being such a damn headache. They just don't work."

"They do if you know how to make 'em. They built the camp."

Oknanawi's obsidian face was dour. "Well, you got the touch with 'em, I guess. I don't." He paused. "In that Applied History course I took in training for Far-out, it said that slavery never worked. It was uneconomical."

"Right, but this isn't slavery, Ok baby. Slaves are humans. When you raise cows, you call that slavery? No. And it works."

Impassive, the foreman nodded; but he said, "They're too little. I tried starving the sulky ones. They just sit and starve."

"They're little, all right, but don't let 'em fool you, Ok. They're tough; they've got terrific endurance; and they don't feel pain like humans. That's the part you forget, Ok. You think hitting one is like hitting a kid, sort of. Believe me, it's more like hitting a robot for all they feel it. Look, you've laid some of the females, you know how they don't seem to feel anything, no pleasure, no pain, they just lay there like mattresses no matter what you do. They're all like that. Probably they've got more primitive nerves than humans do. Like fish. I'll tell you a weird one about that. When I was in Central, before I came up here, one of the tame males jumped me once. I know they'll tell you they never fight, but this one went spla, right off his nut, and lucky he wasn't armed or he'd have killed me. I had to damn near kill him before he'd even let go. And he kept coming back. It was incredible the beating he took and never even felt it. Like some beetle you have to keep stepping on because it doesn't know it's been squashed already. Look at this." Davidson bent down his close-cropped head to show a gnarled lump behind one ear. "That was damn near a concussion. And he did it after I'd broken his arm and pounded his face into cranberry sauce. He just kept coming back and coming back. The thing is, Ok, the creechies are lazy, they're dumb, they're treacherous, and they don't feel pain. You've got to be tough with 'em, and stay tough with 'em."

"They aren't worth the trouble, Captain. Damn sulky little green bastards, they won't fight, won't work, won't nothing. Except give me the pip." There was a geniality in Oknanawi's grumbling which did not conceal the stubbornness beneath. He wouldn't beat up creechies because they were so much smaller; that was clear in his mind, and clear now to Davidson, who at once accepted it. He knew how to handle his men. "Look, Ok. Try this. Pick out the ringleaders and tell 'em you're going to give them a shot of hallucinogen. Mesc, lice, any one, they don't know one from the other. But they're scared of them. Don't overwork it, and it'll work. I can guarantee."

"Why are they scared of hallies?" the foreman asked curiously.

"How do I know? Why are women scared of rats? Don't look for good sense from women or creechies, Ok! Speaking of which I'm on the way to Central this morning, shall I put the finger on a Collie Girl for you?"

"Just keep the finger off a few till I get my leave," Ok said grinning. A group of creechies passed, carrying a long 12×12 beam for the Rec Room being built down by the river. Slow, shambling little figures, they worried

the big beam along like a lot of ants with a dead caterpillar, sullen and inept. Oknanawi watched them and said, "Fact is, Captain, they give me the creeps."

That was queer, coming from a tough, quiet guy like Ok.

"Well, I agree with you, actually, Ok, that they're not worth the trouble, or the risk. If that fart Lyubov wasn't around and the Colonel wasn't so stuck on following the Code, I think we might just clean out the areas we settle, instead of this Voluntary Labor routine. They're going to get rubbed out sooner or later, and it might as well be sooner. It's just how things happen to be. Primitive races always have to give way to civilised ones. Or be assimilated. But we sure as hell can't assimilate a lot of green monkeys. And like you say, they're just bright enough that they'll never be quite trustworthy. Like those big monkeys used to live in Africa, what were they called."

"Gorillas?"

"Right. We'll get on better without creechies here, just like we get on better without gorillas in Africa. They're in our way. . . . But Daddy Ding-Dong he say use creechie-labor, so we use creechie-labor. For a while. Right? See you tonight, Ok."

"Right, Captain."

Davidson checked out the hopper from Smith Camp HQ: a pine-plank 4-meter cube, two desks, a watercooler, Lt. Birno repairing a walkytalky. "Don't let the camp burn down, Birno."

"Bring me back a Collie, Cap. Blonde. 34-22-36."

"Christ, is that all?"

"I like 'em neat, not floppy, see." Birno expressively outlined his preference in the air. Grinning, Davidson went on up to the hangar. As he brought the helicopter back over camp he looked down at it: kid's blocks, sketch-lines of paths, long stump-stubbled clearings, all shrinking as the machine rose and he saw the green of the uncut forests of the great island, and beyond that dark green the pale green of the sea going on and on. Now Smith Camp looked like a yellow spot, a fleck on a vast green tapestry.

He crossed Smith Straits and the wooded, deep-folded ranges of north Central Island, and came down by noon in Centralville. It looked like a city, at least after three months in the woods; there were real streets, real buildings, it had been there since the Colony began four years ago. You didn't see what a flimsy little frontier-town it really was, until you looked south of it a halfmile and saw glittering above the stumplands and the concrete pads a single golden tower, taller than anything in Centralville. The ship wasn't a big one but it looked so big, here. And it was only a launch, a lander, a ship's boat; the NAFAL ship of the line, *Shackleton*, was half

a million kilos up, in orbit. The launch was just a hint, just a fingertip of the hugeness, the power, the golden precision and grandeur of the star-bridging technology of Earth.

That was why tears came to Davidson's eyes for a second at the sight of the ship from home. He wasn't ashamed of it. He was a patriotic man, it just happened to be the way he was made.

Soon enough, walking down those frontier-town streets with their wide vistas of nothing much at each end, he began to smile. For the women were there, all right, and you could tell they were fresh ones. They mostly had long tight skirts and big shoes like goloshes, red or purple or gold, and gold or silver frilly shirts. No more nipplepeeps. Fashions had changed; too bad. They all wore their hair piled up high, it must be sprayed with that glue stuff they used. Ugly as hell, but it was the sort of thing only women would do to their hair, and so it was provocative. Davidson grinned at a chesty little euraf with more hair than head; he got no smile, but a wag of the retreating hips that said plainly, Follow follow follow me. But he didn't. Not yet. He went to Central HQ: quickstone and plastiplate Standard Issue, 40 offices 10 watercoolers and a basement arsenal, and checked in with New Tahiti Central Colonial Administration Command. He met a couple of the launch-crew, put in a request for a new semirobo bark-stripper at Forestry, and got his old pal Juju Sereng to meet him at the Luau Bar at fourteen hundred.

He got to the bar an hour early to stock up on a little food before the drinking began. Lyubov was there, sitting with a couple of guys in Fleet uniform, some kind of speshes that had come down on the *Shackleton*'s launch. Davidson didn't have a high regard for the Navy, a lot of fancy sunhoppers who left the dirty, muddy, dangerous on-planet work to the Army; but brass was brass, and anyhow it was funny to see Lyubov acting chummy with anybody in uniform. He was talking, waving his hands around the way he did. Just in passing Davidson tapped his shoulder and said, "Hi, Raj old pal, how's tricks?" He went on without waiting for the scowl, though he hated to miss it. It was really funny the way Lyubov hated him. Probably the guy was effeminate like a lot of intellectuals, and resented Davidson's virility. Anyhow Davidson wasn't going to waste any time hating Lyubov, he wasn't worth the trouble.

The Luau served a first-rate venison steak. What would they say on old Earth if they saw one man eating a kilogram of meat at one meal? Poor damn soybeansuckers! Then Juju arrived with—as Davidson had confidently expected—the pick of the new Collie Girls: two fruity beauties, not Brides, but Recreation Staff. Oh the old Colonial Administration sometimes came through! It was a long, hot afternoon.

Flying back to camp he crossed Smith Straits level with the sun that lay on top of a great gold bed of haze over the sea. He sang as he lolled in the pilot's seat. Smith Land came in sight hazy, and there was smoke over the camp, a dark smudge as if oil had got into the waste-burner. He couldn't even make out the buildings through it. It was only as he dropped down to the landing-field that he saw the charred jet, the wrecked hoppers, the burned-out hangar.

He pulled the hopper up again and flew back over the camp, so low that he might have hit the high cone of the burner, the only thing left sticking up. The rest was gone, mill, furnace, lumberyards, HQ, huts, barracks, creechie compound, everything. Black hulks and wrecks, still smoking. But it hadn't been a forest fire. The forest stood there, green, next to the ruins. Davidson swung back round to the field, set down and lit out looking for the motorbike, but it too was a black wreck along with the stinking, smouldering ruins of the hangar and the machinery. He loped down the path to camp. As he passed what had been the radio hut, his mind snapped back into gear. Without hesitating for even a stride he changed course, off the path, behind the gutted shack. There he stopped. He listened.

There was nobody. It was all silent. The fires had been out a long time; only the great lumber-piles still smouldered, showing a hot red under the ash and char. Worth more than gold, those oblong ash-heaps had been. But no smoke rose from the black skeletons of the barracks and huts; and there were bones among the ashes.

Davidson's brain was super-clear and active, now, as he crouched behind the radio shack. There were two possibilities. One: an attack from another camp. Some officer on King or New Java had gone spla and was trying a coup de planète. Two: an attack from off-planet. He saw the golden tower on the space-dock at Central. But if the *Shackleton* had gone privateer why would she start by rubbing out a small camp, instead of taking over Centralville? No, it must be invasion, aliens. Some unknown race, or maybe the Cetians or the Hainish had decided to move in on Earth's colonies. He'd never trusted those damned smart humanoids. This must have been done with a heatbomb. The invading force, with jets, aircars, nukes, could easily be hidden on an island or reef anywhere in the SW Quartersphere. He must get back to his hopper and send out the alarm, then try a look around, reconnoiter, so he could tell HQ his assessment of the actual situation. He was just straightening up when he heard the voices.

Not human voices. High, soft, gabble-gobble. Aliens.

Ducking on hands and knees behind the shack's plastic roof, which lay

on the ground deformed by heat into a batwing shape, he held still and listened.

Four creechies walked by a few yards from him, on the path. They were wild creechies, naked except for loose leather belts on which knives and pouches hung. None wore the shorts and leather collar supplied to tame creechies. The Volunteers in the compound must have been incinerated along with the humans.

They stopped a little way past his hiding-place, talking their slow gabble-gobble, and Davidson held his breath. He didn't want them to spot him. What the devil were creechies doing here? They could only be serving as spies and scouts for the invaders.

One pointed south as it talked, and turned, so that Davidson saw its face. And he recognised it. Creechies all looked alike, but this one was different. He had written his own signature all over that face, less than a year ago. It was the one that had gone spla and attacked him down in Central, the homicidal one, Lyubov's pet. What in the blue hell was it doing here?

Davidson's mind raced, clicked; reactions fast as always, he stood up, sudden, tall, easy, gun in hand. "You creechies. Stop. Stay-put. No moving!"

His voice cracked out like a whiplash. The four little green creatures did not move. The one with the smashed-in face looked at him across the black rubble with huge, blank eyes that had no light in them.

"Answer now. This fire, who start it?"

No answer.

"Answer now: hurry-up-quick! No answer, then I burn-up first one, then one, then one, see? This fire, who start it?"

"We burned the camp, Captain Davidson," said the one from Central, in a queer soft voice that reminded Davidson of some human. "The humans are all dead."

"You burned it, what do you mean?"

He could not recall Scarface's name for some reason.

"There were two hundred humans here. Ninety slaves of my people. Nine hundred of my people came out of the forest. First we killed the humans in the place in the forest where they were cutting trees, then we killed those in this place, while the houses were burning. I had thought you were killed. I am glad to see you, Captain Davidson."

It was all crazy, and of course a lie. They couldn't have killed all of them, Ok, Birno, Van Sten, all the rest, two hundred men, some of them would have got out. All the creechies had was bows and arrows. Anyway the creechies couldn't have done this. Creechies didn't fight, didn't kill,

didn't have wars. They were intraspecies non-aggressive, that meant sitting ducks. They didn't fight back. They sure as hell didn't massacre two hundred men at a swipe. It was crazy. The silence, the faint stink of burning in the long, warm evening light, the pale-green faces with unmoving eyes that watched him, it all added up to nothing, to a crazy bad dream, a nightmare.

"Who did this for you?"

"Nine hundred of my people," Scarface said in that damned fake-human voice.

"No, not that. Who else? Who were you acting for? Who told you what to do?"

"My wife did."

Davidson saw then the telltale tension of the creature's stance, yet it sprang at him so lithe and oblique that his shot missed, burning an arm or shoulder instead of smack between the eyes. And the creechie was on him, half his size and weight yet knocking him right off balance by its onslaught, for he had been relying on the gun and not expecting attack. The thing's arms were thin, tough, coarse-furred in his grip, and as he struggled with it, it sang.

He was down on his back, pinned down, disarmed. Four green muzzles looked down at him. The scarfaced one was still singing, a breathless gabble, but with a tune to it. The other three listened, their white teeth showing in grins. He had never seen a creechie smile. He had never looked up into a creechie's face from below. Always down, from above. From on top. He tried not to struggle, for at the moment it was wasted effort. Little as they were, they outnumbered him, and Scarface had his gun. He must wait. But there was a sickness in him, a nausea that made his body twitch and strain against his will. The small hands held him down effortlessly, the small green faces bobbed over him grinning.

Scarface ended his song. He knelt on Davidson's chest, a knife in one hand, Davidson's gun in the other.

"You can't sing, Captain Davidson, is that right? Well, then, you may run to your hopper, and fly away, and tell the Colonel in Central that this place is burned and the humans are all killed."

Blood, the same startling red as human blood, clotted the fur of the creechie's right arm, and the knife shook in the green paw. The sharp, scarred face looked down into Davidson's from very close, and he could see now the queer light that burned way down in the charcoal-dark eyes. The voice was still soft and quiet.

They let him go.

He got up cautiously, still dizzy from the fall Scarface had given him.

The creechies stood well away from him now, knowing his reach was twice theirs; but Scarface wasn't the only one armed, there was a second gun pointing at his guts. That was Ben holding the gun. His own creechie Ben, the little grey mangy bastard, looking stupid as always but holding a gun.

It's hard to turn your back on two pointing guns, but Davidson did it and started walking towards the field.

A voice behind him said some creechie word, shrill and loud. Another said, "Hurry-up-quick!" and there was a queer noise like birds twittering that must be creechie laughter. A shot clapped and whined on the road right by him. Christ, it wasn't fair, they had the guns and he wasn't armed. He began to run. He could outrun any creechie. They didn't know how to shoot a gun.

"Run," said the quiet voice far behind him. That was Scarface—Selver, that was his name. Sam, they'd called him, till Lyubov stopped Davidson from giving him what he deserved and made a pet out of him, then they'd called him Selver. Christ, what was all this, it was a nightmare. He ran. The blood thundered in his ears. He ran through the golden, smoky evening. There was a body by the path, he hadn't even noticed it coming. It wasn't burned, it looked like a white balloon with the air gone out. It had staring blue eyes. They didn't dare kill him, Davidson. They hadn't shot at him again. It was impossible. They couldn't kill him. There was the hopper, safe and shining, and he lunged into the seat and had her up before the creechies could try anything. His hands shook, but not much, just shock. They couldn't kill him. He circled the hill and then came back fast and low, looking for the four creechies. But nothing moved in the streaky rubble of the camp.

There had been a camp there this morning. Two hundred men. There had been four creechies there just now. He hadn't dreamed all this. They couldn't just disappear. They were there, hiding. He opened up the machinegun in the hopper's nose and raked the burned ground, shot holes in the green leaves of the forest, strafed the burned bones and cold bodies of his men and the wrecked machinery and the rotting white stumps, returning again and again until the ammo was gone and the gun's spasms stopped short.

Davidson's hands were steady now, his body felt appeased, and he knew he wasn't caught in any dream. He headed back over the Straits, to take the news to Centralville. As he flew he could feel his face relax into its usual calm lines. They couldn't blame the disaster on him, for he hadn't even been there. Maybe they'd see that it was significant that the creechies had struck while he was gone, knowing they'd fail if he was there to organ-

ise the defense. And there was one good thing would come out of this. They'd do like they should have done to start with, and clean up the planet for human occupation. Not even Lyubov could stop them from rubbing out the creechies now, not when they heard it was Lyubov's pet creechie who'd led the massacre! They'd go in for rat-extermination for a while, now; and maybe, just maybe, they'd hand that little job over to him. At that thought he could have smiled. But he kept his face calm.

The sea under him was greyish with twilight, and ahead of him lay the island hills, the deep-folded, many-streamed, many-leaved forests in the dusk.

2.

All the colors of rust and sunset, brown-reds and pale greens, changed ceaselessly in the long leaves as the wind blew. The roots of the copper willows, thick and ridged, were moss-green down by the running water, which like the wind moved slowly with many soft eddies and seeming pauses, held back by rocks, roots, hanging and fallen leaves. No way was clear, no light unbroken, in the forest. Into wind, water, sunlight, starlight, there always entered leaf and branch, bole and root, the shadowy, the complex. Little paths ran under the branches, around the boles, over the roots; they did not go straight, but yielded to every obstacle, devious as nerves. The ground was not dry and solid but damp and rather springy, product of the collaboration of living things with the long, elaborate death of leaves and trees; and from that rich graveyard grew ninety-foot trees, and tiny mushrooms that sprouted in circles half an inch across. The smell of the air was subtle, various, and sweet. The view was never long, unless looking up through the branches you caught sight of the stars. Nothing was pure, dry, arid, plain. Revelation was lacking. There was no seeing everything at once: no certainty. The colors of rust and sunset kept changing in the hanging leaves of the copper willows, and you could not say even whether the leaves of the willows were brownish-red, or reddish-green, or green.

Selver came up a path beside the water, going slowly and often stumbling on the willow roots. He saw an old man dreaming, and stopped. The old man looked at him through the long willow-leaves and saw him in his dreams.

"May I come to your Lodge, my Lord Dreamer? I've come a long way."

The old man sat still. Presently Selver squatted down on his heels just off the path, beside the stream. His head drooped down, for he was worn out and had to sleep. He had been walking five days.

"Are you of the dream-time or of the world-time?" the old man asked at last.

"Of the world-time."

"Come along with me then." The old man got up promptly and led Selver up the wandering path out of the willow grove into dryer, darker regions of oak and thorn. "I took you for a god," he said, going a pace ahead. "And it seemed to me I had seen you before, perhaps in dream."

"Not in the world-time. I come from Sornol, I have never been here before."

"This town is Cadast. I am Coro Mena. Of the Whitethorn."

"Selver is my name. Of the Ash."

"There are Ash people among us, both men and women. Also your marriage-clans, Birch and Holly; we have no women of the Apple. But you don't come looking for a wife, do you?"

"My wife is dead," Selver said.

They came to the Men's Lodge, on high ground in a stand of young oaks. They stooped and crawled through the tunnel-entrance. Inside, in the firelight, the old man stood up, but Selver stayed crouching on hands and knees, unable to rise. Now that help and comfort was at hand his body, which he had forced too far, would not go farther. It lay down and the eyes closed; and Selver slipped, with relief and gratitude, into the great darkness.

The men of the Lodge of Cadast looked after him, and their healer came to tend the wound in his right arm. In the night Coro Mena and the healer Torber sat by the fire. Most of the other men were with their wives that night; there were only a couple of young prentice-dreamers over on the benches, and they had both gone fast asleep. "I don't know what would give a man such scars as he has on his face," said the healer, "and much less, such a wound as that in his arm. A very queer wound."

"It's a queer engine he wore on his belt," said Coro Mena.

"I saw it and didn't see it."

"I put it under his bench. It looks like polished iron, but not like the handiwork of men."

"He comes from Sornol, he said to you."

They were both silent a while. Coro Mena felt unreasoning fear press upon him, and slipped into dream to find the reason for the fear; for he was an old man, and long adept. In the dream the giants walked, heavy and dire. Their dry scaly limbs were swathed in cloths; their eyes were little and light, like tin beads. Behind them crawled huge moving things made of polished iron. The trees fell down in front of them.

Out from among the falling trees a man ran, crying aloud, with blood

on his mouth. The path he ran on was the doorpath of the Lodge of Cadast.

"Well, there's little doubt of it," Coro Mena said, sliding out of the dream. "He came oversea straight from Sornol, or else came afoot from the coast of Kelme Deva on our own land. The giants are in both those places, travellers say."

"Will they follow him," said Torber; neither answered the question, which was no question but a statement of possibility.

"You saw the giants once, Coro?"

"Once," the old man said.

He dreamed; sometimes, being very old and not so strong as he had been, he slipped off to sleep for a while. Day broke, noon passed. Outside the Lodge a hunting-party went out, children chirped, women talked in voices like running water. A dryer voice called Coro Mena from the door. He crawled out into the evening sunlight. His sister stood outside, sniffing the aromatic wind with pleasure, but looking stern all the same. "Has the stranger waked up, Coro?"

"Not yet. Torber's looking after him."

"We must hear his story."

"No doubt he'll wake soon."

Ebor Dendep frowned. Headwoman of Cadast, she was anxious for her people; but she did not want to ask that a hurt man be disturbed, nor to offend the Dreamers by insisting on her right to enter their Lodge. "Can't you wake him, Coro?" she asked at last. "What if he is . . . being pursued?"

He could not run his sister's emotions on the same rein with his own, yet he felt them; her anxiety bit him. "If Torber permits, I will," he said.

"Try to learn his news, quickly. I wish he was a woman and would talk sense. . . ."

The stranger had roused himself, and lay feverish in the halfdark of the Lodge. The unreined dreams of illness moved in his eyes. He sat up, however, and spoke with control. As he listened Coro Mena's bones seemed to shrink within him trying to hide from this terrible story, this new thing.

"I was Selver Thele, when I lived in Eshreth in Sornol. My city was destroyed by the yumens when they cut down the trees in that region. I was one of those made to serve them, with my wife Thele. She was raped by one of them and died. I attacked the yumen that killed her. He would have killed me then, but another of them saved me and set me free. I left Sornol, where no town is safe from the yumens now, and came here to the North Isle, and lived on the coast of Kelme Deva in the Red Groves. There presently the yumens came and began to cut down the world. They destroyed a city there, Penle. They caught a hundred of the men and women

and made them serve them, and live in the pen. I was not caught. I lived with others who had escaped from Penle, in the bogland north of Kelme Deva. Sometimes at night I went among the people in the yumen's pens. They told me that that one was there. That one whom I had tried to kill. I thought at first to try again; or else to set the people in the pen free. But all the time I watched the trees fall and saw the world cut open and left to rot. The men might have escaped, but the women were locked in more safely and could not, and they were beginning to die. I talked with the people hiding there in the boglands. We were all very frightened and very angry, and had no way to let our fear and anger free. So at last after long talking, and long dreaming, and the making of a plan, we went in daylight, and killed the yumens of Kelme Deva with arrows and hunting-lances, and burned their city and their engines. We left nothing. But that one had gone away. He came back alone. I sang over him, and let him go."

Selver fell silent.

"Then," Coro Mena whispered.

"Then a flying ship came from Sornol, and hunted us in the forest, but found nobody. So they set fire to the forest; but it rained, and they did little harm. Most of the people freed from the pens and the others have gone farther north and east, towards the Holle Hills, for we were afraid many yumens might come hunting us. I went alone. The yumens know me, you see, they know my face; and this frightens me, and those I stay with."

"What is your wound?" Torber asked.

"That one, he shot me with their kind of weapon; but I sang him down and let him go."

"Alone you downed a giant?" said Torber with a fierce grin, wishing to believe.

"Not alone. With three hunters, and with his weapon in my hand—this."

Torber drew back from the thing.

None of them spoke for a while. At last Coro Mena said, "What you tell us is very black, and the road goes down. Are you a Dreamer of your Lodge?"

"I was. There's no Lodge of Eshreth any more."

"That's all one; we speak the Old Tongue together. Among the willows of Asta you first spoke to me calling me Lord Dreamer. So I am. Do you dream, Selver?"

"Seldom now," Selver answered, obedient to the catechism, his scarred, feverish face bowed.

"Awake?"

"Awake."

"Do you dream well, Selver?"

"Not well."

"Do you hold the dream in your hands?"

"Yes."

"Do you weave and shape, direct and follow, start and cease at will?"

"Sometimes, not always."

"Can you walk the road your dream goes?"

"Sometimes. Sometimes I am afraid to."

"Who is not? It is not altogether bad with you, Selver."

"No, it is altogether bad," Selver said, "there's nothing good left," and he began to shake.

Torber gave him the willow-draught to drink and made him lie down. Coro Mena still had the headwoman's question to ask; reluctantly he did so, kneeling by the sick man. "Will the giants, the yumens you call them, will they follow your trail, Selver?"

"I left no trail. No one has seen me between Kelme Deva and this place, six days. That's not the danger." He struggled to sit up again. "Listen, listen. You don't see the danger. How can you see it? You haven't done what I did, you have never dreamed of it, making two hundred people die. They will not follow me, but they may follow us all. Hunt us, as hunters drive coneys. That is the danger. They may try to kill us. To kill us all, all men."

"Lie down—"

"No, I'm not raving, this is true fact and dream. There were two hundred yumens at Kelme Deva and they are dead. We killed them. We killed them as if they were not men. So will they not turn and do the same? They have killed us by ones, now they will kill us as they kill the trees, by hundreds, and hundreds, and hundreds."

"Be still," Torber said. "Such things happen in the fever-dream, Selver. They do not happen in the world."

"The world is always new," said Coro Mena, "however old its roots. Selver, how is it with these creatures, then? They look like men and talk like men, are they not men?"

"I don't know. Do men kill men, except in madness? Does any beast kill its own kind? Only the insects. These yumens kill us as lightly as we kill snakes. The one who taught me said that they kill one another, in quarrels, and also in groups, like ants fighting. I haven't seen that. But I know they don't spare one who asks life. They will strike a bowed neck, I have seen it! There is a wish to kill in them, and therefore I saw fit to put them to death."

"And all men's dreams," said Coro Mena, cross-legged in shadow, "will be changed. They will never be the same again. I shall never walk again

that path I came with you yesterday, the way up from the willow grove that I've walked on all my life. It is changed. You have walked on it and it is utterly changed. Before this day the thing we had to do was the right thing to do; the way we had to go was the right way and led us home. Where is our home now? For you've done what you had to do, and it was not right. You have killed men. I saw them, five years ago, in the Lemgan Valley, where they came in a flying ship; I hid and watched the giants, six of them, and saw them speak, and look at rocks and plants, and cook food. They are men. But you have lived among them, tell me, Selver: do they dream?"

"As children do, in sleep."

"They have no training?"

"No. Sometimes they talk of their dreams, the healers try to use them in healing, but none of them are trained, or have any skill in dreaming. Lyubov, who taught me, understood me when I showed him how to dream, and yet even so he called the world-time 'real' and the dream-time 'unreal,' as if that were the difference between them."

"You have done what you had to do," Coro Mena repeated after a silence. His eyes met Selver's, across shadows. The desperate tension lessened in Selver's face; his scarred mouth relaxed, and he lay back without saying more. In a little while he was asleep.

"He's a god," Coro Mena said.

Torber nodded, accepting the old man's judgment almost with relief.

"But not like the others. Not like the Pursuer, nor the Friend who has no face, nor the Aspen-leaf Woman who walks in the forest of dreams. He is not the Gatekeeper, nor the Snake. Nor the Lyre-player nor the Carver nor the Hunter, though he comes in the world-time like them. We may have dreamed of Selver these last few years, but we shall no longer; he has left the dream-time. In the forest, through the forest he comes, where leaves fall, where trees fall, a god that knows death, a god that kills and is not himself reborn."

The headwoman listened to Coro Mena's reports and prophecies, and acted. She put the town of Cadast on alert, making sure that each family was ready to move out, with some food packed, and litters ready for the old and ill. She sent young women scouting south and east for news of the yumens. She kept one armed hunting-group always around town, though the others went out as usual every night. And when Selver grew stronger she insisted that he come out of the Lodge and tell his story: how the yumens killed and enslaved people in Sornol, and cut down the forests; how the people of Kelme Deva had killed the yumens. She forced women and undreaming men who did not understand these things to listen again, un-

til they understood, and were frightened. For Ebor Dendep was a practical woman. When a Great Dreamer, her brother, told her that Selver was a god, a changer, a bridge between realities, she believed and acted. It was the Dreamer's responsibility to be careful, to be certain that his judgment was true. Her responsibility was then to take that judgment and act upon it. He saw what must be done; she saw that it was done.

"All the cities of the forest must hear," Coro Mena said. So the headwoman sent out her young runners, and headwomen in other towns listened, and sent out their runners. The killing at Kelme Deva and the name of Selver went over North Island and oversea to the other lands, from voice to voice, or in writing; not very fast, for the Forest People had no quicker messengers than footrunners; yet fast enough.

They were not all one people on the Forty Lands of the world. There were more languages than lands, and each with a different dialect for every town that spoke it; there were infinite ramifications of manners, morals, customs, crafts; physical types differed on each of the five Great Lands. The people of Sornol were tall, and pale, and great traders; the people of Rieshwel were short, and many had black fur, and they ate monkeys; and so on and on. But the climate varied little, and the forest little, and the sea not at all. Curiosity, regular trade-routes, and the necessity of finding a husband or wife of the proper Tree, kept up an easy movement of people among the towns and between the lands, and so there were certain likenesses among all but the remotest extremes, the half-rumored barbarian isles of the Far East and South. In all the Forty Lands, women ran the cities and towns, and almost every town had a Men's Lodge. Within the Lodges the Dreamers spoke an old tongue, and this varied little from land to land. It was rarely learned by women or by men who remained hunters, fishers, weavers, builders, those who dreamed only small dreams outside the Lodge. As most writing was in this Lodge-tongue, when headwomen sent fleet girls carrying messages, the letters went from Lodge to Lodge, and so were interpreted by the Dreamers to the Old Women, as were other documents, rumors, problems, myths, and dreams. But it was always the Old Women's choice whether to believe or not.

Selver was in a small room at Eshsen. The door was not locked, but he knew if he opened it something bad would come in. So long as he kept it shut everything would be all right. The trouble was that there were young trees, a sapling orchard, planted out in front of the house; not fruit or nut trees but some other kind, he could not remember what kind. He went out to see what kind of trees they were. They all lay broken and uprooted. He picked up the silvery branch of one and a little blood ran out of the broken

end. No, not here, not again, Thele, he said: O Thele, come to me before your death! But she did not come. Only her death was there, the broken birchtree, the opened door. Selver turned and went quickly back into the house, discovering that it was all built above ground like a yumen house, very tall and full of light. Outside the other door, across the tall room, was the long street of the yumen city Central. Selver had the gun in his belt. If Davidson came, he could shoot him. He waited, just inside the open door, looking out into the sunlight. Davidson came, huge, running so fast that Selver could not keep him in the sights of the gun as he doubled crazily back and forth across the wide street, very fast, always closer. The gun was heavy. Selver fired it but no fire came out of it, and in rage and terror he threw the gun and the dream away.

Disgusted and depressed, he spat, and sighed.

"A bad dream?" Ebor Dendep inquired.

"They're all bad, and all the same," he said, but the deep unease and misery lessened a little as he answered. Cool morning sunlight fell flecked and shafted through the fine leaves and branches of the birch grove of Cadast. There the headwoman sat weaving a basket of blackstem fern, for she liked to keep her fingers busy, while Selver lay beside her in half-dream and dream. He had been fifteen days at Cadast, and his wound was healing well. He still slept much, but for the first time in many months he had begun to dream waking again, regularly, not once or twice in a day and night but in the true pulse and rhythm of dreaming which should rise and fall ten to fourteen times in the diurnal cycle. Bad as his dreams were, all terror and shame, yet he welcomed them. He had feared that he was cut off from his roots, that he had gone too far into the dead land of action ever to find his way back to the springs of reality. Now, though the water was very bitter, he drank again.

Briefly he had Davidson down again among the ashes of the burned camp, and instead of singing over him this time he hit him in the mouth with a rock. Davidson's teeth broke, and blood ran between the white splinters.

The dream was useful, a straight wish-fulfilment, but he stopped it there, having dreamed it many times, before he met Davidson in the ashes of Kelme Deva, and since. There was nothing to that dream but relief. A sip of bland water. It was the bitter he needed. He must go clear back, not to Kelme Deva but to the long dreadful street in the alien city called Central, where he had attacked Death, and had been defeated.

Ebor Dendep hummed as she worked. Her thin hands, their silky green down silvered with age, worked black fern-stems in and out, fast and neat. She sang a song about gathering ferns, a girl's song: I'm picking ferns, I

wonder if he'll come back. . . . Her faint old voice trilled like a cricket's. Sun trembled in birch leaves. Selver put his head down on his arms.

The birch grove was more or less in the center of the town of Cadast. Eight paths led away from it, winding narrowly off among trees. There was a whiff of woodsmoke in the air; where the branches were thin at the south edge of the grove you could see smoke rise from a house-chimney, like a bit of blue yarn unravelling among the leaves. If you looked closely among the live-oaks and other trees you would find houseroofs sticking up a couple of feet above ground, between a hundred and two hundred of them, it was very hard to count. The timber houses were three-quarters sunk, fitted in among tree-roots like badgers' setts. The beam roofs were mounded over with a thatch of small branches, pinestraw, reeds, earth-mould. They were insulating, waterproof, almost invisible. The forest and the community of eight hundred people went about their business all around the birch grove where Ebor Dendep sat making a basket of fern. A bird among the branches over her head said, "Te-whet," sweetly. There was more people-noise than usual, for fifty or sixty strangers, young men and women mostly, had come drifting in these last few days, drawn by Selver's presence. Some were from other cities of the North, some were those who had done the killing at Kelme Deva with him; they had followed rumor here to follow him. Yet the voices calling here and there and the babble of women bathing or children playing down by the stream, were not so loud as the morning birdsong and insect-drone and under-noise of the living forest of which the town was one element.

A girl came quickly, a young huntress the color of the pale birch leaves. "Word of mouth from the southern coast, mother," she said. "The runner's at the Women's Lodge."

"Send her here when she's eaten," the headwoman said softly. "Sh, Tolbar, can't you see he's asleep?"

The girl stooped to pick a large leaf of wild tobacco, and laid it lightly over Selver's eyes, on which a shaft of the steepening, bright sunlight had fallen. He lay with his hands half open and his scarred, damaged face turned upward, vulnerable and foolish, a Great Dreamer gone to sleep like a child. But it was the girl's face that Ebor Dendep watched. It shone, in that uneasy shade, with pity and terror, with adoration.

Tolbar darted away. Presently two of the Old Women came with the messenger, moving silent in single file along the sun-flecked path. Ebor Dendep raised her hand, enjoining silence. The messenger promptly lay down flat, and rested; her brown-dappled green fur was dusty and sweaty, she had run far and fast. The Old Women sat down in patches of sun, and

became still. Like two old grey-green stones they sat there, with bright living eyes.

Selver, struggling with a sleep-dream beyond his control, cried out as if in great fear, and woke.

He went to drink from the stream; when he came back he was followed by six or seven of those who always followed him. The headwoman put down her half-finished work and said, "Now be welcome, runner, and speak."

The runner stood up, bowed her head to Ebor Dendep, and spoke her message: "I come from Trethat. My words come from Sorbron Deva, before that from sailors of the Strait, before that from Broter in Sornol. They are for the hearing of all Cadast but they are to be spoken to the man called Selver who was born of the Ash in Eshreth. Here are the words: There are new giants in the great city of the giants in Sornol, and may of these new ones are females. The yellow ship of fire goes up and down at the place that was called Peha. It is known in Sornol that Selver of Eshreth burned the city of the giants at Kelme Deva. The Great Dreamers of the Exiles in Broter have dreamed giants more numerous than the trees of the Forty Lands. These are all the words of the message I bear."

After the singsong recitation they were all silent. The bird, a little farther off, said, "Whet-whet?" experimentally.

"This is a very bad world-time," said one of the Old Women, rubbing a rheumatic knee.

A grey bird flew from a huge oak that marked the north edge of town, and went up in circles, riding the morning updraft on lazy wings. There was always a roosting-tree of these grey kites near a town; they were the garbage service.

A small, fat boy ran through the birch grove, pursued by a slightly larger sister, both shrieking in tiny voices like bats. The boy fell down and cried, the girl stood him up and scrubbed his tears off with a large leaf. They scuttled off into the forest hand in hand.

"There was one called Lyubov," Selver said to the headwoman. "I have spoken of him to Coro Mena, but not to you. When that one was killing me, it was Lyubov who saved me. It was Lyubov who healed me, and set me free. He wanted to know about us; so I would tell him what he asked, and he too would tell me what I asked. Once I asked how his race could survive, having so few women. He said that in the place where they come from, half the race is women; but the men would not bring women to the Forty Lands until they had made a place ready for them."

"Until the men made a fit place for the women? Well! they may have quite a wait," said Ebor Dendep. "They're like the people in the Elm

Dream who come at you rump-first, with their heads put on front to back. They make the forest into a dry beach"—her language had no word for 'desert'—"and call that making things ready for the women? They should have sent the women first. Maybe with them the women do the Great Dreaming, who knows? They are backwards, Selver. They are insane."

"A people can't be insane."

"But they only dream in sleep, you said; if they want to dream waking they take poisons so that the dreams go out of control, you said! How can people be any madder? They don't know the dream-time from the world-time, any more than a baby does. Maybe when they kill a tree they think it will come alive again!"

Selver shook his head. He still spoke to the headwoman as if he and she were alone in the birch grove, in a quiet hesitant voice, almost drowsily. "No, they understand death very well. . . . Certainly they don't see as we do, but they know more and understand more about certain things than we do. Lyubov mostly understood what I told him. Much of what he told me, I couldn't understand. It wasn't the language that kept me from understanding; I know his tongue, and he learned ours; we made a writing of the two languages together. Yet there were things he said I could never understand. He said the yumens are from outside the forest. That's quite clear. He said they want the forest: the trees for wood, the land to plant grass on." Selver's voice, though still soft, had taken on resonance; the people among the silver trees listened. "That too is clear, to those of us who've seen them cutting down the world. He said the yumens are men like us, that we're indeed related, as close kin maybe as the Red Deer to the Grey-buck. He said that they come from another place which is not the forest; the trees there are all cut down; it has a sun, not our sun, which is a star. All this, as you see, wasn't clear to me. I say his words but don't know what they mean. It does not matter much. It is clear that they want our forest for themselves. They are twice our stature, they have weapons that outshoot ours by far, and fire-throwers, and flying ships. Now they have brought more women, and will have children. There are maybe two thousand, maybe three thousand of them here now, mostly in Sornol. But if we wait a lifetime or two they will breed; their numbers will double and redouble. They kill men and women; they do not spare those who ask life. They cannot sing in contest. They have left their roots behind them, perhaps, in this other forest from which they came, this forest with no trees. So they take poison to let loose the dreams in them, but it only makes them drunk or sick. No one can say certainly whether they're men or not men, whether they're sane or insane, but that does not matter. They must be made to leave the forest, because they are dangerous. If they will not go

they must be burned out of the Lands, as nests of stinging-ants must be burned out of the groves of cities. If we wait, it is we that will be smoked out and burned. They can step on us as we step on stinging-ants. Once I saw a woman, it was when they burned my city Eshreth, she lay down in the path before a yumen to ask him for life, and he stepped on her back and broke the spine, and then kicked her aside as if she was a dead snake. I saw that. If the yumens are men they are men unfit or untaught to dream and to act as men. Therefore they go about in torment killing and destroying, driven by the gods within, whom they will not set free but try to uproot and deny. If they are men they are evil men, having denied their own gods, afraid to see their own faces in the dark. Headwoman of Cadast, hear me." Selver stood up, tall and abrupt among the seated women. "It's time, I think, that I go back to my own land, to Sornol, to those that are in exile and those that are enslaved. Tell any people who dream of a city burning to come after me to Broter." He bowed to Ebor Dendep and left the birch grove, still walking lame, his arm bandaged; yet there was a quickness to his walk, a poise to his head, that made him seem more whole than other men. The young people followed quietly after him.

"Who is he?" asked the runner from Trethat, her eyes following him.

"The man to whom your message came, Selver of Eshreth, a god among us. Have you ever seen a god before, daughter?"

"When I was ten the Lyre-Player came to our town."

"Old Ertel, yes. He was of my Tree, and from the North Vales like me. Well, now you've seen a second god, and a greater. Tell your people in Trethat of him."

"Which god is he, mother?"

"A new one," Ebor Dendep said in her dry old voice. "The son of forest-fire, the brother of the murdered. He is the one who is not reborn. Now go on, all of you, go on to the Lodge. See who'll be going with Selver, see about food for them to carry. Let me be a while. I'm as full of forebodings as a stupid old man, I must dream. . . ."

Coro Mena went with Selver that night as far as the place where they first met, under the copper willows by the stream. Many people were following Selver south, some sixty in all, as great a troop as most people had ever seen on the move at once. They would cause great stir and thus gather many more to them, on their way to the sea-crossing to Sornol. Selver had claimed his Dreamer's privilege of solitude for this one night. He was setting off alone. His followers would catch him up in the morning; and thenceforth, implicated in crowd and act, he would have little time for the slow and deep running of the great dreams.

"Here we met," the old man said, stopping among the bowing branches, the veils of dropping leaves, "and here part. This will be called Selver's Grove, no doubt, by the people who walk our paths hereafter."

Selver said nothing for a while, standing still as a tree, the restless leaves about him darkening from silver as clouds thickened over the stars. "You are surer of me than I am," he said at last, a voice in darkness.

"Yes, I'm sure, Selver. . . . I was well taught in dreaming, and then I'm old. I dream very little for myself any more. Why should I? Little is new to me. And what I wanted from my life, I have had, and more. I have had my whole life. Days like the leaves of the forest. I'm an old hollow tree, only the roots live. And so I dream only what all men dream. I have no visions and no wishes. I see what is. I see the fruit ripening on the branch. Four years it has been ripening, that fruit of the deep-planted tree. We have all been afraid for four years, even we who live far from the yumens' cities, and have only glimpsed them from hiding, or seen their ships fly over, or looked at the dead places where they cut down the world, or heard mere tales of these things. We are all afraid. Children wake from sleep crying of giants; women will not go far on their trading-journeys; men in the Lodges cannot sing. The fruit of fear is ripening. And I see you gather it. You are the harvester. All that we fear to know, you have seen, you have known: exile, shame, pain, the roof and walls of the world fallen, the mother dead in misery, the children untaught, uncherished. . . . This is a new time for the world: a bad time. And you have suffered it all. You have gone farthest. And at the farthest, at the end of the black path, there grows the Tree; there the fruit ripens; now you reach up, Selver, now you gather it. And the world changes wholly, when a man holds in his hand the fruit of that tree, whose roots are deeper than the forest. Men will know it. They will know you, as we did. It doesn't take an old man or a Great Dreamer to recognise a god! Where you go, fire burns; only the blind cannot see it. But listen, Selver, this is what I see that perhaps others do not, this is why I have loved you: I dreamed of you before we met here. You were walking on a path, and behind you the young trees grew up, oak and birch, willow and holly, fir and pine, alder, elm, white-flowering ash, all the roof and walls of the world, forever renewed. Now farewell, dear god and son, go safely."

The night darkened as Selver went, until even his night-seeing eyes saw nothing but masses and planes of black. It began to rain. He had gone only a few miles from Cadast when he must either light a torch, or halt. He chose to halt, and groping found a place among the roots of a great chestnut tree. There he sat, his back against the broad, twisting bole that seemed to hold a little sun-warmth in it still. The fine rain, falling unseen in dark-

ness, pattered on the leaves overhead, on his arms and neck and head protected by their thick silk-fine hair, on the earth and ferns and undergrowth nearby, on all the leaves of the forest, near and far. Selver sat as quiet as the grey owl on a branch above him, unsleeping, his eyes wide open in the rainy dark.

3.

Captain Raj Lyubov had a headache. It began softly in the muscles of his right shoulder, and mounted crescendo to a smashing drumbeat over his right ear. The speech centers are in the left cerebral cortex, he thought, but he couldn't have said it; couldn't speak, or read, or sleep, or think. Cortex, vortex. Migraine headache, margarine breadache, ow, ow, ow. Of course he had been cured of migraine once at college and again during his obligatory Army Prophylactic Psychotherapy Sessions, but he had brought along some ergotamine pills when he left Earth, just in case. He had taken two, and a superhyperduper-analgesic, and a tranquillizer, and a digestive pill to counteract the caffeine which counteracted the ergotamine, but the awl still bored out from within, just over his right ear, to the beat of the big bass drum. Awl, drill, ill, pill, oh God. Lord deliver us. Liver sausage. What would the Athsheans do for a migraine? They wouldn't have one, they would have daydreamed the tensions away a week before they got them. Try it, try daydreaming. Begin as Selver taught you. Although knowing nothing of electricity he could not really grasp the principle of the EEG, as soon as he heard about alpha waves and when they appear he had said, "Oh yes, you mean this," and there appeared the unmistakable alpha-squiggles on the graph recording what went on inside his small green head; and he had taught Lyubov how to turn on and off the alpha-rhythms in one half-hour lesson. There really was nothing to it. But not now, the world is too much with us, ow, ow, ow above the right ear I always hear Time's winged chariot hurrying near, for the Athsheans had burned Smith Camp day before yesterday and killed two hundred men. Two hundred and seven to be precise. Every man alive except the Captain. No wonder pills couldn't get at the center of his migraine, for it was on an island two hundred miles away two days ago. Over the hills and far away. Ashes, ashes, all fall down. And amongst the ashes, all his knowledge of the High Intelligence Life Forms of World 41. Dust, rubbish, a mess of false data and fake hypotheses. Nearly five E-years here, and he had believed the Athsheans to be incapable of killing men, his kind or their kind. He had

written long papers to explain how and why they couldn't kill men. All wrong. Dead wrong.

What had he failed to see?

It was nearly time to be going over to the meeting at HQ. Cautiously Lyubov stood up, moving all in one piece so that the right side of his head would not fall off; he approached his desk with the gait of a man underwater, poured out a shot of General Issue vodka, and drank it. It turned him inside out: it extraverted him: it normalized him. He felt better. He went out, and unable to stand the jouncing of his motorbike, started to walk down the long, dusty main street of Centralville to HQ. Passing the Luau he thought with greed of another vodka; but Captain Davidson was just going in the door, and Lyubov went on.

The people from the *Shackleton* were already in the conference room. Commander Yung, whom he had met before, had brought some new faces down from orbit this time. They were not in Navy uniform; after a moment Lyubov recognised them, with a slight shock, as non-Terran humans. He sought an introduction at once. One, Mr Or, was a Hairy Cetian, dark grey, stocky, and dour; the other, Mr Lepennon, was tall, white, and comely: a Hainishman. They greeted Lyubov with interest, and Lepennon said, "I've just been reading your report on the conscious control of paradoxical sleep among the Athsheans, Dr Lyubov," which was pleasant, and it was pleasant also to be called by his own, earned title of doctor. Their conversation indicated that they had spent some years on Earth, and that they might be hilfers, or something like it; but the Commander, introducing them, had not mentioned their status or position.

The room was filling up. Gosse, the colony ecologist, came in; so did all the high brass; so did Captain Susun, head of Planet Development—logging operations—whose captaincy like Lyubov's was an invention necessary to the peace of the military mind. Captain Davidson came in alone, straight-backed and handsome, his lean, rugged face calm and rather stern. Guards stood at all the doors. The Army necks were all stiff as crowbars. The conference was plainly an Investigation. *Whose fault?* My fault, Lyubov thought despairingly; but out of his despair he looked across the table at Captain Don Davidson with detestation and contempt.

Commander Yung had a very quiet voice. "As you know, gentlemen, my ship stopped here at World 41 to drop you off a new load of colonists, and nothing more; *Shackleton*'s mission is to World 88, Prestno, one of the Hainish Group. However, this attack on your outpost camp, since it chanced to occur during our week here, can't be simply ignored; particularly in the light of certain developments which you would have been informed of a little later, in the normal course of events. The fact is that

the status of World 41 as an Earth Colony is now subject to revision, and the massacre at your camp may precipitate the Administration's decisions on it. Certainly the decisions *we* can make must be made quickly, for I can't keep my ship here long. Now first, we wish to make sure that the relevant facts are all in the possession of those present. Captain Davidson's report on the events at Smith Camp was taped and heard by all of us on ship; by all of you here also? Good. Now if there are questions any of you wish to ask Captain Davidson, go ahead. I have one myself. You returned to the site of the camp the following day, Captain Davidson, in a large hopper with eight soldiers; had you the permission of a senior officer here at Central for that flight?"

Davidson stood up. "I did, sir."

"Were you authorised to land and to set fires in the forest near the camp-site?"

"No, sir."

"You did, however, set fires?"

"I did, sir. I was trying to smoke out the creechies that killed my men."

"Very well. Mr Lepennon?"

The tall Hainishman cleared his throat. "Captain Davidson," he said, "do you think that the people under your command at Smith Camp were mostly content?"

"Yes, I do."

Davidson's manner was firm and forthright; he seemed indifferent to the fact that he was in trouble. Of course these Navy officers and foreigners had no authority over him; it was to his own Colonel that he must answer for losing two hundred men and making unauthorized reprisals. But his Colonel was right there, listening.

"They were well fed, well housed, not overworked, then, as well as can be managed in a frontier camp?"

"Yes."

"Was the discipline maintained very harsh?"

"No, it was not."

"What, then, do you think motivated the revolt?"

"I don't understand."

"If none of them were discontented, why did some of them massacre the rest and destroy the camp?"

There was a worried silence.

"May I put in a word," Lyubov said. "It was the native hilfs, the Athsheans employed in the camp, who joined with an attack by the forest people against the Terran humans. In his report Captain Davidson referred to the Athsheans as 'creechies.'"

Lepennon looked embarrassed and anxious. "Thank you, Dr Lyubov. I misunderstood entirely. Actually I took the word 'creechie' to stand for a Terran caste that did rather menial work in the logging camps. Believing, as we all did, that the Athsheans were intraspecies non-aggressive, I never thought they might be the group meant. In fact I didn't realise that they cooperated with you in your camps.—However, I am more at a loss than ever to understand what provoked the attack and mutiny."

"I don't know, sir."

"When he said the people under his command were content, did the Captain include native people?" said the Cetian, Or, in a dry mumble. The Hainishman picked it up at once, and asked Davidson, in his concerned, courteous voice, "Were the Athsheans living at the camp content, do you think?"

"So far as I know."

"There was nothing unusual in their position there, or the work they had to do?"

Lyubov felt the heightening of tension, one turn of the screw, in Colonel Dongh and his staff, and also in the starship commander. Davidson remained calm and easy. "Nothing unusual."

Lyubov knew now that only his scientific studies had been sent up to the *Shackleton;* his protests, even his annual assessments of 'Native Adjustment to Colonial Presence' required by the Administration, had been kept in some desk drawer deep in HQ. These two N.-T.H.'s knew nothing about the exploitation of the Athsheans. Commander Yung did, of course; he had been down before today and had probably seen the creechie-pens. In any case a Navy commander on Colony runs wouldn't have much to learn about Terran-hilf relations. Whether or not he approved of how the Colonial Administration ran its business, not much would come as a shock to him. But a Cetian and a Hainishman, how much would they know about Terran colonies, unless chance brought them to one on the way to somewhere else? Lepennon and Or had not intended to come on-planet here at all. Or possibly they had not been intended to come on-planet, but, hearing of trouble, had insisted. Why had the commander brought them down: his will, or theirs? Whoever they were they had about them a hint of authority, a whiff of the dry, intoxicating odor of power. Lyubov's headache had gone, he felt alert and excited, his face was rather hot. "Captain Davidson," he said, "I have a couple of questions, concerning your confrontation with the four natives, day before yesterday. You're certain that one of them was Sam, or Selver Thele?"

"I believe so."

"You're aware that he has a personal grudge against you."

"I don't know."

"You don't? Since his wife died in your quarters immediately subsequent to sexual intercourse with you, he holds you responsible for her death; you didn't know that? He attacked you once before, here in Centralville; you had forgotten that? Well, the point is, that Selver's personal hatred for Captain Davidson may serve as a partial explanation or motivation for this unprecedented assault. The Athsheans aren't incapable of personal violence, that's never been asserted in any of my studies of them. Adolescents who haven't mastered controlled dreaming or competitive singing do a lot of wrestling and fist-fighting, not all of it good-tempered. But Selver is an adult and an adept; and his first, personal attack on Captain Davidson, which I happened to witness part of, was pretty certainly an attempt to kill. As was the Captain's retaliation, incidentally. At the time, I thought that attack an isolated psychotic incident, resulting from grief and stress, not likely to be repeated. I was wrong.—Captain, when the four Athsheans jumped you from ambush, as you describe in your report, did you end up prone on the ground?"

"Yes."

"In what position?"

Davidson's calm face tensed and stiffened, and Lyubov felt a pang of compunction. He wanted to corner Davidson in his lies, to force him into speaking truth once, but not to humiliate him before others. Accusations of rape and murder supported Davidson's image of himself as the totally virile man, but now that image was endangered: Lyubov had called up a picture of him, the soldier, the fighter, the cool tough man, being knocked down by enemies the size of six-year-olds. . . . What did it cost Davidson, then, to recall that moment when he had lain looking up at the little green men, for once, not down at them?

"I was on my back."

"Was your head thrown back, or turned aside?"

"I don't know."

"I'm trying to establish a fact here, Captain, one that might help explain why Selver didn't kill you, although he had a grudge against you and had helped kill two hundred men a few hours earlier. I wondered if you might by chance have been in one of the positions which, when assumed by an Athshean, prevent his opponent from further physical aggression."

"I don't know."

Lyubov glanced round the conference table; all the faces showed curiosity and some tension. "These aggression-halting gestures and positions may have some innate basis, may rise from a surviving trigger-response, but they are socially developed and expanded, and of course learned. The

strongest and completest of them is a prone position, on the back, eyes shut, head turned so the throat is fully exposed. I think an Athshean of the local cultures might find it impossible to hurt an enemy who took that position. He would have to do something else to release his anger or aggressive drive.—When they had all got you down, Captain, did Selver by any chance sing?"

"Did he what?"

"Sing."

"I don't know."

Block. No go. Lyubov was about to shrug and give it up when the Cetian said, "Why, Mr Lyubov?" The most winning characteristic of the rather harsh Cetian temperament was curiosity, inopportune and inexhaustible curiosity; Cetians died eagerly, curious as to what came next.

"You see," Lyubov said, "the Athsheans use a kind of ritualised singing to replace physical combat. Again it's a universal social phenomenon that might have a physiological foundation, though it's very hard to establish anything as 'innate' in human beings. However the higher primates here all go in for vocal competing between two males, a lot of howling and whistling; the dominant male may finally give the other a cuff, but usually they just spend an hour or so trying to outbellow each other. The Athsheans themselves see the similarity to their singing-matches, which are also only between males; but as they observe, theirs are not only aggression-releases, but an art-form. The better artist wins. I wondered if Selver sang over Captain Davidson, and if so, whether he did because he could not kill, or because he preferred the bloodless victory. These questions have suddenly become rather urgent."

"Dr Lyubov," said Lepennon, "how effective are these aggression-channelling devices? Are they universal?"

"Among adults, yes. So my informants state, and all my observation supported them, until day before yesterday. Rape, violent assault, and murder virtually don't exist among them. There are accidents, of course. And there are psychotics. Not many of the latter."

"What do they do with dangerous psychotics?"

"Isolate them. Literally. On small islands."

"The Athsheans are carnivorous, they hunt animals?"

"Yes, meat is a staple."

"Wonderful," Lepennon said, and his white skin paled further with pure excitement. "A human society with an effective war-barrier! What's the cost, Dr Lyubov?"

"I'm not sure, Mr Lepennon. Perhaps change. They're a static, stable, uniform society. They have no history. Perfectly integrated, and wholly

unprogressive. You might say that like the forest they live in, they've attained a climax state. But I don't mean to imply that they're incapable of adaptation."

"Gentlemen, this is very interesting but in a somewhat specialist frame of reference, and it may be somewhat out of the context which we're attempting to clarify here—"

"No, excuse me, Colonel Dongh, this may be the point. Yes, Dr Lyubov?"

"Well, I wonder if they're not proving their adaptability, now. By adapting their behavior to us. To the Earth Colony. For four years they've behaved to us as they do to one another. Despite the physical differences, they recognised us as members of their species, as men. However, we have not responded as members of their species should respond. We have ignored the responses, the rights and obligations of non-violence. We have killed, raped, dispersed, and enslaved the native humans, destroyed their communities, and cut down their forests. It wouldn't be surprising if they'd decided that we are not human."

"And therefore can be killed, like animals, yes yes," said the Cetian, enjoying logic; but Lepennon's face now was stiff as white stone. "Enslaved?" he said.

"Captain Lyubov is expressing his personal opinions and theories," said Colonel Dongh, "which I should state I consider possibly to be erroneous, and he and I have discussed this type of thing previously, although the present context is unsuitable. We do not employ slaves, sir. Some of the natives serve a useful role in our community. The Voluntary Autochthonous Labor Corps is a part of all but the temporary camps here. We have very limited personnel to accomplish our tasks here and we need workers and use all we can get, but on any kind of basis that could be called a slavery basis, certainly not."

Lepennon was about to speak, but deferred to the Cetian, who said only, "How many of each race?"

Gosse replied: "2641 Terrans, now. Lyubov and I estimate the native hilf population very roughly at 3 million."

"You should have considered these statistics, gentlemen, before you altered the native traditions!" said Or, with a disagreeable but perfectly genuine laugh.

"We are adequately armed and equipped to resist any type of aggression these natives could offer," said the Colonel. "However there was a general consensus by both the first Exploratory Missions and our own research staff of specialists here headed by Captain Lyubov, giving us to understand

that the New Tahitians are a primitive, harmless, peace-loving species. Now this information was obviously erroneous—"

Or interrupted the Colonel. "Obviously! You consider the human species to be primitive, harmless, and peace-loving, Colonel? No. But you knew that the hilfs of this planet are human? As human as you or I or Lepennon —since we all came from the same, original, Hainish stock?"

"That is the scientific theory, I am aware—"

"Colonel, it is the historic fact."

"I am not forced to accept it as a fact," the old Colonel said, getting hot, "and I don't like opinions stuffed into my own mouth. The fact is that these creechies are a meter tall, they're covered with green fur, they don't sleep, and they're not human beings in my frame of reference!"

"Captain Davidson," said the Cetian, "do you consider the native hilfs human, or not?"

"I don't know."

"But you had sexual intercourse with one—this Selver's wife. Would you have sexual intercourse with a female animal? What about the rest of you?" He looked about at the purple colonel, the glowering majors, the livid captains, the cringing specialists. Contempt came into his face. "You have not thought things through," he said. By his standards it was a brutal insult.

The Commander of the *Shackleton* at last salvaged words from the gulf of embarrassed silence. "Well, gentlemen, the tragedy at Smith Camp clearly is involved with the entire colony-native relationship, and is not by any means an insignificant or isolated episode. That's what we had to establish. And this being the case, we can make a certain contribution towards easing your problems here. The main purpose of our journey was not to drop off a couple of hundred girls here, though I know you've been waiting for 'em, but to get to Prestno, which has been having some difficulties, and give the government there an ansible. That is, an ICD transmitter."

"What?" said Sereng, an engineer. Stares became fixed, all round the table.

"The one we have aboard is an early model, and it cost a planetary annual revenue, roughly. That, of course, was 27 years ago planetary time, when we left Earth. Nowadays they're making them relatively cheaply; they're SI on Navy ships; and in the normal course of things a robo or manned ship would be coming out here to give your colony one. As a matter of fact it's a manned Administration ship, and is on the way, due here in 9.4 E-years if I recall the figure."

"How do you know that?" somebody said, setting it up for Commander

Yung, who replied smiling, "By the ansible: the one we have aboard. Mr Or, your people invented the device, perhaps you'd explain it to those here who are unfamiliar with the terms?"

The Cetian did not unbend. "I shall not attempt to explain the principles of ansible operation to those present," he said. "Its effect can be stated simply: the instantaneous transmission of a message over any distance. One element must be on a large-mass body, the other can be anywhere in the cosmos. Since arrival in orbit the *Shackleton* has been in daily communication with Terra, now 27 lightyears distant. The message does not take 54 years for delivery and response, as it does on an electromagnetic device. It takes no time. There is no more time-gap between worlds."

"As soon as we came out of NAFAL time-dilatation into planetary space-time, here, we rang up home, as you might say," the soft-voiced Commander went on. "And were told what had happened during the 27 years we were travelling. The time-gap for bodies remains, but the information lag does not. As you can see, this is as important to us as an interstellar species, as speech itself was to us earlier in our evolution. It'll have the same effect: to make a society possible."

"Mr Or and I left Earth, 27 years ago, as Legates for our respective governments, Tau II and Hain," said Lepennon. His voice was still gentle and civil, but the warmth had gone out of it. "When we left, people were talking about the possibility of forming some kind of league among the civilised worlds, now that communication was possible. The League of Worlds now exists. It has existed for 18 years. Mr Or and I are now Emissaries of the Council of the League, and so have certain powers and responsibilities we did not have when we left Earth."

The three of them from the ship kept saying these things: an instantaneous communicator exists, an interstellar supergovernment exists. . . . Believe it or not. They were in league, and lying. This thought went through Lyubov's mind; he considered it, decided it was a reasonable but unwarranted suspicion, a defense-mechanism, and discarded it. Some of the military staff, however, trained to compartmentalize their thinking, specialists in self-defense, would accept it as unhesitatingly as he discarded it. They must believe that anyone claiming a sudden new authority was a liar or conspirator. They were no more constrained than Lyubov, who had been trained to keep his mind open whether he wanted to or not.

"Are we to take all—all this simply on your word, sir?" said Colonel Dongh, with dignity and some pathos; for he, too muddleheaded to compartmentalize neatly, knew that he shouldn't believe Lepennon and Or and Yung, but did believe them, and was frightened.

"No," said the Cetian. "That's done with. A colony like this had to be-

lieve what passing ships and outdated radio-messages told them. Now you don't. You can verify. We are going to give you the ansible destined for Prestno. We have League authority to do so. Received, of course, by ansible. Your colony here is in a bad way. Worse than I thought from your reports. Your reports are very incomplete; censorship or stupidity have been at work. Now, however, you'll have the ansible, and can talk with your Terran Administration; you can ask for orders, so you'll know how to proceed. Given the profound changes that have been occurring in the organisation of the Terran Government since we left there, I should recommend that you do so at once. There is no longer any excuse for acting on outdated orders; for ignorance; for irresponsible autonomy."

Sour a Cetian and, like milk, he stayed sour. Mr Or was being overbearing, and Commander Yung should shut him up. But could he? How did an "Emissary of the Council of the League of Worlds" rank? Who's in charge here, thought Lyubov, and he too felt a qualm of fear. His headache had returned as a sense of constriction, a sort of tight headband over the temples.

He looked across the table at Lepennon's white, long-fingered hands, lying left over right, quiet, on the bare polished wood of the table. The white skin was a defect to Lyubov's Earth-formed aesthetic taste, but the serenity and strength of those hands pleased him very much. To the Hainish, he thought, civilisation came naturally. They had been at it so long. They lived the social-intellectual life with the grace of a cat hunting in a garden, the certainty of a swallow following summer over the sea. They were experts. They never had to pose, to fake. They were what they were. Nobody seemed to fit the human skin so well. Except, perhaps, the little green men? the deviant, dwarfed, over-adapted, stagnated creechies, who were as absolutely, as honestly, as serenely what they were. . . .

An officer, Benton, was asking Lepennon if he and Or were on this planet as observers for the (he hesitated) League of Worlds, or if they claimed any authority to . . . Lepennon took him up politely: "We are observers here, not empowered to command, only to report. You are still answerable only to your own government on Earth."

Colonel Dongh said with relief, "Then nothing has essentially changed—"

"You forget the ansible," Or interrupted. "I'll instruct you in its operation, Colonel, as soon as this discussion is over. You can then consult with your Colonial Administration."

"Since your problem here is rather urgent, and since Earth is now a League member and may have changed the Colonial Code somewhat during recent years, Mr Or's advice is both proper and timely. We should be

very grateful to Mr Or and Mr Lepennon for their decision to give this Terran colony the ansible destined for Prestno. It was their decision; I can only applaud it. Now, one more decision remains to be made, and this one I have to make, using your judgment as my guide. If you feel the colony is in imminent peril of further and more massive attacks from the natives, I can keep my ship here for a week or two as a defense arsenal; I can also evacuate the women. No children yet, right?"

"No, sir," said Gosse. "482 women, now."

"Well, I have space for 380 passengers; we might crowd a hundred more in; the extra mass would add a year or so to the trip home, but it could be done. Unfortunately that's all I can do. We must proceed to Prestno; your nearest neighbor, as you know, 1.8 lightyears distant. We'll stop here on the way home to Terra, but that's going to be three and a half more E-years at least. Can you stick it out?"

"Yes," said the Colonel, and others echoed him. "We've had warning now and we won't be caught napping again."

"Equally," said the Cetian, "can the native inhabitants stick it out for three and a half Earth-years more?"

"Yes," said the Colonel. "No," said Lyubov. He had been watching Davidson's face, and a kind of panic had taken hold of him.

"Colonel?" said Lepennon, politely.

"We've been here four years now and the natives are flourishing. There's room enough and to spare for all of us, as you can see the planet's heavily underpopulated and the Administration wouldn't have cleared it for colonisation purposes if that hadn't been as it is. As for if this entered anyone's head, they won't catch us off guard again, we were erroneously briefed concerning the nature of these natives, but we're fully armed and able to defend ourselves, but we aren't planning any reprisals. That is expressly forbidden in the Colonial Code, though I don't know what new rules this new government may have added on, but we'll just stick to our own as we have been doing and they definitely negative mass reprisals or genocide. We won't be sending any messages for help out, after all a colony 27 lightyears from home has come out expecting to be on its own and to in fact be completely self-sufficient, and I don't see that the ICD really changes that, due to ship and men and material still have to travel at near lightspeed. We'll just keep on shipping the lumber home, and look out for ourselves. The women are in no danger."

"Mr Lyubov?" said Lepennon.

"We've been here four years. I don't know if the native human culture will survive four more. As for the total land ecology, I think Gosse will back me if I say that we've irrecoverably wrecked the native life-systems

on one large island, have done great damage on this subcontinent Somol, and if we go on logging at the present rate, may reduce the major habitable lands to desert within ten years. This isn't the fault of the colony's HQ or Forestry Bureau; they've simply been following a Development Plan drawn up on Earth without sufficient knowledge of the planet to be exploited, its life-systems, or its native human inhabitants."

"Mr Gosse?" said the polite voice.

"Well, Raj, you're stretching things a bit. There's no denying that Dump Island, which was overlogged in direct contravention to my recommendations, is a dead loss. If more than a certain percentage of the forest is cut over a certain area, then the fibreweed doesn't reseed, you see, gentlemen, and the fibreweed root-system is the main soil-binder on clear land; without it the soil goes dusty and drifts off very fast under wind-erosion and the heavy rainfall. But I can't agree that our basic directives are at fault, so long as they're scrupulously followed. They were based on careful study of the planet. We've succeeded, here on Central, by following the Plan: erosion is minimal, and the cleared soil is highly arable. To log off a forest doesn't, after all, mean to make a desert—except perhaps from the point of view of a squirrel. We can't forecast precisely how the native forest life-systems will adapt to the new woodland-prairie-plowland ambiance foreseen in the Development Plan, but we know the chances are good for a large percentage of adaptation and survival."

"That's what the Bureau of Land Management said about Alaska during the First Famine," said Lyubov. His throat had tightened so that his voice came out high and husky. He had counted on Gosse for support. "How many Sitka spruce have you seen in your lifetime, Gosse? Or snowy owl? or wolf? or Eskimo? The survival percentage of native Alaskan species in habitat, after 15 years of the Development Program, was .3%. It's now zero.—A forest ecology is a delicate one. If the forest perishes, its fauna may go with it. The Athshean word for *world* is also the word for *forest.* I submit, Commander Yung, that though the colony may not be in imminent danger, the planet is—"

"Captain Lyubov," said the old Colonel, "such submissions are not properly submitted by staff specialist officers to officers of other branches of the service but should rest on the judgment of the senior officers of the Colony, and I cannot tolerate any further such attempts as this to give advice without previous clearance."

Caught off guard by his own outburst, Lyubov apologised and tried to look calm. If only he didn't lose his temper, if his voice didn't go weak and husky, if he had poise. . . .

The Colonel went on. "It appears to us that you made some serious erro-

neous judgments concerning the peacefulness and non-aggressiveness of the natives here, and because we counted on this specialist description of them as non-aggressive is why we left ourselves open to this terrible tragedy at Smith Camp, Captain Lyubov. So I think we have to wait until some other specialists in hilfs have had time to study them, because evidently your theories were basically erroneous to some extent."

Lyubov sat and took it. Let the men from the ship see them all passing the blame around like a hot brick: all the better. The more dissension they showed, the likelier were these Emissaries to have them checked and watched over. And he was to blame; he had been wrong. To hell with my self-respect so long as the forest people get a chance, Lyubov thought, and so strong a sense of his own humiliation and self-sacrifice came over him that tears rose to his eyes.

He was aware that Davidson was watching him.

He sat up stiff, the blood hot in his face, his temples drumming. He would not be sneered at by that bastard Davidson. Couldn't Or and Lepennon see what kind of man Davidson was, and how much power he had here, while Lyubov's powers, called "advisory," were simply derisory? If the colonists were left to go on with no check on them but a super-radio, the Smith Camp massacre would almost certainly become the excuse for systematic aggression against the natives. Bacteriological extermination, most likely. The *Shackleton* would come back in three and a half or four years to "New Tahiti," and find a thriving Terran colony, and no more Creechie Problem. None at all. Pity about the plague, we took all precautions required by the Code, but it must have been some kind of mutation, they had no natural resistance, but we did manage to save a group of them by transporting them to the New Falkland Isles in the southern hemisphere and they're doing fine there, all sixty-two of them. . . .

The conference did not last much longer. When it ended he stood up and leaned across the table to Lepennon. "You must tell the League to do something to save the forests, the forest people," he said almost inaudibly, his throat constricted, "you must, please, you must."

The Hainishman met his eyes; his gaze was reserved, kindly, and deep as a well. He said nothing.

4.

It was unbelievable. They'd all gone insane. This damned alien world had sent them all right round the bend, into byebye dreamland, along with the creechies. He still wouldn't believe what he'd seen at that 'con-

ference' and the briefing after it, if he saw it all over again on film. A Starfleet ship's commander bootlicking two humanoids. Engineers and techs cooing and ooing over a fancy radio presented to them by a Hairy Cetian with a lot of sneering and boasting, as if ICD's hadn't been predicted by Terran science years ago! The humanoids had stolen the idea, implemented it, and called it an 'ansible' so nobody would realise it was just an ICD. But the worst part of it had been the conference, with that psycho Lyubov raving and crying, and Colonel Dongh letting him do it, letting him insult Davidson and HQ staff and the whole Colony; and all the time the two aliens sitting and grinning, the little grey ape and the big white fairy, sneering at humans.

It had been pretty bad. It hadn't got any better since the *Shackleton* left. He didn't mind being sent down to New Java Camp under Major Muhamed. The Colonel had to discipline him; old Ding Dong might actually be very happy about that fire-raid he'd pulled in reprisal on Smith Island, but the raid had been a breach of discipline and he had to reprimand Davidson. All right, rules of the game. But what wasn't in the rules was this stuff coming over that overgrown TV set they called the ansible —their new little tin god at HQ.

Orders from the Bureau of Colonial Administration in Karachi: *Restrict Terran-Athshean contact to occasions arranged by Athsheans.* In other words you couldn't go into a creechie warren and round up a workforce any more. *Employment of volunteer labor is not advised; employment of forced labor is forbidden.* More of same. How the hell were they supposed to get the work done? Did Earth want this wood or didn't it? They were still sending the robot cargo ships to New Tahiti, weren't they, four a year, each carrying about 30 million new-dollars worth of prime lumber back to Mother Earth. Sure the Development people wanted those millions. They were businessmen. These messages weren't coming from them, any fool could see that.

The colonial status of World 41—why didn't they call it New Tahiti any more?—*is under consideration. Until decision is reached colonists should observe extreme caution in all dealings with native inhabitants. . . . The use of weapons of any kind except small side-arms carried in self-defense is absolutely forbidden*—just as on Earth, except that there a man couldn't even carry side-arms any more. But what the hell was the use coming 27 lightyears to a frontier world and then get told No guns, no firejelly, no bugbombs, no no, just sit like nice little boys and let the creechies come spit in your faces and sing songs at you and then stick a knife in your guts and burn down your camp, but don't you hurt the cute little green fellers, no sir!

A policy of avoidance is strongly advised; a policy of aggression or retaliation is strictly forbidden.

That was the gist of all the messages actually, and any fool could tell that that wasn't the Colonial Administration talking. They couldn't have changed that much in thirty years. They were practical, realistic men who knew what life was like on frontier planets. It was clear, to anybody who hadn't gone spla from geoshock, that the 'ansible' messages were phoneys. They might be planted right in the machine, a whole set of answers to high-probability questions, computer run. The engineers said they could have spotted that; maybe so. In that case the thing did communicate instantaneously with another world. But that world wasn't Earth. Not by a long long shot! There weren't any men typing the answers onto the other end of that little trick: they were aliens, humanoids. Probably Cetians, for the machine was Cetian-made, and they were a smart bunch of devils. They were the kind that might make a real bid for interstellar supremacy. The Hainish would be in the conspiracy with them, of course; all that bleeding-heart stuff in the so-called directives had a Hainish sound to it. What the long-term objective of the aliens was, was hard to guess from here; it probably involved weakening the Terran Government by tying it up in this 'league of worlds' business, until the aliens were strong enough to make an armed takeover. But their plan for New Tahiti was easy to see. They'd let the creechies wipe out the humans for them. Just tie the humans' hands with a lot of fake 'ansible' directives and let the slaughter begin. Humanoids help humanoids: rats help rats.

And Colonel Dongh had swallowed it. He intended to obey orders. He had actually said that to Davidson. "I intend to obey my orders from Terra-HQ, and by God, Don, you'll obey my orders the same way, and in New Java you'll obey Major Muhamed's orders there." He was stupid, old Ding Dong, but he liked Davidson, and Davidson liked him. If it meant betraying the human race to an alien conspiracy then he couldn't obey his orders, but he still felt sorry for the old soldier. A fool, but a loyal and brave one. Not a born traitor like that whining, tattling prig Lyubov. If there was one man he hoped the creechies did get, it was bigdome Raj Lyubov, the alien-lover.

Some men, especially the asiatiforms and hindi types, are actually born traitors. Not all, but some. Certain other men are born saviors. It just happened to be the way they were made, like being of euraf descent, or like having a good physique; it wasn't anything he claimed credit for. If he could save the men and women of New Tahiti, he would; if he couldn't, he'd make a damn good try; and that was all there was to it, actually.

The women, now, that rankled. They'd pulled out the 10 Collies who'd

been in New Java and none of the new ones were being sent out from Centralville. "Not safe yet," HQ bleated. Pretty rough on the three outpost camps. What did they expect the outposters to do when it was hands off the she-creechies, and all the she-humans were for the lucky bastards at Central? It was going to cause terrific resentment. But it couldn't last long, the whole situation was too crazy to be stable. If they didn't start easing back to normal now the *Shackleton* was gone, then Captain D. Davidson would just have to do a little extra work to get things headed back towards normalcy.

The morning of the day he left Central, they had let loose the whole creechie work-force. Made a big noble speech in pidgin, opened the compound gates, and let out every single tame creechie, carriers, diggers, cooks, dustmen, houseboys, maids, the lot. Not one had stayed. Some of them had been with their masters ever since the start of the colony, four E-years ago. But they had no loyalty. A dog, a chimp would have hung around. These things weren't even that highly developed, they were just about like snakes or rats, just smart enough to turn around and bite you as soon as you let 'em out of the cage. Ding Dong was spla, letting all those creechies loose right in the vicinity. Dumping them on Dump Island and letting them starve would have been actually the best final solution. But Dongh was still panicked by that pair of humanoids and their talky-box. So if the wild creechies on Central were planning to imitate the Smith Camp atrocity, they now had lots of real handy new recruits, who knew the layout of the whole town, the routines, where the arsenal was, where guards were posted, and the rest. If Centralville got burned down, HQ could thank themselves. It would be what they deserved, actually. For letting traitors dupe them, for listening to humanoids and ignoring the advice of men who really knew what the creechies were like.

None of those guys at HQ had come back to camp and found ashes and wreckage and burned bodies, like he had. And Ok's body, out where they'd slaughtered the logging crew, it had had an arrow sticking out of each eye like some sort of weird insect with antennae sticking out feeling the air, Christ, he kept seeing that.

One thing anyhow, whatever the phoney 'directives' said, the boys at Central wouldn't be stuck with trying to use 'small side-arms' for self-defense. They had fire throwers and machine guns; the 16 little hoppers had machine guns and were useful for dropping firejelly cans from; the five big hoppers had full armament. But they wouldn't need the big stuff. Just take up a hopper over one of the deforested areas and catch a mess of creechies there, with their damned bows and arrows, and start drop-

ping firejelly cans and watch them run around and burn. It would be all right. It made his belly churn a little to imagine it, just like when he thought about making a woman, or whenever he remembered about when that Sam creechie had attacked him and he had smashed in his whole face with four blows one right after the other. It was eidetic memory plus a more vivid imagination than most men had, no credit due, just happened to be the way he was made.

The fact is, the only time a man is really and entirely a man is when he's just had a woman or just killed another man. That wasn't original, he'd read it in some old books; but it was true. That was why he liked to imagine scenes like that. Even if the creechies weren't actually men.

New Java was the southernmost of the five big lands, just north of the equator, and so was hotter than Central or Smith which were just about perfect climate-wise. Hotter and a lot wetter. It rained all the time in the wet seasons anywhere on New Tahiti, but in the northern lands it was a kind of quiet fine rain that went on and on and never really got you wet or cold. Down here it came in buckets, and there was a monsoon-type storm that you couldn't even walk in, let alone work in. Only a solid roof kept that rain off you, or else the forest. The damn forest was so thick it kept out the storms. You'd get wet from all the dripping off the leaves, of course, but if you were really inside the forest during one of those monsoons you'd hardly notice the wind was blowing; then you came out in the open and wham! got knocked off your feet by the wind and slobbered all over with the red liquid mud that the rain turned the cleared ground into, and you couldn't duck back into the forest quick enough; and inside the forest it was dark, and hot, and easy to get lost.

Then the C.O., Major Muhamed, was a sticky bastard. Everything at N. J. was done by the book: the logging all in kilo-strips, the fibreweed crap planted in the logged strips, leave to Central granted in strict non-preferential rotation, hallucinogens rationed and their use on duty punished, and so on and so on. However, one good thing about Muhamed was he wasn't always radioing Central. New Java was his camp, and he ran it his way. He didn't like orders from HQ. He obeyed them all right, he'd let the creechies go, and locked up all the guns except little popgun pistols, as soon as the orders came. But he didn't go looking for orders, or for advice. Not from Central or anybody else. He was a self-righteous type: knew he was right. That was his big fault.

When he was on Dongh's staff at HQ Davidson had had occasion sometimes to see the officers' records. His unusual memory held on to such things, and he could recall for instance that Muhamed's IQ was 107.

Whereas his own happened to be 118. There was a difference of 11 points; but of course he couldn't say that to old Moo, and Moo couldn't see it, and so there was no way to get him to listen. He thought he knew better than Davidson, and that was that.

They were all a bit sticky at first, actually. None of these men at N. J. knew anything about the Smith Camp atrocity, except that the camp C.O. had left for Central an hour before it happened, and so was the only human that escaped alive. Put like that, it did sound bad. You could see why at first they looked at him like a kind of Jonah, or worse, a kind of Judas even. But when they got to know him they'd know better. They'd begin to see that, far from being a deserter or traitor, he was dedicated to preventing the colony of New Tahiti from betrayal. And they'd realise that getting rid of the creechies was going to be the only way to make this world safe for the Terran way of life.

It wasn't too hard to start getting that message across to the loggers. They'd never liked the little green rats, having to drive them to work all day and guard them all night; but now they began to understand that the creechies were not only repulsive but dangerous. When Davidson told them what he'd found at Smith; when he explained how the two humanoids on the Fleet ship had brainwashed HQ; when he showed them that wiping out the Terrans on New Tahiti was just a small part of the whole alien conspiracy against Earth; when he reminded them of the cold hard figures, twenty-five *hundred* humans to three *million* creechies—then they began to really get behind him.

Even the Ecological Control Officer here was with him. Not like poor old Kees, mad because men shot red deer and then getting shot in the guts himself by the sneaking creechies. This fellow, Atranda, was a creechie-hater. Actually he was kind of spla about them, he had geoshock or something; he was so afraid the creechies were going to attack the camp that he acted like some woman afraid of getting raped. But it was useful to have the local spesh on his side anyhow.

No use trying to line up the C.O.; a good judge of men, Davidson had seen it was no use almost at once. Muhamed was rigid-minded. Also he had a prejudice against Davidson which he wouldn't drop; it had something to do with the Smith Camp affair. He as much as told Davidson he didn't consider him a trustworthy officer.

He was a self-righteous bastard, but his running N. J. camp on such rigid lines was an advantage. A tight organization, used to obeying orders, was easier to take over than a loose one full of independent characters, and easier to keep together as a unit for defensive and offensive military

operations, once he was in command. He would have to take command. Moo was a good logging-camp boss, but no soldier.

Davidson kept busy getting some of the best loggers and junior officers really firmly with him. He didn't hurry. When he had enough of them he could really trust, a squad of ten lifted a few items from old Moo's locked-up room in the Rec House basement full of war toys, and then went off one Sunday into the woods to play.

Davidson had located the creechie town some weeks ago, and had saved up the treat for his men. He could have done it singlehanded, but it was better this way. You got the sense of comradeship, of a real bond among men. They just walked into the place in broad open daylight, and coated all the creechies caught above-ground with firejelly and burned them, then poured kerosene over the warren-roofs and roasted the rest. Those that tried to get out got jellied; that was the artistic part, waiting at the rat-holes for the little rats to come out, letting them think they'd made it, and then just frying them from the feet up so they made torches. That green fur sizzled like crazy.

It actually wàsn't much more exciting than hunting real rats, which were about the only wild animals left on Mother Earth, but there was more thrill to it; the creechies were a lot bigger than rats, and you knew they could fight back, though this time they didn't. In fact some of them even lay down instead of running away, just lay there on their backs with their eyes shut. It was sickening. The other fellows thought so too, and one of them actually got sick and vomited after he'd burned up one of the lying-down ones.

Hard up as the men were, they didn't leave even one of the females alive to rape. They had all agreed with Davidson beforehand that it was too damn near perversity. Homosexuality was with other humans, it was normal. These things might be built like human women but they weren't human, and it was better to get your kicks from killing them, and stay *clean*. That had made good sense to all of them, and they stuck to it.

Every one of them kept his trap shut back at camp, no boasting even to their buddies. They were sound men. Not a word of the expedition got to Muhamed's ears. So far as old Moo knew, all his men were good little boys just sawing up logs and keeping away from creechies, yes sir; and he could go on believing that until D-Day came.

For the creechies would attack. Somewhere. Here, or one of the camps on King Island, or Central. Davidson knew that. He was the only officer in the entire colony that did know it. No credit due, he just happened to know he was right. Nobody else had believed him, except these men here

whom he'd had time to convince. But the others would all see, sooner or later, that he was right.

And he was right.

5.

It had been a shock, meeting Selver face to face. As he flew back to Central from the foothill village, Lyubov tried to decide why it had been a shock, to analyse out the nerve that had jumped. For after all one isn't usually terrified by a chance meeting with a good friend.

It hadn't been easy to get the headwoman to invite him. Tuntar had been his main locus of study all summer; he had several excellent informants there and was on good terms with the Lodge and with the headwoman, who had let him observe and participate in the community freely. Wangling an actual invitation out of her, via some of the ex-serfs still in the area, had taken a long time, but at last she had complied, giving him, according to the new directives, a genuine 'occasion arranged by the Athsheans.' His own conscience, rather than the Colonel, had insisted on this. Dongh wanted him to go. He was worried about the Creechie Threat. He told Lyubov to size them up, to 'see how they're reacting now that we're leaving them strictly alone.' He hoped for reassurance. Lyubov couldn't decide whether the report he'd be turning in would reassure Colonel Dongh, or not.

For ten miles out of Central, the plain had been logged and the stumps had all rotted away; it was now a great dull flat of fibreweed, hairy grey in the rain. Under those hirsute leaves the seedling shrubs got their first growth, the sumacs, dwarf aspens, and salviforms which, grown, would in turn protect the seedling trees. Left alone, in this even, rainy climate, this area might reforest itself within thirty years and reattain the full climax forest within a hundred. Left alone.

Suddenly the forest began again, in space not time: under the helicopter the infinitely various green of leaves covered the slow swells and foldings of the hills of North Sornol.

Like most Terrans on Terra, Lyubov had never walked among wild trees at all, never seen a wood larger than a city block. At first on Athshe he had felt oppressed and uneasy in the forest, stifled by its endless crowd and incoherence of trunks, branches, leaves in the perpetual greenish or brownish twilight. The mass and jumble of various competitive lives all pushing and swelling outwards and upwards towards light, the silence made up of many little meaningless noises, the total vegetable indifference

to the presence of mind, all this had troubled him, and like the others he had kept to clearings and to the beach. But little by little he had begun to like it. Gosse teased him, calling him Mr Gibbon; in fact Lyubov looked rather like a gibbon, with a round, dark face, long arms, and hair greying early; but gibbons were extinct. Like it or not, as a hilfer he had to go into the forests to find the hilfs; and now after four years of it he was completely at home under the trees, more so perhaps than anywhere else.

He had also come to like the Athsheans' names for their own lands and places, sonorous two-syllabled words: Sornol, Tuntar, Eshreth, Eshsen—that was now Centralville—Endtor, Abtan, and above all Athshe, which meant the Forest, and the World. So earth, terra, tellus mean both the soil and the planet, two meanings and one. But to the Athsheans soil, ground, earth was not that to which the dead return and by which the living live: the substance of their world was not earth, but forest. Terran man was clay, red dust. Athshean man was branch and root. They did not carve figures of themselves in stone, only in wood.

He brought the hopper down in a small glade north of the town, and walked in past the Women's Lodge. The smell of an Athshean settlement hung pungent in the air, woodsmoke, dead fish, aromatic herbs, alien sweat. The atmosphere of an underground house, if a Terran could fit himself in at all, was a rare compound of CO_2 and stinks. Lyubov had spent many intellectually stimulating hours doubled up and suffocating in the reeking gloom of the Men's Lodge in Tuntar. But it didn't look as if he would be invited in this time.

Of course the townsfolk knew of the Smith Camp massacre, now six weeks ago. They would have known of it soon, for word got around fast among the islands, though not so fast as to constitute a 'mysterious power of telepathy' as the loggers liked to believe. The townsfolk also knew that the 1200 slaves at Centralville had been freed soon after the Smith Camp massacre, and Lyubov agreed with the Colonel that the natives might take the second event to be a result of the first. That gave what Colonel Dongh would call 'an erroneous impression,' but it probably wasn't important. What was important was that the slaves had been freed. Wrongs done could not be righted, but at least they were not still being done. They could start over: the natives without that painful, unanswerable wonder as to why the 'yumens' treated men like animals; and he without the burden of explanation and the gnawing of irremediable guilt.

Knowing how they valued candor and direct speech concerning frightening or troublous matters, he expected that people in Tuntar would talk about these things with him, in triumph, or apology, or rejoicing, or puzzlement. No one did. No one said much of anything to him.

He had come in late afternoon, which was like arriving in a Terran city just after dawn. Athsheans did sleep—the colonists' opinion, as often, ignored observable fact—but their physiological low was between noon and four p.m., whereas with Terrans it is usually between two and five a.m.; and they had a double-peak cycle of high temperature and high activity, coming in the two twilights, dawn and evening. Most adults slept five or six hours in 24, in several catnaps; and adept men slept as little as two hours in 24; so, if one discounted both their naps and their dreaming-states as 'laziness,' one might say they never slept. It was much easier to say that than to understand what they actually did do.—At this point, in Tuntar, things were just beginning to stir again after the late-day slump.

Lyubov noticed a good many strangers. They looked at him, but none approached; they were mere presences passing on other paths in the dusk of the great oaks. At last someone he knew came along his path, the headwoman's cousin Sherrar, an old woman of small importance and small understanding. She greeted him civilly, but did not or would not respond to his inquiries about the headwoman and his two best informants, Egath the orchard-keeper and Tubab the Dreamer. Oh, the headwoman was very busy, and who was Egath, did he mean Geban, and Tubab might be here or perhaps he was there, or not. She stuck to Lyubov, and nobody else spoke to him. He worked his way, accompanied by the hobbling, complaining, tiny, green crone, across the groves and glades of Tuntar to the Men's Lodge. "They're busy in there," said Sherrar.

"Dreaming?"

"However should I know? Come along now, Lyubov, come see . . ." She knew he always wanted to see things, but she couldn't think what to show him to draw him away. "Come see the fishing-nets," she said feebly.

A girl passing by, one of the Young Hunters, looked up at him: a black look, a stare of animosity such as he had never received from any Athshean, unless perhaps from a little child frightened into scowling by his height and his hairless face. But this girl was not frightened.

"All right," he said to Sherrar, feeling that his only course was docility. If the Athsheans had indeed developed—at last, and abruptly—the sense of group enmity, then he must accept this, and simply try to show them that he remained a reliable, unchanging friend.

But how could their way of feeling and thinking have changed so fast, after so long? And why? At Smith Camp, provocation had been immediate and intolerable: Davidson's cruelty would drive even Athsheans to violence. But this town, Tuntar, had never been attacked by the Terrans, had suffered no slave-raids, had not seen the local forest logged or burned. He, Lyubov himself, had been there—the anthropologist cannot always

leave his own shadow out of the picture he draws—but not for over two months now. They had got the news from Smith, and there were among them now refugees, ex-slaves, who had suffered at the Terrans' hands and would talk about it. But would news and hearsay change the hearers, change them radically?—when their unaggressiveness ran so deep in them, right through their culture and society and on down into their subconscious, their 'dream time,' and perhaps into their very physiology? That an Athshean could be provoked, by atrocious cruelty, to attempt murder, he knew: he had seen it happen—once. That a disrupted community might be similarly provoked by similarly intolerable injuries, he had to believe: it had happened at Smith Camp. But that talk and hearsay, no matter how frightening and outrageous, could enrage a settled community of these people to the point where they acted against their customs and reason, broke entirely out of their whole style of living, this he couldn't believe. It was psychologically improbable. Some element was missing.

Old Tubab came out of the Lodge, just as Lyubov passed in front of it. Behind the old man came Selver.

Selver crawled out of the tunnel-door, stood upright, blinked at the rain-greyed, foliage-dimmed brightness of daylight. His dark eyes met Lyubov's, looking up. Neither spoke. Lyubov was badly frightened.

Flying home in the hopper, analysing out the shocked nerve, he thought, why fear? Why was I afraid of Selver? Unprovable intuition or mere false analogy? Irrational in any case.

Nothing between Selver and Lyubov had changed. What Selver had done at Smith Camp could be justified; even if it couldn't be justified, it made no difference. The friendship between them was too deep to be touched by moral doubt. They had worked very hard together; they had taught each other, in rather more than the literal sense, their languages. They had spoken without reserve. And Lyubov's love for his friend was deepened by that gratitude the savior feels toward the one whose life he has been privileged to save.

Indeed he had scarcely realised until that moment how deep his liking and loyalty to Selver were. Had his fear in fact been the personal fear that Selver might, having learned racial hatred, reject him, despise his loyalty, and treat him not as 'you,' but as 'one of them'?

After that long first gaze Selver came forward slowly and greeted Lyubov, holding out his hands.

Touch was a main channel of communication among the forest people. Among Terrans touch is always likely to imply threat, aggression, and so for them there is often nothing between the formal handshake and the sexual caress. All that blank was filled by the Athsheans with

varied customs of touch. Caress as signal and reassurance was as essential to them as it is to mother and child or to lover and lover; but its significance was social, not only maternal and sexual. It was part of their language. It was therefore patterned, codified, yet infinitely modifiable. "They're always pawing each other," some of the colonists sneered, unable to see in these touch-exchanges anything but their own eroticism which, forced to concentrate itself exclusively on sex and then repressed and frustrated, invades and poisons every sensual pleasure, every humane response: the victory of a blinded, furtive Cupid over the great brooding mother of all the seas and stars, all the leaves of trees, all the gestures of men, Venus Genetrix. . . .

So Selver came forward with his hands held out, shook Lyubov's hand Terran fashion, and then took both his arms with a stroking motion just above the elbow. He was not much more than half Lyubov's height, which made all gestures difficult and ungainly for both of them, but there was nothing uncertain or childlike in the touch of his small, thin-boned, green-furred hand on Lyubov's arms. It was a reassurance. Lyubov was very glad to get it.

"Selver, what luck to meet you here. I want very much to talk with you—"

"I can't, now, Lyubov."

He spoke gently, but when he spoke Lyubov's hope of an unaltered friendship vanished. Selver had changed. He was changed, radically: from the root.

"Can I come back," Lyubov said urgently, "another day, and talk with you, Selver? It is important to me—"

"I leave here today," Selver said even more gently, but letting go Lyubov's arms, and also looking away. He thus put himself literally out of touch. Civility required that Lyubov do the same, and let the conversation end. But then there would be no one to talk to. Old Tubab had not even looked at him; the town had turned its back on him. And this was Selver, who had been his friend.

"Selver, this killing at Kelme Deva, maybe you think that lies between us. But it does not. Maybe it brings us closer together. And your people in the slave-pens, they've all been set free, so that wrong no longer lies between us. And even if it does—it always did—all the same I . . . I am the same man I was, Selver."

At first the Athshean made no response. His strange face, the large deep-set eyes, the strong features misshapen by scars and blurred by the short silken fur that followed and yet obscured all contours, this face turned from Lyubov, shut, obstinate. Then suddenly he looked round as if against

his own intent. "Lyubov, you shouldn't have come here. You should leave Central two nights from now. I don't know what you are. It would be better if I had never known you."

And with that he was off, a light walk like a long-legged cat, a green flicker among the dark oaks of Tuntar, gone. Tubab followed slowly after him, still without a glance at Lyubov. A fine rain fell without sound on the oak-leaves and on the narrow pathways to the Lodge and the river. Only if you listened intently could you hear the rain, too multitudinous a music for one mind to grasp, a single endless chord played on the entire forest.

"Selver is a god," said old Sherrar. "Come and see the fishing-nets now."

Lyubov declined. It would be impolite and impolitic to stay; anyway he had no heart to.

He tried to tell himself that Selver had not been rejecting him, Lyubov, but him as a Terran. It made no difference. It never does.

He was always disagreeably surprised to find how vulnerable his feelings were, how much it hurt him to be hurt. This sort of adolescent sensitivity was shameful, he should have a tougher hide by now.

The little crone, her green fur all dusted and besilvered with raindrops, sighed with relief when he said goodbye. As he started the hopper he had to grin at the sight of her, hop-hobbling off into the trees as fast as she could go, like a little toad that has escaped a snake.

Quality is an important matter, but so is quantity: relative size. The normal adult reaction to a very much smaller person may be arrogant, or protective, or patronising, or affectionate, or bullying, but whatever it is it's liable to be better fitted to a child than to an adult. Then, when the child-sized person was furry, a further response got called upon, which Lyubov had labelled the Teddybear Reaction. Since the Athsheans used caress so much, its manifestation was not inappropriate, but its motivation remained suspect. And finally there was the inevitable Freak Reaction, the flinching away from what is human but does not quite look so.

But quite outside of all that was the fact that the Athsheans, like Terrans, were simply funny-looking at times. Some of them did look like little toads, owls, caterpillars. Sherrar was not the first little old lady who had struck Lyubov as looking funny from behind. . . .

And that's one trouble with the colony, he thought as he lifted the hopper and Tuntar vanished beneath the oaks and the leafless orchards. We haven't got any old women. No old men either, except Dongh and he's only about sixty. But old women are different from everybody else, they say what they think. The Athsheans are governed, in so far as they have government, by old women. Intellect to the men, politics to the women,

and ethics to the interaction of both: that's their arrangement. It has charm, and it works—for them. I wish the Administration had sent out a couple of grannies along with all those nubile fertile high-breasted young women. Now that girl I had over the other night, she's really very nice, and nice in bed, she has a kind heart, but my God it'll be forty years before she'll say anything to a man. . . .

But all the time, beneath his thoughts concerning old women and young ones, the shock persisted, the intuition or recognition that would not let itself be recognised.

He must think this out before he reported to HQ.

Selver: what about Selver, then?

Selver was certainly a key figure to Lyubov. Why? Because he knew him well, or because of some actual power in his personality, which Lyubov had never consciously appreciated?

But he had appreciated it; he had picked Selver out very soon as an extraordinary person. 'Sam,' he had been then, bodyservant for three officers sharing a prefab. Lyubov remembered Benson boasting what a good creechie they'd got, they'd broke him in right.

Many Athsheans, especially Dreamers from the Lodges, could not change their polycyclic sleep-pattern to fit the Terran one. If they caught up with their normal sleep at night, that prevented them from catching up with the REM or paradoxical sleep, whose 120-minute cycle ruled their life both day and night, and could not be fitted in to the Terran workday. Once you have learned to do your dreaming wide awake, to balance your sanity not on the razor's edge of reason but on the double support, the fine balance, of reason and dream, once you have learned that, you cannot unlearn it any more than you can unlearn to think. So many of the men became groggy, confused, withdrawn, even catatonic. Women, bewildered and abased, behaved with the sullen listlessness of the newly enslaved. Male non-adepts and some of the younger Dreamers did best; they adapted, working hard in the logging camps or becoming clever servants. Sam had been one of these, an efficient, characterless bodyservant, cook, laundry-boy, butler, backsoaper and scapegoat for his three masters. He had learned how to be invisible. Lyubov borrowed him as an ethnological informant, and had, by some affinity of mind and nature, won Sam's trust at once. He found Sam the ideal informant, trained in his people's customs, perceptive of their significances, and quick to translate them, to make them intelligible to Lyubov, bridging the gap between two languages, two cultures, two species of the genus Man.

For two years Lyubov had been travelling, studying, interviewing, observing, and had failed to get at the key that would let him into the Ath-

shean mind. He didn't even know where the lock was. He had studied the Athsheans' sleeping-habits and found that they apparently had no sleeping-habits. He had wired countless electrodes onto countless furry green skulls, and failed to make any sense at all out of the familiar patterns, the spindles and jags, the alphas and deltas and thetas, that appeared on the graph. It was Selver who had made him understand, at last, the Athshean significance of the word 'dream,' which was also the word for 'root,' and so hand him the key of the kingdom of the forest people. It was with Selver as EEG subject that he had first seen with comprehension the extraordinary impulse-patterns of a brain entering a dream-state neither sleeping nor awake: a condition which related to Terran dreaming-sleep as the Parthenon to a mud hut: the same thing basically, but with the addition of complexity, quality, and control.

What then, what more?

Selver might have escaped. He stayed, first as a valet, then (through one of Lyubov's few useful perquisites as a Spesh) as Scientific Aide, still locked up nightly with all other creechies in the pen (the Voluntary Autochthonous Labor Personnel Quarters). "I'll fly you up to Tuntar and work with you there," Lyubov had said, about the third time he talked with Selver, "for God's sake why stay here?"—"My wife Thele is in the pen," Selver had said. Lyubov had tried to get her released, but she was in the HQ kitchen, and the sergeants who managed the kitchen-gang resented any interference from 'brass' and 'speshes'. Lyubov had to be very careful, lest they take out their resentment on the woman. She and Selver had both seemed willing to wait patiently until both could escape or be freed. Male and female creechies were strictly segregated in the pens—why, no one seemed to know—and husband and wife rarely saw each other. Lyubov managed to arrange meetings for them in his hut, which he had to himself at the north end of town. It was when Thele was returning to HQ from one such meeting that Davidson had seen her and apparently been struck by her frail, frightened grace. He had had her brought to his quarters that night, and had raped her.

He had killed her in the act, perhaps; this had happened before, a result of the physical disparity; or else she had stopped living. Like some Terrans the Athsheans had the knack of the authentic death-wish, and could cease to live. In either case it was Davidson who had killed her. Such murders had occurred before. What had not occurred before was what Selver did, the second day after her death.

Lyubov had got there only at the end. He could recall the sounds; himself running down Main Street in hot sunlight; the dust, the knot of men. The whole thing could have lasted only five minutes, a long time for a

homicidal fight. When Lyubov got there Selver was blinded with blood, a sort of toy for Davidson to play with, and yet he had picked himself up and was coming back, not with berserk rage but with intelligent despair. He kept coming back. It was Davidson who was scared into rage at last by that terrible persistence; knocking Selver down with a side-blow he had moved forward lifting his booted foot to stamp on the skull. Even as he moved, Lyubov had broken into the circle. He stopped the fight (for whatever blood-thirst the ten or twelve men watching had had, was more than appeased, and they backed Lyubov when he told Davidson hands off); and thenceforth he hated Davidson, and was hated by him, having come between the killer and his death.

For if it's all the rest of us who are killed by the suicide, it's himself whom the murderer kills; only he has to do it over, and over, and over.

Lyubov had picked up Selver, a light weight in his arms. The mutilated face had pressed against his shirt so that the blood soaked through against his own skin. He had taken Selver to his own bungalow, splinted his broken wrist, done what he could for his face, kept him in his own bed, night after night tried to talk to him, to reach him in the desolation of his grief and shame. It was, of course, against regulations.

Nobody mentioned the regulations to him. They did not have to. He knew he was forfeiting most of what favor he had ever had with the officers of the colony.

He had been careful to keep on the right side of HQ, objecting only to extreme cases of brutality against the natives, using persuasion not defiance, and conserving what shred of power and influence he had. He could not prevent the exploitation of the Athsheans. It was much worse than his training had led him to expect, but he could do little about it here and now. His reports to the Administration and to the Committee on Rights might—after the roundtrip of 54 years—have some effect; Terra might even decide that the Open Colony policy for Athshe was a bad mistake. Better 54 years late than never. If he lost the tolerance of his superiors here they would censor or invalidate his reports, and there would be no hope at all.

But he was too angry now to keep up his strategy. To hell with the others, if they insisted on seeing his care of a friend as an insult to Mother Earth and a betrayal of the colony. If they labelled him 'creechie-lover' his usefulness to the Athsheans would be impaired; but he could not set a possible, general good above Selver's imperative need. You can't save a people by selling your friend. Davidson, curiously infuriated by the minor injuries Selver had done him and by Lyubov's interference, had gone around saying he intended to finish off that rebel creechie; he certainly

would do so if he got the chance. Lyubov stayed with Selver night and day for two weeks, and then flew him out of Central and put him down in a west coast town, Broter, where he had relatives.

There was no penalty for aiding slaves to escape, since the Athsheans were not slaves at all except in fact: they were Voluntary Autochthonous Labor Personnel. Lyubov was not even reprimanded. But the regular officers distrusted him totally, instead of partially, from then on; and even his colleagues in the Special Services, the exobiologist, the ag and forestry coordinators, the ecologists, variously let him know that he had been irrational, quixotic, or stupid. "Did you think you were coming on a picnic?" Gosse had demanded.

"No. I didn't think it would be any bloody picnic," Lyubov answered, morose.

"I can't see why any hilfer voluntarily ties himself up to an Open Colony. You know the people you're studying are going to get plowed under, and probably wiped out. It's the way things are. It's human nature, and you must know you can't change that. Then why come and watch the process? Masochism?"

"I don't know what 'human nature' is. Maybe leaving descriptions of what we wipe out is part of human nature.—Is it much pleasanter for an ecologist, really?"

Gosse ignored this. "All right then, write up your descriptions. But keep out of the carnage. A biologist studying a rat colony doesn't start reaching in and rescuing pet rats of his that get attacked, you know."

At this Lyubov had blown loose. He had taken too much. "No, of course not," he said. "A rat can be a pet, but not a friend. Selver is my friend. In fact he's the only man on this world whom I consider to be a friend." That had hurt poor old Gosse, who wanted to be a father-figure to Lyubov, and it had done nobody any good. Yet it had been true. And the truth shall make you free. . . . I like Selver, respect him; saved him; suffered with him; fear him. Selver is my friend.

Selver is a god.

So the little green crone had said as if everybody knew it, as flatly as she might have said So-and-so is a hunter. "Selver sha'ab." What did *sha'ab* mean, though? Many words of the Women's Tongue, the everyday speech of the Athsheans, came from the Men's Tongue that was the same in all communities, and these words often were not only two-syllabled but two-sided. They were coins, obverse and reverse. *Sha'ab* meant god, or numinous entity, or powerful being; it also meant something quite different, but Lyubov could not remember what. By this stage in his thinking, he was home in his bungalow, and had only to look it up in the dictionary

which he and Selver had compiled in four months of exhausting but harmonious work. Of course: *sha'ab,* translator.

It was almost too pat, too apposite.

Were the two meanings connected? Often they were, yet not so often as to constitute a rule. If a god was a translator, what did he translate? Selver was indeed a gifted interpreter, but that gift had found expression only through the fortuity of a truly foreign language having been brought into his world. Was a *sha'ab* one who translated the language of dream and philosophy, the Men's Tongue, into the everyday speech? But all Dreamers could do that. Might he then be one who could translate into waking life the central experience of vision: one serving as a link between the two realities, considered by the Athsheans as equal, the dream-time and the world-time, whose connections, though vital, are obscure. A link: one who could speak aloud the perceptions of the subconscious. To 'speak' that tongue is to act. To do a new thing. To change or to be changed, radically, from the root. For the root is the dream.

And the translator is the god. Selver had brought a new word into the language of his people. He had done a new deed. The word, the deed, murder. Only a god could lead so great a newcomer as Death across the bridge between the worlds.

But had he learned to kill his fellowmen among his own dreams of outrage and bereavement, or from the undreamed-of actions of the strangers? Was he speaking his own language, or was he speaking Captain Davidson's? That which seemed to rise from the root of his own suffering and express his own changed being, might in fact be an infection, a foreign plague, which would not make a new people of his race, but would destroy them.

It was not in Raj Lyubov's nature to think, "What can I do?" Character and training disposed him not to interfere in other men's business. His job was to find out what they did, and his inclination was to let them go on doing it. He preferred to be enlightened, rather than to enlighten; to seek facts rather than the Truth. But even the most unmissionary soul, unless he pretend he has no emotions, is sometimes faced with a choice between commission and omission. "What are they doing?" abruptly becomes, "What are we doing?" and then, "What must I do?"

That he had reached such a point of choice now, he knew, and yet did not know clearly why, nor what alternatives were offered him.

He could do no more to improve the Athsheans' chance of survival at the moment; Lepennon, Or, and the ansible had done more than he had hoped to see done in his lifetime. The Administration on Terra was ex-

plicit in every ansible communication, and Colonel Dongh, though under pressure from some of his staff and the logging bosses to ignore the directives, was carrying out orders. He was a loyal officer; and besides, the *Shackleton* would be coming back to observe and report on how orders were being carried out. Reports home meant something, now that this ansible, this *machina ex machina,* functioned to prevent all the comfortable old colonial autonomy, and make you answerable within your own lifetime for what you did. There was no more 54-year margin for error. Policy was no longer static. A decision by the League of Worlds might now lead overnight to the colony's being limited to one Land, or forbidden to cut trees, or encouraged to kill natives—no telling. How the League worked and what sort of policies it was developing could not yet be guessed from the flat directives of the Administration. Dongh was worried by these multiple-choice futures, but Lyubov enjoyed them. In diversity is life and where there's life there's hope, was the general sum of his creed, a modest one to be sure.

The colonists were letting the Athsheans alone and they were letting the colonists alone. A healthy situation, and one not to be disturbed unnecessarily. The only thing likely to disturb it was fear.

At the moment the Athsheans might be expected to be suspicious and still resentful, but not particularly afraid. As for the panic felt in Centralville at news of the Smith Camp massacre, nothing had happened to revive it. No Athshean anywhere had shown any violence since; and with the slaves gone, the creechies all vanished back into their forests, there was no more constant irritation of xenophobia. The colonists were at last beginning to relax.

If Lyubov reported that he had seen Selver at Tuntar, Dongh and the others would be alarmed. They might insist on trying to capture Selver and bring him in for trial. The Colonial Code forbade prosecution of a member of one planetary society under the laws of another, but the Court Martial over-rode such distinctions. They could try, convict, and shoot Selver. With Davidson brought back from New Java to give evidence. Oh no, Lyubov thought, shoving the dictionary onto an overcrowded shelf. Oh no, he thought, and thought no more about it. So he made his choice without even knowing he had made one.

He turned in a brief report next day. It said that Tuntar was going about its business as usual, and that he had not been turned away or threatened. It was a soothing report, and the most inaccurate one Lyubov ever wrote. It omitted everything of significance: the headwoman's non-appearance, Tubab's refusal to greet Lyubov, the large number of strangers in town, the young huntress' expression, Selver's presence. . . .

Of course that last was an intentional omission, but otherwise the report was quite factual, he thought; he had merely omitted subjective impressions, as a scientist should. He had a severe migraine whilst writing the report, and a worse one after submitting it.

He dreamed a lot that night, but could not remember his dreams in the morning. Late in the second night after his visit to Tuntar he woke, and in the hysterical whooping of the alarm-siren and the thudding of explosions he faced, at last, what he had refused. He was the only man in Centralville not taken by surprise. In that moment he knew what he was: a traitor.

And yet even now it was not clear in his mind that this was an Athshean raid. It was the terror in the night.

His own hut had been ignored, standing in its yard away from other houses; perhaps the trees around it protected it, he thought as he hurried out. The center of town was all on fire. Even the stone cube of HQ burned from within like a broken kiln. The ansible was in there: the precious link. There were fires also in the direction of the helicopter port and the Field. Where had they got explosives? How had the fires got going all at once? All the buildings along both sides of Main Street, built of wood, were burning; the sound of the burning was terrible. Lyubov ran towards the fires. Water flooded the way; he thought at first it was from a fire-hose, then realised the main from the river Menend was flooding uselessly over the ground while the houses burned with that hideous sucking roar. How had they done this? There were guards, there were always guards in jeeps at the Field. . . . Shots: volleys, the yatter of a machine gun. All around Lyubov were small running figures, but he ran among them without giving them much thought. He was abreast of the Hostel now, and saw a girl standing in the doorway, fire flickering at her back and a clear escape before her. She did not move. He shouted at her, then ran across the yard to her and wrested her hands free of the doorjambs which she clung to in panic, pulling her away by force, saying gently, "Come on, honey, come on." She came then, but not quite soon enough. As they crossed the yard the front of the upper storey, blazing from within, fell slowly forward, pushed by the timbers of the collapsing roof. Shingles and beams shot out like shell-fragments; a blazing beam-end struck Lyubov and knocked him sprawling. He lay face down in the firelit lake of mud. He did not see a little green-furred huntress leap at the girl, drag her down backwards, and cut her throat. He did not see anything.

6.

No songs were sung that night. There was only shouting and silence. When the flying ships burned Selver exulted, and tears came into his eyes, but no words into his mouth. He turned away in silence, the fire thrower heavy in his arms, to lead his group back into the city.

Each group of people from the West and North was led by an ex-slave like himself, one who had served the yumens in Central and knew the buildings and ways of the city.

Most of the people who came to the attack that night had never seen the yumen city; many of them had never seen a yumen. They had come because they followed Selver, because they were driven by the evil dream and only Selver could teach them how to master it. There were hundreds and hundreds of them, men and women; they had waited in utter silence in the rainy darkness all around the edges of the city, while the ex-slaves, two or three at a time, did those things which they judged must be done first: break the water-pipe, cut the wires that carried light from Generator House, break into and rob the Arsenal. The first deaths, those of guards, had been silent, accomplished with hunting weapons, noose, knife, arrow, very quickly, in the dark. The dynamite, stolen earlier in the night from the logging camp ten miles south, was prepared in the Arsenal, the basement of HQ Building, while fires were set in other places; and then the alarm went off and the fires blazed and both night and silence fled. Most of the thunderclap and tree-fall crashing of gunfire came from the yumens defending themselves, for only ex-slaves had taken weapons from the Arsenal and used them; all the rest kept to their own lances, knives, and bows. But it was the dynamite, placed and ignited by Reswan and others who had worked in the loggers' slave-pen, that made the noise that conquered all other noises, and blew out the walls of the HQ Building and destroyed the hangars and the ships.

There were about seventeen hundred yumens in the city that night, about five hundred of them female; all the yumen females were said to be there now, that was why Selver and the others had decided to act, though not all the people who wished to come had yet gathered. Between four and five thousand men and women had come through the forests to the Meeting at Endtor, and from there to this place, to this night.

The fires burned huge, and the smell of burning and of butchering was foul.

Selver's mouth was dry and his throat sore, so that he could not speak,

and longed for water to drink. As he led his group down the middle path of the city, a yumen came running towards him, looming huge in the black and dazzle of the smoky air. Selver lifted the fire thrower and pulled back on the tongue of it, even as the yumen slipped in mud and fell scrambling to its knees. No hissing jet of flame sprang from the machine, it had all been spent on burning the airships that had not been in the hangar. Selver dropped the heavy machine. The yumen was not armed, and was male. Selver tried to say, "Let him run away," but his voice was weak, and two men, hunters of the Abtam Glades, had leapt past him even as he spoke, holding their long knives up. The big, naked hands clutched at air, and dropped limp. The big corpse lay in a heap on the path. There were many others lying dead, there in what had been the center of the city. There was not much noise any more except the noise of the fires.

Selver parted his lips and hoarsely sent up the home-call that ends the hunt; those with him took it up more clearly and loudly, in carrying falsetto; other voices answered it, near and far off in the mist and reek and flame-shot darkness of the night. Instead of leading his group at once from the city, he signalled them to go on, and himself went aside, onto the muddy ground between the path and a building which had burned and fallen. He stepped across a dead female yumen and bent over one that lay pinned down under a great, charred beam of wood. He could not see the features obliterated by mud and shadow.

It was not just; it was not necessary; he need not have looked at that one among so many dead. He need not have known him in the dark. He started to go after his group. Then he turned back; straining, lifted the beam off Lyubov's back; knelt down, slipping one hand under the heavy head so that Lyubov seemed to lie easier, his face clear of the earth; and so knelt there, motionless.

He had not slept for four days and had not been still to dream for longer than that—he did not know how long. He had acted, spoken, travelled, planned, night and day, ever since he left Broter with his followers from Cadast. He had gone from city to city speaking to the people of the forest, telling them the new thing, waking them from the dream into the world, arranging the thing done this night, talking, always talking and hearing others talk, never in silence and never alone. They had listened, they had heard and had come to follow him, to follow the new path. They had taken up the fire they feared into their own hands: taken up the mastery over the evil dream: and loosed the death they feared upon their enemy. All had been done as he said it should be done. All had gone as he said it would go. The lodges and many dwellings of the yumens were burnt, their

airships burnt or broken, their weapons stolen or destroyed: and their females were dead. The fires were burning out, the night growing very dark, fouled with smoke. Selver could scarcely see; he looked up to the east, wondering if it were nearing dawn. Kneeling there in the mud among the dead he thought, This is the dream now, the evil dream. I thought to drive it, but it drives me.

In the dream, Lyubov's lips moved a little against the palm of his own hand; Selver looked down and saw the dead man's eyes open. The glare of dying fires shone on the surface of them. After a while he spoke Selver's name.

"Lyubov, why did you stay here? I told you to be out of the city this night." So Selver spoke in dream, harshly, as if he were angry at Lyubov.

"Are you the prisoner?" Lyubov said, faintly and not lifting his head, but in so commonplace a voice that Selver knew for a moment that this was not the dream-time but the world-time, the forest's night. "Or am I?"

"Neither, both, how do I know? All the engines and machines are burned. All the women are dead. We let the men run away if they would. I told them not to set fire to your house, the books will be all right. Lyubov, why aren't you like the others?"

"I am like them. A man. Like them. Like you."

"No. You are different—"

"I am like them. And so are you. Listen, Selver. Don't go on. You must not go on killing other men. You must go back . . . to your own . . . to your roots."

"When your people are gone, then the evil dream will stop."

"*Now*," Lyubov said, trying to lift his head, but his back was broken. He looked up at Selver and opened his mouth to speak. His gaze dropped away and looked into the other time, and his lips remained parted, unspeaking. His breath whistled a little in his throat.

They were calling Selver's name, many voices far away, calling over and over. "I can't stay with you, Lyubov!" Selver said in tears, and when there was no answer stood up and tried to run away. But in the dream-darkness he could go only very slowly, like one wading through deep water. The Ash Spirit walked in front of him, taller than Lyubov or any yumen, tall as a tree, not turning its white mask to him. As Selver went he spoke to Lyubov: "We'll go back," he said. "I will go back. Now. We will go back, now, I promise you, Lyubov!"

But his friend, the gentle one, who had saved his life and betrayed his dream, Lyubov did not reply. He walked somewhere in the night near Selver, unseen, and quiet as death.

A group of the people of Tuntar came on Selver wandering in the dark, weeping and speaking, overmastered by dream; they took him with them in their swift return to Endtor.

In the makeshift Lodge there, a tent on the river-bank, he lay helpless and insane for two days and nights, while the Old Men tended him. All that time people kept coming in to Endtor and going out again, returning to the Place of Eshsen which had been called Central, burying their dead there and the alien dead: of theirs more than three hundred, of the others more than seven hundred. There were about five hundred yumens locked into the compound, the creechie-pens, which, standing empty and apart, had not been burnt. As many more had escaped, some of whom had got to the logging camps farther south, which had not been attacked; those who were still hiding and wandering in the forest or the Cut Lands were hunted down. Some were killed, for many of the younger hunters and huntresses still heard only Selver's voice saying *Kill them.* Others had left the night of killing behind them as if it had been a nightmare, the evil dream that must be understood lest it be repeated; and these, faced with a thirsty, exhausted yumen cowering in a thicket, could not kill him. So maybe he killed them. There were groups of ten and twenty yumens, armed with logger's axes and hand-guns, though few had ammunition left; these groups were tracked until sufficient numbers were hidden in the forest about them, then overpowered, bound, and led back to Eshsen. They were all captured within two or three days, for all that part of Sornol was swarming with the people of the forest, there had never in the knowledge of any man been half or a tenth so great a gathering of people in one place; some still coming in from distant towns and other Lands, others already going home again. The captured yumens were put in among the others in the compound, though it was overcrowded and the huts were too small for yumens. They were watered, fed twice daily, and guarded by a couple of hundred armed hunters at all times.

In the afternoon following the Night of Eshsen an airship came rattling out of the east and flew low as if to land, then shot upward like a bird of prey that misses its kill, and circled the wrecked landing-place, the smouldering city, and the Cut Lands. Reswan had seen to it that the radios were destroyed, and perhaps it was the silence of the radios that had brought the airship from Kushil or Rieshwel, where there were three small towns of yumens. The prisoners in the compound rushed out of the barracks and yelled at the machine whenever it came rattling overhead, and once it dropped an object on a small parachute into the compound: at last it rattled off into the sky.

There were four such winged ships left on Athshe now, three on Kushil

and one on Rieshwel, all of the small kind that carried four men; they also carried machine guns and flamethrowers, and they weighed much on the minds of Reswan and the others, while Selver lay lost to them, walking the cryptic ways of the other time.

He woke into the world-time on the third day, thin, dazed, hungry, silent. After he had bathed in the river and had eaten, he listened to Reswan and the headwoman of Berre and the others chosen as leaders. They told him how the world had gone while he dreamed. When he had heard them all, he looked about at them and they saw the god in him. In the sickness of disgust and fear that followed the Night of Eshsen, some of them had come to doubt. Their dreams were uneasy and full of blood and fire; they were surrounded all day by strangers, people come from all over the forests, hundreds of them, thousands, all gathered here like kites to carrion, none knowing another: and it seemed to them as if the end of things had come and nothing would ever be the same, or be right, again. But in Selver's presence they remembered purpose; their distress was quietened, and they waited for him to speak.

"The killing is all done," he said. "Make sure that everyone knows that." He looked round at them. "I have to talk with the ones in the compound. Who is leading them in there?"

"Turkey, Flapfeet, Weteyes," said Reswan, the ex-slave.

"Turkey's alive? Good. Help me get up, Greda, I have eels for bones. . . ."

When he had been afoot a while he was stronger, and within the hour he set off for Eshsen, two hours' walk from Endtor.

When they came Reswan mounted a ladder set against the compound wall and bawled in the pidgin-English taught the slaves, "Dong-a come to gate hurry-up-quick!"

Down in the alleys between the squat cement barracks, some of the yumens yelled and threw clods of dirt at him. He ducked, and waited.

The old Colonel did not come out, but Gosse, whom they called Weteyes, came limping out of a hut and called up to Reswan, "Colonel Dongh is ill, he cannot come out."

"Ill what kind?"

"Bowels, water-illness. What you want?"

"Talk-talk.—My lord god," Reswan said in his own language, looking down at Selver, "the Turkey's hiding, do you want to talk with Weteyes?"

"All right."

"Watch the gate there, you bowmen!—To gate, Mis-ter Goss-a, hurry-up-quick!"

The gate was opened just wide enough and long enough for Gosse to

squeeze out. He stood in front of it alone, facing the group led by Selver. He favored one leg, injured on the Night of Eshsen. He was wearing torn pajamas, mudstained and rain-sodden. His greying hair hung in lank festoons around his ears and over his forehead. Twice the height of his captors, he held himself very stiff, and stared at them in courageous, angry misery. "What you want?"

"We must talk, Mr Gosse," said Selver, who had learned plain English from Lyubov. "I'm Selver of the Ash Tree of Eshreth. I'm Lyubov's friend."

"Yes, I know you. What have you to say?"

"I have to say that the killing is over, if that be made a promise kept by your people and my people. You may all go free, if you will gather in your people from the logging camps in South Sornol, Kushil, and Rieshwel, and make them all stay together here. You may live here where the forest is dead, where you grow your seed-grasses. There must not be any more cutting of trees."

Gosse's face had grown eager: "The camps weren't attacked?"

"No."

Gosse said nothing.

Selver watched his face, and presently spoke again: "There are less than two thousand of your people left living in the world, I think. Your women are all dead. In the other camps there are still weapons; you could kill many of us. But we have some of your weapons. And there are more of us than you could kill. I suppose you know that, and that's why you have not tried to have the flying ships bring you fire-throwers, and kill the guards, and escape. It would be no good; there really are so many of us. If you make the promise with us it will be much the best, and then you can wait without harm until one of your Great Ships comes, and you can leave the world. That will be in three years, I think."

"Yes, three local years—How do you know that?"

"Well, slaves have ears, Mr Gosse."

Gosse looked straight at him at last. He looked away, fidgeted, tried to ease his leg. He looked back at Selver, and away again. "We had already 'promised' not to hurt any of your people. It's why the workers were sent home. It did no good, you didn't listen—"

"It was not a promise made to us."

"How can we make any sort of agreement or treaty with a people who have no government, no central authority?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure you know what a promise is. This one was soon broken."

"What do you mean? By whom, how?"

"In Rieshwel, New Java. Fourteen days ago. A town was burned and its people killed by yumens of the Camp in Rieshwel."

"What are you talking about?"

"About news brought us by messengers from Rieshwel."

"It's a lie. We were in radio contact with New Java right along, until the massacre. Nobody was killing natives there or anywhere else."

"You're speaking the truth you know," Selver said, "I the truth I know. I accept your ignorance of the killings on Rieshwel; but you must accept my telling you that they were done. This remains: the promise must be made to us and with us, and it must be kept. You'll wish to talk about these matters with Colonel Dongh and the others."

Gosse moved as if to re-enter the gate, then turned back and said in his deep, hoarse voice, "Who are you, Selver? Did you—was it you that organised the attack? Did you lead them?"

"Yes, I did."

"Then all this blood is on your head," Gosse said, and with sudden savagery, "Lyubov's too, you know. He's dead—your 'friend Lyubov.'"

Selver did not understand the idiom. He had learned murder, but of guilt he knew little beyond the name. As his gaze locked for a moment with Gosse's pale, resentful stare, he felt afraid. A sickness rose up in him, a mortal chill. He tried to put it away from him, shutting his eyes a moment. At last he said, "Lyubov is my friend, and so not dead."

"You're children," Gosse said with hatred. "Children, savages. You have no conception of reality. This is no dream, this is real! You killed Lyubov. He's dead. You killed the women—the *women*—you burned them alive, slaughtered them like animals!"

"Should we have let them live?" said Selver with vehemence equal to Gosse's, but softly, his voice singing a little. "To breed like insects in the carcase of the World? To overrun us? We killed them to sterilise you. I know what a realist is, Mr Gosse. Lyubov and I have talked about these words. A realist is a man who knows both the world and his own dreams. You're not sane: there's not one man in a thousand of you who knows how to dream. Not even Lyubov and he was the best among you. You sleep, you wake and forget your dreams, you sleep again and wake again, and so you spend your whole lives, and you think that is being, life, reality! You are not children, you are grown men, but insane. And that's why we had to kill you, before you drove us mad. Now go back and talk about reality with the other insane men. Talk long, and well!"

The guards opened the gate, threatening the crowding yumens inside with their spears; Gosse re-entered the compound, his big shoulders hunched as if against the rain.

Selver was very tired. The headwoman of Berre and another woman came to him and walked with him, his arms over their shoulders so that if he stumbled he should not fall. The young hunter Greda, a cousin of his Tree, joked with him, and Selver answered light-headedly, laughing. The walk back to Endtor seemed to go on for days.

He was too weary to eat. He drank a little hot broth and lay down by the Men's Fire. Endtor was no town but a mere camp by the great river, a favorite fishing place for all the cities that had once been in the forest round about, before the yumens came. There was no Lodge. Two fire-rings of black stone and a long grassy bank over the river where tents of hide and plaited rush could be set up, that was Endtor. The river Menend, the master river of Sornol, spoke ceaselessly in the world and in the dream at Endtor.

There were many old men at the fire, some whom he knew from Broter and Tuntar and his own destroyed city Eshreth, some whom he did not know; he could see in their eyes and gestures, and hear in their voices, that they were Great Dreamers; more dreamers than had ever been gathered in one place before, perhaps. Lying stretched out full length, his head raised on his hands, gazing at the fire, he said, "I have called the yumens mad. Am I mad myself?"

"You don't know one time from the other," said old Tubab, laying a pine-knot on the fire, "because you did not dream either sleeping or waking for far too long. The price for that takes long to pay."

"The poisons the yumens take do much the same as does the lack of sleep and dream," said Heben, who had been a slave both at Central and at Smith Camp. "The yumens poison themselves in order to dream. I saw the dreamer's look in them after they took the poisons. But they couldn't call the dreams, nor control them, nor weave nor shape nor cease to dream; they were driven, overpowered. They did not know what was within them at all. So it is with a man who hasn't dreamed for many days. Though he be the wisest of his Lodge, still he'll be mad, now and then, here and there, for a long time after. He'll be driven, enslaved. He will not understand himself."

A very old man with the accent of South Sornol laid his hand on Selver's shoulder, caressing him, and said, "My dear young god, you need to sing, that would do you good."

"I can't. Sing for me."

The old man sang; others joined in, their voices high and reedy, almost tuneless, like the wind blowing in the water-reeds of Endtor. They sang one of the songs of the ash-tree, about the delicate parted leaves that turn

yellow in autumn when the berries turn red, and one night the first frost silvers them.

While Selver was listening to the song of the Ash, Lyubov lay down beside him. Lying down he did not seem so monstrously tall and large-limbed. Behind him was the half-collapsed, fire-gutted building, black against the stars. "I am like you," he said, not looking at Selver, in that dream-voice which tries to reveal its own untruth. Selver's heart was heavy with sorrow for his friend. "I've got a headache," Lyubov said in his own voice, rubbing the back of his neck as he always did, and at that Selver reached out to touch him, to console him. But he was shadow and fire-light in the world-time, and the old men were singing the song of the Ash, about the small white flowers on the black branches in spring among the parted leaves.

The next day the yumens imprisoned in the compound sent for Selver. He came to Eshsen in the afternoon, and met with them outside the compound, under the branches of an oak tree, for all Selver's people felt a little uneasy under the bare open sky. Eshsen had been an oak grove; this tree was the largest of the few the colonists had left standing. It was on the long slope behind Lyubov's bungalow, one of the six or eight houses that had come through the night of the burning undamaged. With Selver under the oak were Reswan, the headwoman of Berre, Greda of Cadast, and others who wished to be in on the parley, a dozen or so in all. Many bowmen kept guard, fearing the yumens might have hidden weapons, but they sat behind bushes or bits of wreckage left from the burning, so as not to dominate the scene with the hint of threat. With Gosse and Colonel Dongh were three of the yumens called officers and two from the logging camp, at the sight of one of whom, Benton, the ex-slaves drew in their breaths. Benton had used to punish 'lazy creechies' by castrating them in public.

The Colonel looked thin, his normally yellow-brown skin a muddy yellow-grey; his illness had been no sham. "Now the first thing is," he said when they were all settled, the yumens standing, Selver's people squatting or sitting on the damp, soft oak-leaf mould, "the first thing is that I want first to have a working definition of just precisely what these terms of yours mean and what they mean in terms of guaranteed safety of my personnel under my command here."

There was a silence.

"You understand English, don't you, some of you?"

"Yes. I don't understand your question, Mr Dongh."

"Colonel Dongh, if you please!"

"Then you'll call me Colonel Selver, if you please." A singing note came

into Selver's voice; he stood up, ready for the contest, tunes running in his mind like rivers.

But the old yumen just stood there, huge and heavy, angry yet not meeting the challenge. "I did not come here to be insulted by you little humanoids," he said. But his lips trembled as he said it. He was old, and bewildered, and humiliated. All anticipation of triumph went out of Selver. There was no triumph in the world any more, only death. He sat down again. "I didn't intend insult, Colonel Dongh," he said resignedly. "Will you repeat your question, please?"

"I want to hear your terms, and then you'll hear ours, that's all there is to it."

Selver repeated what he had said to Gosse.

Dongh listened with apparent impatience. "All right. Now you don't realise that we've had a functioning radio in the prison compound for three days now." Selver did know this, as Reswan had at once checked on the object dropped by the helicopter, lest it be a weapon; the guards reported it was a radio, and he let the yumens keep it. Selver merely nodded. "So we've been in contact with the three outlying camps, the two on King Land and one on New Java, right along, and if we had decided to make a break for it and escape from that prison compound then it would have been very simple for us to do that, with the helicopters to drop us weapons and covering our movements with their mounted weapons, one flamethrower could have got us out of the compound and in case of need they also have the bombs that can blow up an entire area. You haven't seen those in action of course."

"If you'd left the compound, where would you have gone?"

"The point is, without introducing into this any beside the point or erroneous factors, now we are certainly greatly outnumbered by your forces, but we have the four helicopters at the camps, which there's no use you trying to disable as they are under fully armed guard at all times now, and also all the serious fire-power, so that the cold reality of the situation is we can pretty much call it a draw and speak in positions of mutual equality. This of course is a temporary situation. If necessary we are enabled to maintain a defensive police action to prevent all-out war. Moreover we have behind us the entire fire-power of the Terran Interstellar Fleet, which could blow your entire planet right out of the sky. But these ideas are pretty intangible to you, so let's just put it as plainly and simply as I can, that we're prepared to negotiate with you, for the present time, in terms of an equal frame of reference."

Selver's patience was short; he knew his ill-temper was a symptom of his deteriorated mental state, but he could no longer control it. "Go on, then!"

"Well, first I want it clearly understood that as soon as we got the radio we told the men at the other camps not to bring us weapons and not to try any airlift or rescue attempts, and reprisals were strictly out of order—"

"That was prudent. What next?"

Colonel Dongh began an angry retort, then stopped; he turned very pale. "Isn't there anything to sit down on," he said.

Selver went around the yumen group, up the slope, into the empty two-room bungalow, and took the folding desk-chair. Before he left the silent room he leaned down and laid his cheek on the scarred, raw wood of the desk, where Lyubov had always sat when he worked with Selver or alone; some of his papers were lying there now; Selver touched them lightly. He carried the chair out and set it in the rainwet dirt for Dongh. The old man sat down, biting his lips, his almond-shaped eyes narrow with pain.

"Mr Gosse, perhaps you can speak for the Colonel," Selver said. "He isn't well."

"I'll do the talking," Benton said, stepping forward, but Dongh shook his head and muttered, "Gosse."

With the Colonel as auditor rather than speaker it went more easily. The yumens were accepting Selver's terms. With a mutual promise of peace, they would withdraw all their outposts and live in one area, the region they had forested in Middle Sornol: about 1700 square miles of rolling land, well watered. They undertook not to enter the forest; the forest people undertook not to trespass on the Cut Lands.

The four remaining airships were the cause of some argument. The yumens insisted they needed them to bring their people from the other islands to Sornol. Since the machines carried only four men and would take several hours for each trip, it appeared to Selver that the yumens could get to Eshsen rather sooner by walking, and he offered them ferry service across the straits; but it appeared that yumens never walked far. Very well, they could keep the hoppers for what they called the 'Airlift Operation.' After that, they were to destroy them.—Refusal. Anger. They were more protective of their machines than of their bodies. Selver gave in, saying they could keep the hoppers if they flew them only over the Cut Lands and if the weapons in them were destroyed. Over this they argued, but with one another, while Selver waited, occasionally repeating the terms of his demand, for he was not giving in on this point.

"What's the difference, Benton," the old Colonel said at last, furious and shaky, "can't you see that we can't use the damned weapons? There's three million of these aliens all scattered out all over every damned island, all covered with trees and undergrowth, no cities, no vital network, no centralised control. You can't disable a guerrilla type structure with bombs,

it's been proved, in fact my own part of the world where I was born proved it for about thirty years fighting off major super-powers one after the other in the twentieth century. And we're not in a position until a ship comes to prove our superiority. Let the big stuff go, if we can hold on to the side-arms for hunting and self-defense!"

He was their Old Man, and his opinion prevailed in the end, as it might have done in a Men's Lodge. Benton sulked. Gosse started to talk about what would happen if the truce was broken, but Selver stopped him. "These are possibilities, we aren't yet done with certainties. Your Great Ship is to return in three years, that is three and a half years of your count. Until that time you are free here. It will not be very hard for you. Nothing more will be taken away from Centralville, except some of Lyubov's work that I wish to keep. You still have most of your tools of tree-cutting and ground-moving; if you need more tools, the iron-mines of Peldel are in your territory. I think all this is clear. What remains to be known is this: When that ship comes, what will they seek to do with you, and with us?"

"We don't know," Gosse said. Dongh amplified: "If you hadn't destroyed the ansible communicator first thing off, we might be receiving some current information on these matters, and our reports would of course influence the decisions that may be made concerning a finalised decision on the status of this planet, which we might then expect to begin to implement before the ship returns from Prestno. But due to wanton destruction due to your ignorance of your own interests, we haven't even got a radio left that will transmit over a few hundred miles."

"What is the ansible?" The word had come up before in this talk; it was a new one to Selver.

"ICD," the Colonel said, morose.

"A kind of radio," Gosse said, arrogant. "It put us in instant touch with our home-world."

"Without the 27-year waiting?"

Gosse stared down at Selver. "Right. Quite right. You learned a great deal from Lyubov, didn't you?"

"Didn't he just," said Benton. "He was Lyubov's little green buddyboy. He picked up everything worth knowing and a bit more besides. Like all the vital points to sabotage, and where the guards would be posted, and how to get into the weapon stockpile. They must have been in touch right up to the moment the massacre started."

Gosse looked uneasy. "Raj is dead. All that's irrelevant now, Benton. We've got to establish—"

"Are you trying to infer in some way that Captain Lyubov was involved in some activity that could be called treachery to the Colony, Benton?" said

Dongh, glaring and pressing his hands against his belly. "There were no spies or treachers on my staff, it was absolutely handpicked before we ever left Terra and I know the kind of men I have to deal with."

"I'm not inferring anything, Colonel. I'm saying straight out that it was Lyubov stirred up the creechies, and if orders hadn't been changed on us after that Fleet ship was here, it never would have happened."

Gosse and Dongh both started to speak at once. "You are all very ill," Selver observed, getting up and dusting himself off, for the damp brown oak-leaves clung to his short body-fur as to silk. "I'm sorry we've had to hold you in the creechie-pen, it is not a good place for the mind. Please send for your men from the camps. When all are here and the large weapons have been destroyed, and the promise has been spoken by all of us, then we shall leave you alone. The gates of the compound will be opened when I leave here today. Is there more to be said?"

None of them said anything. They looked down at him. Seven big men, with tan or brown hairless skin, cloth-covered, dark-eyed, grim-faced; twelve small men, green or brownish-green, fur-covered, with the large eyes of the seminocturnal creature, with dreamy faces; between the two groups, Selver, the translator, frail, disfigured, holding all their destinies in his empty hands. Rain fell softly on the brown earth about them.

"Farewell then," Selver said, and led his people away.

"They're not so stupid," said the headwoman of Berre as she accompanied Selver back to Endtor. "I thought such giants must be stupid, but they saw that you're a god, I saw it in their faces at the end of the talking. How well you talk that gobble-gubble. Ugly they are, do you think even their children are hairless?"

"That we shall never know, I hope."

"Ugh, think of nursing a child that wasn't furry. Like trying to suckle a fish."

"They are all insane," said old Tubab, looking deeply distressed. "Lyubov wasn't like that, when he used to come to Tuntar. He was ignorant, but sensible. But these ones, they argue, and sneer at the old man, and hate each other, like this," and he contorted his grey-furred face to imitate the expressions of the Terrans, whose words of course he had not been able to follow. "Was that what you said to them, Selver, that they're mad?"

"I told them that they were ill. But then, they've been defeated, and hurt, and locked in that stone cage. After that anyone might be ill and need healing."

"Who's to heal them," said the headwoman of Berre, "their women are

all dead. Too bad for them. Poor ugly things—great naked spiders they are, ugh!"

"They are men, men, like us, men," Selver said, his voice shrill and edged like a knife.

"Oh, my dear lord god, I know it, I only meant they *look* like spiders," said the old woman, caressing his cheek. "Look here, you people, Selver is worn out with this going back and forth between Endtor and Eshsen, let's sit down and rest a bit."

"Not here," Selver said. They were still in the Cut Lands, among stumps and grassy slopes, under the bare sky. "When we come under the trees. . . ." He stumbled, and those who were not gods helped him to walk along the road.

7.

Davidson found a good use for Major Muhamed's tape recorder. Somebody had to make a record of events on New Tahiti, a history of the crucifixion of the Terran Colony. So that when the ships came from Mother Earth they could learn the truth. So that future generations could learn how much treachery and cowardice and folly humans were capable of, and how much courage against all odds. During his free moments—not much more than moments since he had assumed command—he recorded the whole story of the Smith Camp Massacre, and brought the record up to date for New Java, and for King and Central also, as well as he could with the garbled hysterical stuff that was all he got by way of news from Central HQ.

Exactly what had happened there nobody would ever know, except the creechies, for the humans were trying to cover up their own betrayals and mistakes. The outlines were clear, though. An organised bunch of creechies, led by Selver, had been let into the Arsenal and the Hangars, and turned loose with dynamite, grenades, guns, and flamethrowers to totally destruct the city and slaughter the humans. It was an inside job, the fact that HQ was the first place blown up proved that. Lyubov of course had been in on it, and his little green buddies had proved just as grateful as you might expect, and cut his throat like the others. At least, Gosse and Benton claimed to have seen him dead the morning after the massacre. But could you believe any of them, actually? You could assume that any human left alive in Central after that night was more or less of a traitor. A traitor to his race.

The women were all dead, they claimed. That was bad enough, but

what was worse, there was no reason to believe it. It was easy for the creechies to take prisoners in the woods, and nothing would be easier to catch than a terrified girl running out of a burning town. And wouldn't the little green devils like to get hold of a human girl and try experiments on her? God knows how many of the women were still alive in the creechie warrens, tied down underground in one of those stinking holes, being touched and felt and crawled over and defiled by the filthy, hairy little monkeymen. It was unthinkable. But by God sometimes you have to be able to think about the unthinkable.

A hopper from King had dropped the prisoners at Central a receiver-transmitter the day after the massacre, and Muhamed had taped all his exchanges with Central starting that day. The most incredible one was a conversation between him and Colonel Dongh. The first time he played it Davidson had torn the thing right off the reel and burned it. Now he wished he had kept it, for the records, as a perfect proof of the total incompetence of the C.O.'s at both Central and New Java. He had given in to his own hotbloodedness, destroying it. But how could he sit there and listen to the recording of the Colonel and the Major discussing total surrender to the creechies, agreeing not to try retaliation, not to defend themselves, to give up all their big weapons, to all squeeze together onto a bit of land picked out for them by the creechies, a reservation conceded to them by their generous conquerors, the little green beasts. It was incredible. Literally incredible.

Probably old Ding Dong and Moo were not actually traitors by intent. They had just gone spla, lost their nerve. It was this damned planet that did it to them. It took a very strong personality to withstand it. There was something in the air, maybe pollens from all those trees, acting as some kind of drug maybe, that made ordinary humans begin to get as stupid and out of touch with reality as the creechies were. Then, being so outnumbered, they were pushovers for the creechies to wipe out.

It was too bad Muhamed had had to be put out of the way, but he would never have agreed to accept Davidson's plans, that was clear; he'd been too far gone. Anyone who'd heard that incredible tape would agree. So it was better he got shot before he really knew what was going on, and now no shame would attach to his name, as it would to Dongh's and all the other officers left alive at Central.

Dongh hadn't come on the radio lately. Usually it was Juju Sereng, in Engineering. Davidson had used to pal around a lot with Juju and had thought of him as a friend, but now you couldn't trust anybody any more. And Juju was another asiatiform. It was really queer how many of them had survived the Centralville Massacre; of those he'd talked to, the only

non-asio was Gosse. Here in Java the fifty-five loyal men remaining after the reorganization were mostly eurafs like himself, some afros and afrasians, not one pure asio. Blood tells, after all. You couldn't be fully human without some blood in your veins from the Cradle of Man. But that wouldn't stop him from saving those poor yellow bastards at Central, it just helped explain their moral collapse under stress.

"Can't you realise what kind of trouble you're making for us, Don?" Juju Sereng had demanded in his flat voice. "We've made a formal truce with the creechies. And we're under direct orders from Earth not to interfere with the hilfs and not to retaliate. Anyhow how the hell can we retaliate? Now all the fellows from King Land and South Central are here with us we're still less than two thousand, and what have you got there on Java, about sixty-five men isn't it? Do you really think two thousand men can take on three million intelligent enemies, Don?"

"Juju, fifty men can do it. It's a matter of will, skill, and weaponry."

"Batshit! But the point is, Don, a truce has been made. And if it's broken, we've had it. It's all that keeps us afloat, now. Maybe when the ship gets back from Prestno and sees what happened, they'll decide to wipe out the creechies. We don't know. But it does look like the creechies intend to keep the truce, after all it was their idea, and we have got to. They can wipe us out by sheer numbers, any time, the way they did Centralville. There were thousands of them. Can't you understand that, Don?"

"Listen, Juju, sure I understand. If you're scared to use the three hoppers you've still got there, you could send 'em over here, with a few fellows who see things like we do here. If I'm going to liberate you fellows singlehanded, I sure could use some more hoppers for the job."

"You aren't going to liberate us, you're going to incinerate us, you damned fool. Get that last hopper over here to Central now: that's the Colonel's personal order to you as Acting C.O. Use it to fly your men here; twelve trips, you won't need more than four local dayperiods. Now act on those orders, and get to it." Ponk, off the air—afraid to argue with him any more.

At first he worried that they might send their three hoppers over and actually bomb or strafe New Java Camp; for he was, technically, disobeying orders, and old Dongh wasn't tolerant of independent elements. Look how he'd taken it out on Davidson already, for that tiny reprisal-raid on Smith. Initiative got punished. What Ding Dong liked was submission, like most officers. The danger with that is that it can make the officer get submissive himself. Davidson finally realized, with a real shock, that the hoppers were no threat to him, because Dongh, Sereng, Gosse, even Benton were *afraid* to send them. The creechies had ordered them to keep

the hoppers inside the Human Reservation: and they were obeying orders.

Christ, it made him sick. It was time to act. They'd been waiting around nearly two weeks now. He had his camp well defended; they had strengthened the stockade fence and built it up so that no little green monkeymen could possibly get over it, and that clever kid Aabi had made lots of neat home-made land mines and sown 'em all around the stockade in a hundred-meter belt. Now it was time to show the creechies that they might push around those sheep on Central but on New Java it was men they had to deal with. He took the hopper up and with it guided an infantry squad of fifteen to a creechie-warren south of camp. He'd learned how to spot the things from the air; the giveaway was the orchards, concentrations of certain kinds of tree, though not planted in rows like humans would. It was incredible how many warrens there were once you learned to spot them. The forest was crawling with the things. The raiding party burned up that warren by hand, and then flying back with a couple of his boys he spotted another, less than four kilos from camp. On that one, just to write his signature real clear and plain for everybody to read, he dropped a bomb. Just a firebomb, not a big one, but baby did it make the green fur fly. It left a big hole in the forest, and the edges of the hole were burning.

Of course that was his real weapon when it actually came to setting up massive retaliation. Forest fire. He could set one of these whole islands on fire, with bombs and firejelly dropped from the hopper. Have to wait a month or two, till the rainy season was over. Should he burn King or Smith or Central? King first, maybe, as a little warning, since there were no humans left there. Then Central, if they didn't get in line.

"What are you trying to do?" said the voice on the radio, and it made him grin, it was so agonised, like some old woman being held up. "Do you know what you're doing, Davidson?"

"Yep."

"Do you think you're going to subdue the creechies?" It wasn't Juju this time, it might be that bigdome Gosse, or any of them; no difference; they all bleated baa.

"Yes, that's right," he said with ironic mildness.

"You think if you keep burning up villages they'll come to you and surrender—three million of them. Right?"

"Maybe."

"Look, Davidson," the radio said after a while, whining and buzzing; they were using some kind of emergency rig, having lost the big transmitter, along with that phoney ansible which was no loss. "Look, is there somebody else standing by there we can talk to?"

"No; they're all pretty busy. Say, we're doing great here, but we're out

of dessert stuff, you know, fruit cocktail, peaches, crap like that. Some of the fellows really miss it. And we were due for a load of maryjanes when you fellows got blown up. If I sent the hopper over, could you spare us a few crates of sweet stuff and grass?"

A pause. "Yes, send it on over."

"Great. Have the stuff in a net, and the boys can hook it without landing." He grinned.

There was some fussing around at the Central end, and all of a sudden old Dongh was on, the first time he'd talked to Davidson. He sounded feeble and out of breath on the whining shortwave. "Listen, Captain, I want to know if you fully realize what form of action your actions on New Java are going to be forcing me into taking. If you continue to disobey your orders. I am trying to reason with you as a reasonable and loyal soldier. In order to ensure the safety of my personnel here at Central I'm going to be put into the position of being forced to tell the natives here that we can't assume any responsibility at all for your actions."

"That's correct, sir."

"What I'm trying to make clear to you is that means that we are going to be put into the position of having to tell them that we can't stop you from breaking the truce there on Java. Your personnel there is sixty-six men, is that correct, well I want those men safe and sound here at Central with us to wait for the *Shackleton* and keep the Colony together. You're on a suicide course and I'm responsible for those men you have there with you."

"No, you're not, sir. I am. You just relax. Only when you see the jungle burning, pick up and get out into the middle of a Strip, because we don't want to roast you folks along with the creechies.

"Now listen, Davidson, I order you to hand your command over to Lt. Temba at once and report to me here," said the distant whining voice, and Davidson suddenly cut off the radio, sickened. They were all spla, playing at still being soldiers, in full retreat from reality. There were actually very few men who could face reality when the going got tough.

As he expected, the local creechies did absolutely nothing about his raids on the warrens. The only way to handle them, as he'd known from the start, was to terrorise them and never let up on them. If you did that, they knew who was boss, and knuckled under. A lot of the villages within a thirty-kilo radius seemed to be deserted now before he got to them, but he kept his men going out to burn them up every few days.

The fellows were getting rather jumpy. He had kept them logging, since that's what forty-eight of the fifty-five loyal survivors were, loggers. But they knew that the robo-freighters from Earth wouldn't be called down to

load up the lumber, but would just keep coming in and circling in orbit waiting for the signal that didn't come. No use cutting trees just for the hell of it; it was hard work. Might as well burn them. He exercised the men in teams, developing fire-setting techniques. It was still too rainy for them to do much, but it kept their minds busy. If only he had the other three hoppers, he'd really be able to hit and run. He considered a raid on Central to liberate the hoppers, but did not yet mention this idea even to Aabi and Temba, his best men. Some of the boys would get cold feet at the idea of an armed raid on their own HQ. They kept talking about "when we get back with the others." They didn't know those others had abandoned them, betrayed them, sold their skins to the creechies. He didn't tell them that, they couldn't take it.

One day he and Aabi and Temba and another good sound man would just take the hopper over, then three of them jump out with machine guns, take a hopper apiece, and so home again, home again, jiggety jog. With four nice egg-beaters to beat eggs with. Can't make an omelet without beating eggs. Davidson laughed aloud, in the darkness of his bungalow. He kept that plan hidden just a little longer, because it tickled him so much to think about it.

After two more weeks they had pretty well closed out the creechie-warrens within walking distance, and the forest was neat and tidy. No vermin. No smoke-puffs over the trees. Nobody hopping out of bushes and flopping down on the ground with their eyes shut, waiting for you to stomp them. No little green men. Just a mess of trees and some burned places. The boys were getting really edgy and mean; it was time to make the hopper-raid. He told his plan one night to Aabi, Temba, and Post.

None of them said anything for a minute, then Aabi said, "What about fuel, Captain?"

"We got enough fuel."

"Not for four hoppers; wouldn't last a week."

"You mean there's only a month's supply left for this one?"

Aabi nodded.

"Well then, we pick up a little fuel too, looks like."

"How?"

"Put your minds to it."

They all sat there looking stupid. It annoyed him. They looked to him for everything. He was a natural leader, but he liked men who thought for themselves too. "Figure it out, it's your line of work, Aabi," he said, and went out for a smoke, sick of the way everybody acted, like they'd lost their nerve. They just couldn't face the cold hard facts.

They were low on maryjanes now and he hadn't had one for a couple

of days. It didn't do anything for him. The night was overcast and black, damp, warm, smelling like spring. Ngenene went by walking like an ice-skater, or almost like a robot on treads; he turned slowly through a gliding step and gazed at Davidson, who stood on the bungalow porch in the dim light from the doorway. He was a power-saw operator, a huge man. "The source of my energy is connected to the Great Generator I cannot be switched off," he said in a level tone, gazing at Davidson.

"Get to your barracks and sleep it off!" Davidson said in the whipcrack voice that nobody ever disobeyed, and after a moment Ngenene skated carefully on, ponderous and graceful. Too many of the men were using hallies more and more heavily. There was plenty, but the stuff was for loggers relaxing on Sundays, not for soldiers of a tiny outpost marooned on a hostile world. They had no time for getting high, for dreaming. He'd have to lock the stuff up. Then some of the boys might crack. Well, let 'em crack. Can't make an omelet without cracking eggs. Maybe he could send them back to Central in exchange for some fuel. You give me two, three tanks of gas and I'll give you two, three warm bodies, loyal soldiers, good loggers, just your type, a little far gone in bye-bye dreamland. . . .

He grinned, and was going back inside to try this one out on Temba and the others, when the guard posted up on the lumberyard smoke stack yelled. "They're coming!" he screeched out in a high voice, like a kid playing Blacks and Rhodesians. Somebody else over on the west side of the stockade began yelling too. A gun went off.

And they came. Christ, they came. It was incredible. There were thousands of them, thousands. No sound, no noise at all, until that screech from the guard; then one gunshot; then an explosion—a land mine going up—and another, one after another, and hundreds and hundreds of torches flaring up lit one from another and being thrown and soaring through the black wet air like rockets, and the walls of the stockade coming alive with creechies, pouring in, pouring over, pushing, swarming, thousands of them. It was like an army of rats Davidson had seen once when he was a little kid, in the last Famine, in the streets of Cleveland, Ohio, where he grew up. Something had driven the rats out of their holes and they had come up in daylight, seething up over the wall, a pulsing blanket of fur and eyes and little hands and teeth, and he had yelled for his mom and run like crazy, or was that only a dream he'd had when he was a kid? It was important to keep cool. The hopper was parked in the creechie-pen; it was still dark over on that side and he got there at once. The gate was locked, he always kept it locked in case one of the weak sisters got a notion of flying off to Papa Ding Dong some dark night. It seemed to take a long time to get the key out and fit it in the lock and turn it right, but it

was just a matter of keeping cool, and then it took a long time to sprint to the hopper and unlock it. Post and Aabi were with him now. At last came the huge rattle of the rotors, beating eggs, covering up all the weird noises, the high voices yelling and screeching and singing. Up they went, and hell dropped away below them: a pen full of rats, burning.

"It takes a cool head to size up an emergency situation quickly," Davidson said. "You men thought fast and acted fast. Good work. Where's Temba?"

"Got a spear in his belly," Post said.

Aabi, the pilot, seemed to want to fly the hopper, so Davidson let him. He clambered into one of the rear seats and sat back, letting his muscles relax. The forest flowed beneath them, black under black.

"Where you heading, Aabi?"

"Central."

"No. We don't want to go to Central."

"Where do we want to go to?" Aabi said with a kind of womanish giggle. "New York? Peking?"

"Just keep her up a while, Aabi, and circle camp. Big circles. Out of earshot."

"Captain, there isn't any Java Camp any more by now," said Post, a logging-crew foreman, a stocky, steady man.

"When the creechies are through burning the camp, we'll come in and burn creechies. There must be four thousand of them all in one place there. There's six flamethrowers in the back of this helicopter. Let's give 'em about twenty minutes. Start with the jelly bombs and then catch the ones that run with the flamethrowers."

"Christ," Aabi said violently, "some of our guys might be there, the creechies might take prisoners, we don't know. I'm not going back there and burn up humans, maybe." He had not turned the hopper.

Davidson put the nose of his revolver against the back of Aabi's skull and said, "Yes, we're going back; so pull yourself together, baby, and don't give me a lot of trouble."

"There's enough fuel in the tank to get us to Central, Captain," the pilot said. He kept trying to duck his head away from the touch of the gun, like it was a fly bothering him. "But that's all. That's all we got."

"Then we'll get a lot of mileage out of it. Turn her, Aabi."

"I think we better go on to Central, Captain," Post said in his stolid voice, and this ganging up against him enraged Davidson so much that reversing the gun in his hand he struck out fast as a snake and clipped Post over the ear with the gun-butt. The logger just folded over like a Christmas card, and sat there in the front seat with his head between his knees and

his hands hanging to the floor. "Turn her, Aabi," Davidson said, the whiplash in his voice. The helicopter swung around in a wide arc. "Hell, where's camp, I never had this hopper up at night without any signal to follow," Aabi said, sounding dull and snuffly like he had a cold.

"Go east and look for the fire," Davidson said, cold and quiet. None of them had any real stamina, not even Temba. None of them had stood by him when the going got really tough. Sooner or later they all joined up against him, because they just couldn't take it the way he could. The weak conspire against the strong, the strong man has to stand alone and look out for himself. It just happened to be the way things are. Where was the camp?

They should have been able to see the burning buildings for miles in this blank dark, even in the rain. Nothing showed. Grey-black sky, black ground. The fires must have gone out. Been put out. Could the humans have driven off the creechies? After he'd escaped? The thought went like a spray of icewater through his mind. No, of course not, not fifty against thousands. But by God there must be a lot of pieces of blown-up creechie lying around on the minefields, anyway. It was just that they'd come so damned thick. Nothing could have stopped them. He couldn't have planned for that. Where had they come from? There hadn't been any creechies in the forest anywhere around for days and days. They must have poured in from somewhere, from all directions, sneaking along in the woods, coming up out of their holes like rats. There wasn't any way to stop thousands and thousands of them like that. Where the hell was camp? Aabi was tricking, faking course. "Find the camp, Aabi," he said softly.

"For Christ's sake I'm trying to," the boy said.

Post never moved, folded over there by the pilot.

"It couldn't just disappear, could it, Aabi. You got seven minutes to find it."

"Find it yourself," Aabi said, shrill and sullen.

"Not till you and Post get in line, baby. Take her down lower."

After a minute Aabi said, "That looks like the river."

There was a river, and a big clearing; but where was Java Camp? It didn't show up as they flew north over the clearing. "This must be it, there isn't any other big clearing is there," Aabi said, coming back over the treeless area. Their landing-lights glared but you couldn't see anything outside the tunnels of the lights; it would be better to have them off. Davidson reached over the pilot's shoulder and switched the lights off. Blank wet dark was like black towels slapped on their eyes. "For Christ's sake!" Aabi screamed, and flipping the lights back on slewed the hopper left and up,

but not fast enough. Trees leaned hugely out of the night and caught the machine.

The vanes screamed, hurling leaves and twigs in a cyclone through the bright lanes of the lights, but the boles of the trees were very old and strong. The little winged machine plunged, seemed to lurch and tear itself free, and went down sideways into the trees. The lights went out. The noise stopped.

"I don't feel so good," Davidson said. He said it again. Then he stopped saying it, for there was nobody to say it to. Then he realised he hadn't said it anyway. He felt groggy. Must have hit his head. Aabi wasn't there. Where was he? This was the hopper. It was all slewed around, but he was still in his seat. It was so dark, like being blind. He felt around, and so found Post, inert, still doubled up, crammed in between the front seat and the control panel. The hopper trembled whenever Davidson moved, and he figured out at last that it wasn't on the ground but wedged in between trees, stuck like a kite. His head was feeling better, and he wanted more and more to get out of the black, tilted-over cabin. He squirmed over into the pilot's seat and got his legs out, hung by his hands, and could not feel ground, only branches scraping his dangling legs. Finally he let go, not knowing how far he'd fall, but he had to get out of that cabin. It was only a few feet down. It jolted his head, but he felt better standing up. If only it wasn't so dark, so black. He had a torch in his belt, he always carried one at night around camp. But it wasn't there. That was funny. It must have fallen out. He'd better get back into the hopper and get it. Maybe Aabi had taken it. Aabi had intentionally crashed the hopper, taken Davidson's torch, and made a break for it. The slimy little bastard, he was like all the rest of them. The air was black and full of moisture, and you couldn't tell where to put your feet, it was all roots and bushes and tangles. There were noises all around, water dripping, rustling, tiny noises, little things sneaking around in the darkness. He'd better get back up into the hopper, get his torch. But he couldn't see how to climb back up. The bottom edge of the doorway was just out of reach of his fingers.

There was a light, a faint gleam seen and gone away off in the trees. Aabi had taken the torch and gone off to reconnoiter, get orientated, smart boy. "Aabi!" he called in a piercing whisper. He stepped on something queer while he was trying to see the light among the trees again. He kicked at it with his boots, then put a hand down on it, cautiously, for it wasn't wise to go feeling things you couldn't see. A lot of wet stuff, slick, like a dead rat. He withdrew his hand quickly. He felt in another place after a while; it was a boot under his hand, he could feel the crossings of the laces. It must be Aabi lying there right under his feet. He'd got thrown out of the

hopper when it came down. Well, he'd deserved it with his Judas trick, trying to run off to Central. Davidson did not like the wet feel of the unseen clothes and hair. He straightened up. There was the light again, black-barred by near and distant tree-trunks, a distant glow that moved.

Davidson put his hand to his holster. The revolver was not in it.

He'd had it in his hand, in case Post or Aabi acted up. It was not in his hand. It must be up in the helicopter with his torch.

He stood crouching, immobile; then abruptly began to run. He could not see where he was going. Tree-trunks jolted him from side to side as he knocked into them, and roots tripped up his feet. He fell full length, crashing down among bushes. Getting to hands and knees he tried to hide. Bare, wet twigs dragged and scraped over his face. He squirmed farther into the bushes. His brain was entirely occupied by the complex smells of rot and growth, dead leaves, decay, new shoots, fronds, flowers, the smells of night and spring and rain. The light shone full on him. He saw the creechies.

He remembered what they did when cornered, and what Lyubov had said about it. He turned over on his back and lay with his head tipped back, his eyes shut. His heart stuttered in his chest.

Nothing happened.

It was hard to open his eyes, but finally he managed to. They just stood there: a lot of them, ten or twenty. They carried those spears they had for hunting, little toy-looking things but the iron blades were sharp, they could cut right through your guts. He shut his eyes and just kept lying there.

And nothing happened.

His heart quieted down, and it seemed like he could think better. Something stirred down inside him, something almost like laughter. By God they couldn't get him down! If his own men betrayed him, and human intelligence couldn't do any more for him, then he used their own trick against them—played dead like this, and triggered this instinct reflex that kept them from killing anybody who took that position. They just stood around him, muttering at each other. *They couldn't hurt him.* It was as if he was a god.

"Davidson."

He had to open his eyes again. The resin-flare carried by one of the creechies still burned, but it had grown pale, and the forest was dim grey now, not pitch-black. How had that happened? Only five or ten minutes had gone by. It was still hard to see but it wasn't night any more. He could see the leaves and branches, the forest. He could see the face looking down at him. It had no color in this toneless twilight of dawn. The scarred features looked like a man's. The eyes were like dark holes.

"Let me get up," Davidson said suddenly in a loud, hoarse voice. He was shaking with cold from lying on the wet ground. He could not lie there with Selver looking down at him.

Selver was emptyhanded, but a lot of the little devils around him had not only spears but revolvers. Stolen from his stockpile at camp. He struggled to his feet. His clothes clung icy to his shoulders and the backs of his legs, and he could not stop shaking.

"Get it over with," he said. "Hurry-up-quick!"

Selver just looked at him. At least now he had to look up, way up, to meet Davidson's eyes.

"Do you wish me to kill you now?" he inquired. He had learned that way of talking from Lyubov, of course; even his voice, it could have been Lyubov talking. It was uncanny.

"It's my choice, is it?"

"Well, you have lain all night in the way that means you wished us to let you live; now do you want to die?"

The pain in his head and stomach, and his hatred for this horrible little freak that talked like Lyubov and that had got him at its mercy, the pain and the hatred combined and set his belly churning, so he retched and was nearly sick. He shook with cold and nausea. He tried to hold on to courage. He suddenly stepped forward a pace and spat in Selver's face.

There was a little pause, and then Selver, with a kind of dancing movement, spat back. And laughed. And made no move to kill Davidson. Davidson wiped the cold spittle off his lips.

"Look, Captain Davidson," the creechie said in that quiet little voice that made Davidson go dizzy and sick, "we're both gods, you and I. You're an insane one, and I'm not sure whether I'm sane or not. But we are gods. There will never be another meeting in the forest like this meeting now between us. We bring each other such gifts as gods bring. You gave me a gift, the killing of one's kind, murder. Now, as well as I can, I give you my people's gift, which is not killing. I think we each find each other's gift heavy to carry. However, you must carry it alone. Your people at Eshsen tell me that if I bring you there, they have to make a judgment on you and kill you, it's their law to do so. So, wishing to give you life, I can't take you with the other prisoners to Eshsen; and I can't leave you to wander in the forest, for you do too much harm. So you'll be treated like one of us when we go mad. You'll be taken to Rendlep where nobody lives any more, and left there."

Davidson stared at the creechie, could not take his eyes off it. It was as if it had some hypnotic power over him. He couldn't stand this. Nobody had any power over him. Nobody could hurt him. "I should have broken

your neck right away, that day you tried to jump me," he said, his voice still hoarse and thick.

"It might have been best," Selver answered. "But Lyubov prevented you. As he now prevents me from killing you.—All the killing is done now. And the cutting of trees. There aren't trees to cut on Rendlep. That's the place you call Dump Island. Your people left no trees there, so you can't make a boat and sail from it. Nothing much grows there any more, so we shall have to bring you food and wood to burn. There's nothing to kill on Rendlep. No trees, no people. There were trees and people, but now there are only the dreams of them. It seems to me a fitting place for you to live, since you must live. You might learn how to dream there, but more likely you will follow your madness through to its proper end, at last."

"Kill me now and quit your damned gloating."

"Kill you?" Selver said, and his eyes looking up at Davidson seemed to shine, very clear and terrible, in the twilight of the forest. "I can't kill you, Davidson. You're a god. You must do it yourself."

He turned and walked away, light and quick, vanishing among the grey trees within a few steps.

A noose slipped over Davidson's head and tightened a little on his throat. Small spears approached his back and sides. They did not try to hurt him. He could run away, make a break for it, they didn't dare kill him. The blades were polished, leaf-shaped, sharp as razors. The noose tugged gently at his neck. He followed where they led him.

8.

Selver had not seen Lyubov for a long time. That dream had gone with him to Rieshwel. It had been with him when he spoke the last time to Davidson. Then it had gone, and perhaps it slept now in the grave of Lyubov's death at Eshsen, for it never came to Selver in the town of Broter where he now lived.

But when the great ship returned, and he went to Eshsen, Lyubov met him there. He was silent and tenuous, very sad, so that the old carking grief awoke in Selver.

Lyubov stayed with him, a shadow in the mind, even when he met the yumens from the ship. These were people of power; they were very different from all yumens he had known, except his friend, but they were much stronger men than Lyubov had been.

His yumen speech had gone rusty, and at first he mostly let them talk. When he was fairly certain what kind of people they were, he brought forward the heavy box he had carried from Broter. "Inside this there is Lyubov's work," he said, groping for the words. "He knew more about us than the others do. He learned my language and the Men's Tongue; we wrote all that down. He understood somewhat how we live and dream. The others do not. I'll give you the work, if you'll take it to the place he wished."

The tall, white-skinned one, Lepennon, looked happy, and thanked Selver, telling him that the papers would indeed be taken where Lyubov wished, and would be highly valued. That pleased Selver. But it had been painful to him to speak his friend's name aloud, for Lyubov's face was still bitterly sad when he turned to it in his mind. He withdrew a little from the yumens, and watched them. Dongh and Gosse and others of Eshsen were there along with the five from the ship. The new ones looked clean and polished as new iron. The old ones had let the hair grow on their faces, so that they looked a little like huge, black-furred Athsheans. They still wore clothes, but the clothes were old and not kept clean. They were not thin, except for the Old Man, who had been ill ever since the Night of Eshsen; but they all looked a little like men who are lost or mad.

This meeting was at the edge of the forest, in that zone where by tacit agreement neither the forest people nor the yumens had built dwellings or camped for these past years. Selver and his companions settled down in the shade of a big ash-tree that stood out away from the forest eaves. Its berries were only small green knots against the twigs as yet, its leaves were long and soft, labile, summer-green. The light beneath the great tree was soft, complex with shadows.

The yumens consulted and came and went, and at last one came over to the ash-tree. It was the hard one from the ship, the Commander. He squatted down on his heels near Selver, not asking permission but not with any evident intention of rudeness. He said, "Can we talk a little?"

"Certainly."

"You know that we'll be taking all the Terrans away with us. We brought a second ship with us to carry them. Your world will no longer be used as a colony."

"This was the message I heard at Broter, when you came three days ago."

"I wanted to be sure that you understand that this is a permanent arrangement. We're not coming back. Your world has been placed under the League Ban. What that means in your terms is this: I can promise you

that no one will come here to cut the trees or take your lands, so long as the League lasts."

"None of you will ever come back," Selver said, statement or question.

"Not for five generations. None. Then perhaps a few men, ten or twenty, no more than twenty, might come to talk to your people, and study your world, as some of the men here were doing."

"The scientists, the Speshes," Selver said. He brooded. "You decide matters all at once, your people," he said, again between statement and question.

"How do you mean?" The Commander looked wary.

"Well, you say that none of you shall cut the trees of Athshe: and all of you stop. And yet you live in many places. Now if a headwoman in Karach gave an order, it would not be obeyed by the people of the next village, and surely not by all the people in the world at once. . . ."

"No, because you haven't one government over all. But we do—now—and I assure you its orders are obeyed. By all of us at once. But, as a matter of fact, it seems to me from the story we've been told by the colonists here, that when *you* gave an order, Selver, it was obeyed by everybody on every island here at once. How did you manage that?"

"At that time I was a god," Selver said, expressionless.

After the Commander had left him, the long white one came sauntering over and asked if he might sit down in the shade of the tree. He had tact, this one, and was extremely clever. Selver was uneasy with him. Like Lyubov, this one would be gentle; he would understand, and yet would himself be utterly beyond understanding. For the kindest of them was as far out of touch, as unreachable, as the cruellest. That was why the presence of Lyubov in his mind remained painful to him, while the dreams in which he saw and touched his dead wife Thele were precious and full of peace.

"When I was here before," Lepennon said, "I met this man, Raj Lyubov. I had very little chance to speak with him, but I remember what he said; and I've had time to read some of his studies of your people, since. His work, as you say. It's largely because of that work of his that Athshe is now free of the Terran Colony. This freedom had become the direction of Lyubov's life, I think. You, being his friend, will see that his death did not stop him from arriving at his goal, from finishing his journey."

Selver sat still. Uneasiness turned to fear in his mind. This one spoke like a Great Dreamer.

He made no response at all.

"Will you tell me one thing, Selver. If the question doesn't offend you. There will be no more questions after it. . . . There were the killings: at

Smith Camp, then at this place, Eshsen, then finally at New Java Camp where Davidson led the rebel group. That was all. No more since then. . . . Is that true? Have there been no more killings?"

"I did not kill Davidson."

"That does not matter," Lepennon said, misunderstanding; Selver meant that Davidson was not dead, but Lepennon took him to mean that someone else had killed Davidson. Relieved to see that the yumen could err, Selver did not correct him.

"There has been no more killing, then?"

"None. They will tell you," Selver said, nodding towards the Colonel and Gosse.

"Among your own people, I mean. Athsheans killing Athsheans."

Selver was silent.

He looked up at Lepennon, at the strange face, white as the mask of the Ash Spirit, that changed as it met his gaze.

"Sometimes a god comes," Selver said. "He brings a new way to do a thing, or a new thing to be done. A new kind of singing, or a new kind of death. He brings this across the bridge between the dream-time and the world-time. When he has done this, it is done. You cannot take things that exist in the world and try to drive them back into the dream, to hold them inside the dream with walls and pretenses. That is insanity. What is, is. There is no use pretending, now, that we do not know how to kill one another."

Lepennon laid his long hand on Selver's hand, so quickly and gently that Selver accepted the touch as if the hand were not a stranger's. The green-gold shadows of the ash leaves flickered over them.

"But you must not pretend to have reasons to kill one another. Murder has no reason," Lepennon said, his face as anxious and sad as Lyubov's face. "We shall go. Within two days we shall be gone. All of us. Forever. Then the forests of Athshe will be as they were before."

Lyubov came out of the shadows of Selver's mind and said, "I shall be here."

"Lyubov will be here," Selver said. "And Davidson will be here. Both of them. Maybe after I die people will be as they were before I was born, and before you came. But I do not think they will."

Afterword:

Writing is usually hard work for me, and enjoyable; this story was easy to write, and disagreeable. It left me no choice. Writing it was a little like

taking dictation from a boss with ulcers. What I wanted to write about was the forest and the dream; that is, I wanted to describe a certain ecology from within, and to play with some of Hadfield's and Dement's ideas about the function of dreaming-sleep and the uses of dream. But the boss wanted to talk about the destruction of ecological balance and the rejection of emotional balance. He didn't want to play. He wanted to moralize. I am not very fond of moralistic tales, for they often lack charity. I hope this one does not. I can only say—having been forced to endure the experience—that it is even more painful to be Don Davidson than it is to be Raj Lyubov.



andy offutt tells me this story was turned down by myriad publishers because they were afraid of it. That may be true, I don't know. It seemed to me the instant I read it, one of the cleverest ways to screw up The System ever invented. For those of us who daily grapple with the monstrousness of The System, stories such as andy's come as reaffirmation of our silent, increasingly more dangerous and difficult mission: the tossing of spanners into the machinery of The Corporate State, what Reich calls in *The Greening of America,* "a mindless juggernaut, destroying the environment, obliterating human values, and assuming domination over the lives and minds of its subjects. To the injustices and exploitation of the nineteenth century, the Corporate State has added depersonalization, meaninglessness, and repression, until it has threatened to destroy all meaning and all life."

I've written elsewhere, and at great length about the ways in which the mindless juggernaut debases and manhandles us, and I've even written of the few legitimate and legal steps I've taken to slow its crushing inertia. The illegal and illegitimate steps I've taken will go to my grave with me, probably very soon if I keep at them.

But overpaying one's telephone bill by something just under a dollar (so it costs them many more dollars to clear it on their computers) and remitting one's telephone bill in the return envelope *without* postage . . . writing to the giant food companies telling them you found a dead fly or a cockroach in their breakfast food, so they send you a case of the crap just to appease you . . . conscientious objecting or joining the Peace Corps to screw the war machine out of another warm body . . . suing the automobile manufacturers when their cars fall to pieces, or suing in general because they pollute the air . . . these, and the thousands of other ripoffs, both legal and illegal . . . these are manna in the desert to those of us who see the snowball roll of the Corporate State flattening individuality and reason and humanity in these Dark Days of our civilization's decline.

So andy offutt offers another one here. A lovely and original one.

Which sort of says it about andy offutt.

You've noticed his name always appears in lower-case, no initial-caps. How about that. It's the way andrew j. offutt signs his letters and heads his stationery, and bylines his stories and in general continues to annoy people. He's annoyed me ever since 1954 when his short story, "And Gone Tomorrow," won first place in a College SF Contest sponsored by *If:*

Worlds of Science Fiction. I'd entered that contest myself, being in an impoverished state (Ohio) at the time, working my way through Ohio State Impoverished cadging off my mother, waiting table, writing term papers (on which I guaranteed a "B" or better) and shoplifting to obtain the little luxuries like books and records. When the contest was won by an "A. J. Offutt" I thought, *flash in the pan; stupid sonofabitch'll never write another word.*

Didn't hear from the clown again till 1959 when "Blacksword" appeared in *Galaxy.* But by that time I'd been writing professionally for three years, I was out of the Army, and I could afford to be charitable. Still didn't know or care much about anything named Offutt (in those days the name was capped).

Who he was, and where he came from is contained in this revealing and semi-literate biography, presented here without comment by your editor, who is still working on the grudge from 1954 . . .

"The first thing we did was move from Louisville to this farm, where i grew up with a couple of coonhounds, 35 or so Holstein cattle, a bull with manners like a NYC editor, some horses, lots of tobacco and hay (fever for me), and a cat named Papa who went coon-hunting with Dad. (Raccoons. We i mean us Kentuckians don't consider ourselves Southerners. Ohioans do. Tennesseeans consider us damyanks. What are you going to do? We supplied the leaders to BOTH sides of that godawful war.)

"I had a damned unhappy childhood during which i attended a 1-room, 8-grade schoolhouse for 4 years; waited at the mailbox every day after we sent off the Sears order; reigned as the most unathletic kid in the county (i got chosen next to last when we played ball; the little fat girl was chosen last, bless her, i was always sent to right field. That's where the balls don't come); was very short until i was 17 or worse, when i grew 8 inches in 10 months; committed the unpardonable sincrime of being awfully smart, as well as Catholic in a community devoted to stupidity and where the KKK had ridden only 23 years earlier—against Catholics! (The community was too small to afford Jews or Blacks, who keep Catholics safe in big cities.)

"We were also pore.

"At 17 i took a lot of tests and skipped my senior year of high school to enter the U. of Louisville on a Ford Foundation Scholarship. I graduated at 20. In the meanwhile i did a lot of stuff like playing bridge and poker and cutting lots of classes and being a virgin and president of my fraternity and the Newman Club and on the student council and editor of the Air Farce ROTC paper and Mng Editor of the school weekly. Uncle andy's Advice column was a popular feature, honest to Abby! I also had lots of jobs; 3 in my senior year, simultaneously. In '54 or '55 i entered IF's College SF Contest and won because Ellison had dropped out of college to become Symington's aide, or something. My story 'And Gone To-

morrow,' laid in 2054, predicted trial marriages (would you believe it started happening a little earlier, like 90 years?) and other earthshaking stuff. I also said that there was no perfect government, but that a dictatorship comes closest. I still believe that, but prefer freedom and so write things that try to show how my favorite form of government could be better. You know, the one America used to have. I took no business courses, so i went to work with Proctor & Gamble until i outgrew it. I went into the life and health insurance business and by Fall of '68 i had agencies in three towns. Fortunately i was able to outgrow that, too. Oh, at around age 28 i also outgrew the Roman Church; Vardis Fisher helped a lot.

"I was always a slow starter. My second story was published in 1959, in *Galaxy*. (Despite the fact that it was mostly written on my honeymoon, my wife is still with me.) It was called 'Blacksword' and was about a man named that, not a weapon. Another one called 'Population Implosion' was picked for Ace's WORLD'S BEST in '68, and you can now read it in Japanese if you've a mind to. There were other stories. My stories usually involve satire and resistance to Authority and attacks on Established Faiths (AMA, ABA, USA, ETC), which i guess indicates i must have had funny feelings about my coonhunten daddy who ran the house as if he were the Sheriff of Nottingham.

"I love to talk first and write second, and i do both because i have to. I've sold a lot of novels, under several names; i'm John Cleve, usually, when i write about goodole sex (which maybe i like better than writing and eating, come to think). I like to drink, too, and prefer Maker's Mark and soda with lemon in season and gin 'n' tonic in the other season. I put lemon in everything i drink except beer and the gallon or so of sacchariny coffee i store away daily.

"Ours is an enormous old white elephant of a house with a living room the size of the standard FHA/VA house of the '50's. It is on 3½ acres on a high hill in Haldeman, 8 miles from Morehead (which is about 8 miles from Salt Lick and 15 from Flemingsburg, so you'll know). We call the place Funny Farm because there's a wife i'm crazy about and four offutt-spring i endeavor to tolerate and a coonhound named Pompeius Magnus who prays to me every night because black-and-tans are like that (coonhounds, not Irish, of which my wife is one). (We don't raise anything except hell and kids.) I fully expect to have to defend the damned place from you lebensrauming scum from NYC and places like that, anyday soon. I fully expect LA to solve its own problem, and i will miss Atlanteans Kirby and Ellison and Geis and a few others."

offutt is the author of any number of novels, about sixty totaled. He's even managed to sell about forty of them. When I sat down to write this introduction, however, I found that offutt had cleverly avoided giving me the titles of any of them, and since only one (as of this writing) has appeared under his name—*Evil Is Live Spelled Backwards*—and a pretty

fair country novel it is, too—I got on the phone and called him in Morehead, Kentucky, or wherever the hell he is. He was rather annoyed.

I see no reason why a man should be annoyed that you call him at 12:30 a.m. Los Angeles time, that is. In Kentucky it was 3:30 in the morning, and his wife, Jodie, answered the phone, so I said, "Happy Mother's Day," thinking that might placate her. I must say, for all that, andy offutt is crummy company at 3:30 in the morning. All he does is grumble.

But I managed to get some titles out of him. He was very reluctant. He felt my including the titles of his "erotic" novels was a cheapjack trick of yellow journalism. Not so. I happen to think the contemporary "erotica" scene has produced some very heady writing (if you'll pardon the term) and some very interesting writers. Like David Meltzer and Michael Perkins and Hank Stine . . . and John Cleve, who is andrew j. offutt.

So he gave me a few titles. *Barbarana, The Seductress, Mongoll, Black Man's Harem, The Devoured* and something he says should be written like so: *the great 24 hour THING.*

He's also got some more sf novels coming out under his own name—*The Castle Keeps* from Berkley and *Messenger of Zhuvastou* from the same place, and Dell is publishing *Ardor on Aros.* As you can see, offutt writes a lot, and he writes a lot of "erotica." (When *I* was writing that stuff, we called it "stiffeners," but then, *we* weren't Artists.)

Which brings me to the second large chunk of comment out of offutt himself. I include it here, recognizing that the introduction will be almost as long as the story it introduces, because it offers some very amusing and perceptive insights into the way a *professional* works.

Look: A,DV is something of a living entity. It is not merely a batch of stories cobbled up by a faceless dude trying to fill in the lag-time between his own books, with another group of faceless dudes submitting at random and hoping to make a buck. It is a great wild bunch of us sitting about and rapping till well into the wee hours, and when one of us gets it on in a sufficiently fascinating manner, we like to let him ramble on. So for all of you out there who think writing is this or that or the other thing, who have writing blocks and want to know what the mind of the writer is like, here's offutt on his habits behind the typewriter. I think you'll find it highly readable. Take it, andy:

"i have defined a writer as the happiest man alive, because he gets paid for doing his thing, his hobby. i wrote a novel when i was nine (cowboys, what else?), and stories right along, and a novel when i was 13 or so (Edgar Rice Burroughs, what else?). i wrote three novels while in college (pretending to be taking notes during dull lectures). Two of them still read pretty well. i graduated at 20.

"Cut to 1967. i had published a few short stories, solo and in unlikely collaborations; had put in several years with Proctor & Gamble until i out-

grew that; had put in a year in the life insurance business and then had gone into that same business for myself; had begun managing. Suddenly, after saying No about seven times, i finally said yes and took up the management of three insurance agencies in three different cities. Ripping up and down the highways. Holding meetings here and there. Playing Executive in motels (that's a fun game too, and most players never outgrow it). i was a member in good standing of the crisis-of-the-day club. i was exhausting myself, mentally and physically. Too, i knew what my twice-daily Alka-Seltzering for that fluttery gut was in all likelihood leading to. Yet with the exhaustion came extreme mental stimulation.

"On weekends i was in sore need of relaxation.

"i relaxed in front of the Selectric. (i like the best machinery, too; the Mercedes and the Selectric are, although the Underwood P-48 and the SCM-250 i had for a year each were Bhad Nhews.) In six months of such heavyweight management, capped—and made bearable by—Saturday-and-Sunday writing, i created three short stories and 5½ novels. They started selling. i closed the out-of-Morehead agencies. Four months later i made certain other arrangements, and took a back seat in *andrew offutt associates* (unltd).

"Finally, in August 1970, i left the insurance business altogether. i did some designs, spent a lot of money, and had an office built in here at home, Funny Farm.

"i had been in the life/hospitalization insurance business seven years. In the final 20 months i managed, selling nothing because i did not try to (that's true capitalism). In that same period i sold sixteen 50,000-word novels. Settings, times, subject matter, 'type' and even styles—I did a Victorian, for instance—varied.

"Since August 1967 i've sold just under two million words. In 1969 10 novels sold, over a half-million words. In 1970 12 novels, four of which, finally, were sf with my own name on them, and a couple of shorts and an underground-newspaper article. (Well, all right: *Screw.*)

"Until very recently, all my work was done on weekends, on the IBM. i would start at about 1:30 PM, sometimes a little earlier, on Saturdays. And write until dinner call: between 6:30 and 7:30. Interruptions were (1) frequent bellows for more coffee; (2) bathroom; (3) lunch: cheese and a little wine. Sunday's schedule was the same, without lunchbreak. i wrote at a secretary's metal typing table, at the top of the steps in the hallway of this huge old house.

"During the week there were other things to do: research, editing first-drafts and proofreading submission drafts. Sure, there are spurts; one Monday night in October i had an idea, and hand-outlined a novel while watching the NBC movie. Next day i typed that outline. Following night i read/changed/expanded that, while watching election returns. Wednesday i typed *that:* a long outline of 6500 or so words. Thursday i typed

the first chapter, but had to stop to go make a speech. Friday-Saturday-Sunday-Monday i wrote on it, and finished it Tuesday. That novel's writing was a happening, to me, and i enjoyed rereading it because it was created so fast i hardly noticed what it was about!

"Last summer, June 1970, i experienced my first Block, that ancient writer's devil i'd heard about. Stupid; it was MY fault. The novel was ⅔ outlined, see, with the ending decided (although it got changed when i reached it), and the previous weekend had seen completion of a chapter, a section, and the outline. Simultaneously. Very neat. Very stupid. That's the WORST place to stop. Stupid. i HANDED myself a block. It's a book i feel deeply about, too; it came a little less easily than some. It's the pretty-immediate future, as i see it, and regional (i live in Appalachia and most people who write about Kentucky ruralites don't know what the holy hell they are typing about), drawing strongly, aside from personal observations/notes/thinking, from three books: (*The*) *Territorial Imperative, Naked Ape,* and *Environmental Handbook.*

"Anyhow, i blocked. When i came back to it the following weekend, for the first time in my life i could NOT pick up and get going.

"i fought. My brain fought back. i bathroomed three times, washed a pair of corfam boots, wished it were Winter so i could chop wood, separated original and carbon of the novel just finished for submission, got up and down, fixed more coffee. It was awful. i sweated. (i do not perspire. i have never perspired. i sweat. And no, you're wrong: i weigh 154 at 6′ 1″.)

"i fought. i kept sitting down and trying to type. i snarled, cursed, cussed, obscenitized. Kept on fingering keys. (i use three fingers, one of which is on my left hand. It gets sorest.) i kept on. Come *on,* damn you!

"i PREVAILED! It had been awful. It had lasted 45 minutes, and now i know what a block is. i'd liefer forget, and i will never ever stop at a stopping point again!

"i can't see that a block ever need be longer, assuming one has any control over himself at all. Ideas come out of the woodwork, daily, and who writes something he doesn't WANT to write?"

Ellison again. Now you understand why I have allowed offutt to go on at such length. As a man who is just emerging from a very long Writer's Block (for me), a Block that's lasted about three months, I know how the poor soul felt during those terrible 45 minutes.

offutt, you arrogant sonofabitch, there are writers around whose pencil cases we can't carry, who've been in blocks for *years!* Sturgeon has been through at least three that I know of, each one about three years long. Sheckley goes into blocks that drive him to the Costa Brava and keep him off the typer for a year at a time. William Tenn has been in a Block for at least the last ten years that *I* know of, living off the teaching abilities of Phil Klass. There are fans who jest about me and Silverberg "blocking"—

for half an hour. But one day will come, smartass; one frightening, mouth-drying day when *nothing* comes. And then you'll know what it is to suffer the torments of a hell you can't even name. It's like being nibbled to death by mice in Philadelphia. You straighten the desk, you clean the house, you listen to music, you re-read Tolstoy, you pray, you go get laid, you come back and . . . nothing.

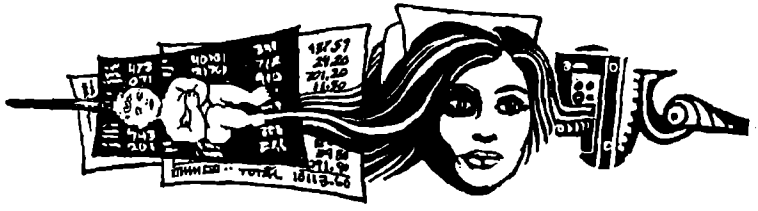
And it goes on and on.

You try to explain it to yourself and your friends and those who have you fish-hooked with deadlines, and they won't believe you, because you've been arrogantly productive all your writing life. And you exist there all alone, trapped out on the edge of your mind; gone suddenly black and empty. It's not that you don't have ideas. Oh, hell, you have thousands of those. You're as articulate, as clever, as facile as you ever were. You just don't *want to work.* You stare at the machine and it's loathsome.

And then, one day, for no reason you can discern, it breaks. The Block vanishes and you start bamming the keys again.

And at that moment, ANDREW J. CAPITALS AND ALL DAMNED OFFUTT, and all of you dainty dilettantes out there reading this, who think writing is something *any* schlepp can do, remember the words of Hemingway, who said, "There are three conditions for becoming a writer. He must write today, he must write tomorrow, he must write the day after that . . ."

offutt's a writer. He writes. As this story, at long last, attests.



andrew j. offutt

FOR VALUE RECEIVED

Mary Ann Barber, M.D., was graduated from medical school at the tender age of 23. Her Boards score set a new high. No, she isn't a genius. You don't know about her? Where've you been? There have been Hospital Board Meetings and Staff Meetings and even discussions of her case in the AMA and the AHA. Most important medical case in American his-

tory; frightening precedent. She's been written up, with pictures, in LIFE, LOOK, PARENTS, THE JOURNAL OF THE AMA, HOSPITAL NEWS, TODAY'S HEALTH, READER'S DIGEST—and FORTUNE. Her father has turned down movie offers. He's also been interviewed by THE INDEPENDENT, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY, RAMPARTS, THE OBJECTIVIST NEWSLETTER, and PLAYBOY.

It started twenty-three years ago when Robert S. Barber won a sales contest and received a very healthy company bonus. That was just before his wife Jodie was due to present him with their third child. Feeling expansive, Bob Barber suggested a private room for Jodie's confinement. She agreed, with enthusiasm. Last time she had shared a room with Philomena, a mother of nine. Philomena had complained constantly about the horror of being a breeding machine. Jodie told her to have faith—and stop. Philomena advised her that her Faith was the source of her problem.

Jodie entered the Saint Meinrad Medical Center in a room all to herself, rather than sharing one with another new mother in the American Way. The room cost ten dollars a day more than the money provided by the Barber's group hospitalization insurance; privacy's expensive! Nevertheless the ID card got them past the Warder of the Gates, a suspicious matron at the Admittance desk whose job it was to admit all patients impartially—provided they either possessed insurance ID cards or were visibly and provably destitute. There wasn't any middle ground.

The baby, a hairless girl—at least she showed certain evidences of insipidly incipient femalehood—was born with the usual number of arms, legs, fingers, etcetera after a brief period of labor. She proved with gusto the proper functioning of her lungs and larynx. She also took immediately to breast-feeding as if it were the normal method. She throve without seeming to realize that her infantile neighbors wouldn't recognize a mammary if they saw one.

Meanwhile the girls in the nursery went about their job: spoiling the infants entrusted to them by parents who had no choice and who would wonder in a few days how it was possible for a child to be born spoiled. The second part of the job of all hospital personnel involved, then as now, keeping the male of the species from both his chosen mate and the fruit of his loins. Robert Barber objected to this. Why his presence was forbidden while Jodie nursed the baby was beyond him. He'd seen 'em before. As a matter of fact he considered them his.

The nun he asked failed to reply.

Ostensibly, visiting hours were to protect the patients from disturbances in the form of Aunt Martha ("Yaas, I knew someone who had the selfsame operation, my dear. She died, poor soul.") and the like. But new

mothers were not sick. It was obvious to Robert Barber that the prescribed hours—and the far greater number of proscribed ones—were for the convenience of a hospital staff whose mystique suffered from a surfeit of Commoners noticing their humanness. Naturally this assumption was strengthened by the fact that physicians, nurses, interns, residents, orderlies, Candy-Stripers, Gray Ladies, Pink Ladies, and the Lady pushing the cart peddling magazines and tissues disturbed the patients far more than "lay" visitors.

The inescapable prayers on the loudspeaker every night were rather disturbing, too.

But Robert Barber was a determined man. He had noticed that there were two kinds of people in hospitals, aside from the patients: Those Who Belong, and Others. The Others visited and indeed seemed to exist only by the sufferance of anyone who wore white shoes or a lab coat. Or carried a little black satchel. All one had to do, Bob Barber decided, was to act as if one Belonged.

So he adopted protective coloration. Carrying his black briefcase and striding purposefully, he traversed the hallowed and antiseptic halls.

"Good-evening-nurse," he said briskly, barely deigning to see the deferential girls who ducked respectfully out of his way. "Sister," he said to the nuns who were not quite so deferential: after all, doctor or no doctor, he was only a man, and a layman at that. But they nodded and rustled aside nevertheless.

Thus did the fiercely independent Bob Barber disregard Visiting Hours for four days running.

The fateful day arrived without portentous occurrence in the skies. Jodie Barber was pronounced ready to go home by a duly authorized member of the American Magicians Association. Thanking the kindly old AMA shaman-priest, Bob went down to settle with the cashier. She ruled a smallish domain separated from the world by a counter-*cum*-window that reminded him of a bank. She regarded him with the usual expression: as if he had committed a crime.

He had not.

He was about to.

"You seem to have placed your wife in a better room than your hospitalization covers, Mister Barber." Her tone was the same you've heard in movies when the prosecutor says, "Then you were indeed at or near the scene of the crime on the night of March 21st!"

Bob Barber smiled and nodded. "Yes. I should owe you about forty dollars, right?"

She nodded wordlessly, giving him an exemplary imitation of the gaze of the legendary basilisk.

Frowning a little, wondering if it were a communicable disease, Robert Barber also nodded, again. "Uh, well . . ."

"Would-you-like-to-pay-the-balance-by-cash-or-check, Mister Barber?"

He hesitated, he told an interviewer years later, waiting for the words THIS IS A RECORDING. He had recognized good salesmanship; the room was "better," not "more costly" than his insurance covered. Now he'd been given the standard "fatal choice": cash or check. "Send me a bill, please. You have my address."

"Mister Barber, our policy is that all bills are handled upon the release of the patient."

He remarked on that word "handled" later, too. Not "paid." She *had* taken a course in salesmanship/semantics! "Yes, well, you've got $237.26 coming from the hospitalization and $40 from me. Just send me a bill at the end of the month like everyone else, will you?"

His smile failed to bring one in return. "We have a policy, Mister Barber, of not dismissing the patient until the bill has been settled in full."

"We've got an out then, ma'm. My wife isn't a patient here. We merely came here because it's a more convenient place for our doctor to watch the baby being born. Now . . . my car is back by the Emergency Door, and my wife's all packed." He gave her his very best boyish smile. "Am I supposed to sign something?"

It didn't work. She sighed. "Mister Barber, you just don't seem to understand. It's a *rule,* Mister Barber. A *hospital* rule. We cannot dismiss the patient until the bill has been settled."

Bob Barber shoved his hands into his trousers pockets and squared his shoulders. She not only hadn't a cerebral cortex, he thought, she was missing her ovaries and needed a heart transplant! He firmed his mouth. "OK," he said. "If you must keep hostages, that's your business. But I'm sure one will do. Mrs. Barber and I are leaving in a few minutes. We are nursing the baby, so my wife will be coming back six times daily. The baby's name is Mary Ann, by the way." He smiled in his confidence, enjoying her shocked look. "When she's big enough to go to college we'll send you the tuition money." He grinned and waited for the backdown. He was without doubt the first man in history to call her bluff.

When Mary Ann Barber was six years old her father picked her up at the hospital each day to transport her to school. Each Friday she brought him a bill. It had passed $9,000 when she was partly through the first grade.

She entered the tenth grade at age fourteen. On her fourth day as a Junior, she handed her daddy a bill for $106,378.23. She was one of the brightest girls in high school, and one of the healthiest. She had absorbed a tremendous amount of knowledge and sophistication, talking with interns. And it was easy to remain healthy, living in a hospital.

She had been moved from Nursery to Pediatrics to Children's Ward to Second Floor. Then the interns had doubled up to make her a gift: a private room away from the patients. Her parents visited her twice daily, usually. At visiting hours.

There were the Staff and Board Meetings, the magazine and newspaper articles, the interviews. Offers to pay Mary Ann Barber's daily-increasing bill had come from all over the country, as well as from seventeen foreign nations and the governments of two. The hospital had offered to settle for ninety cents on the dollar. Then seventy-five. Fifty cents. Forty. Bob Barber said he was holding out for the same terms the Feds had given James Hoffa.

On her fourteenth birthday Mary Ann received one thousand, two hundred seventy-one cards. Shortly thereafter she received 1,314 Christmas cards. Her clothing came from one manufacturer, her shoes from another, her school books from two others. Her tuition arrived anonymously each year. Bob Barber solemnly invested it in an insurance annuity in his daughter's name. Most of the clothing she never wore; the parochial school she attended required sexless, characterless uniforms of navy-blue jumpers over white blouses. And black shoes. And white socks, rolled just to here.

She was graduated from college at nineteen and entered medical school at once. The doctors had won; the nuns had tried to sell her on the convent, the nurses on being an airline stewardess or secret agent. Mary Ann was far too fond of interns.

On his daughter's twenty-first birthday Robert Barber received his now-monthly itemized bill. It was thirty-seven feet long, neatly typed by the hated machine he called an Iron Brain, Malefic. The bill totalled $364,311.41, very little of which was for anything other than room and board. The discount had been applied and figured for him as usual, although this time he noticed he was asked for only twenty cents on the dollar. Still, $72,862.28 was more than he had available. He sent the usual note:

> I agreed to forward the forty dollars outstanding on my daughter's bill at the end of the month of her birth. When the bill arrived it was for $130, including ten days at $9 for Nursery Care. I returned it, requesting a corrected total of $40. Had you responded I would have had a daughter all these years, like other people. You chose to

advise that I owed you for the time she spent in the hospital past the day I took my wife home. I disagreed then and I disagree today; those additional ten days were spent in your institution at your request, not mine. And not hers. Thus, since you claim to be a non-profit organization and the courts have refused to uphold me in prosecuting for kidnap-at-ransom, I am still willing to pay the $40. However I cannot do this until I receive a proper bill for that amount, so that I can account for it on my income tax return.

—Robert S. Barber

PS: The enclosed check is to cover all expenses for my daughter's recent tonsillectomy. Actually, had I had a choice I would have chosen another hospital providing better care, but she advises your service was satisfactory.

—RSB.

It was signed, as usual, with a flourish. You can see for yourself; the hospital threw away the first few, but they have a file of 243 of those letters. Two hundred thirty-seven of them are printed.

There was another Board Meeting. The vote still went against bowing to Barber's request for a total bill of $40, although Board members calculated that the bookkeeping had cost them $27.38 a year. But—in the first place, What Would People Think if they learned hospitals are fallible, and admit errors? In the second, Eli R. Hutchinson, president of the biggest bank in town and a board member for thirty-six years, absolutely refused to agree to the $40 settlement unless it included interest. Simple interest on the original amount came to $50.40. Barber had rejected that six years ago.

As they left the Board Meeting William Joseph Spaninger, MD, was heard to mutter to Sister Mary Joseph, OP, RN, "Well, Hutch can't live forever."

Sister Mary Joseph shook her head and rattled her beads. "You're a sinful man, Doctor Spaninger. Besides, Mister Hutchinson had a complete physical last week. He's in ridiculously good health."

Mary Ann Barber, as noted, graduated from Med School at 23 and made an extraordinary grade on her Boards. By that time she had turned down seven offers from six magazines to be photographed as their Nubile Young (semi) Nude (semi) Virgin of the month; three major studios who wanted to film her life story—two with herself in the starring role; seven hundred twenty-four written, wired, and cabled offers of matrimony, and six offers of the same from fellow medical students. There were other offers, most of them from fellow med students, most of them less formal.

Special arrangements were made for her to intern at home: Saint Meinrad Medical Center. The interns are salaried at exactly one hundred twenty dollars monthly. Doctor M. A. Barber began on the first of September.

At exactly midnight on the tenth she moved her possessions out of the hospital and just as quietly moved into a long-empty room at her parents' home. At two AM she returned to the hospital to go on duty.

Her departure was discovered at 8:30, while she was assisting—medicalese for watching—Doctor Spaninger perform a Pilonidal Cystectomy on a nineteen-year-old college student. Dr. Spaninger glanced up at the frantically-signaling nun in the doorway, then looked at Doctor Barber. Her eyes smiled at him above her mask. He shook his head at the nun and pulled his brows down at her as ferociously as possible. Doctor Mary Ann Barber smiled sweetly at her.

"What's she want?" Dr. Spaninger asked as they smoked a cigaret in the Physicians' Lounge after what he called a Tailectomy. He was very popular among nurses, residents, and interns, who called him the nearest-human doctor in town.

"Probably discovered I moved out last night. At midnight."

"Moved out of the hospital? My god, girl! You've run away from home!"

She shook her very blonde hair. "No doctor. I moved *to* home. It's quite a lovely room, although it certainly *smells* odd."

He nodded. "That's air. O_2 and some other stuff, nitrogen, hydrogen; you know. No antiseptics. No medicines. Possibly a little chintz, and some mothballs. Take some getting used to, I guess." He gazed at her, brows down. "But you're a . . . *resident* here. A resident resident, I mean, not a medical one. Let's don't go into it; I've been on the damned Hospital Board twenty years, and I've been living with the infamous Barber case all twenty of 'em. You can't leave. You have a hell of a bill here. Or your irascible, independent, atavistic, heroic old S.O.B. of a father does."

She pulled off the surgery cap and her hair flew as she shook her head with a very bright smile. "Nope. He doesn't. I signed some papers assuming all my own bills, debts, etcetera etcetera the day I turned twenty-one. I'm his daughter, you know; I agree with him. He didn't much like that, but I used the word 'independent' and he shut up pretty fast. That's Sacrament at his—my house. Then I told him my plan. That *really* shut him up, after he stopped laughing."

Dr. Spaninger waited. Then he sighed, looked at his watch, and leaned back, lighting another cigaret. She also had a cigaret out; he pushed the lighter back into his pocket.

"Don't play woman with me, Doctor," he said. "You're much too independent, competent and professional for me to insult you by lighting your cigaret. Besides, I've diapered you a few times. Never sent a bill, either." He watched a snake of smoke writhe up to the ceiling. "All right Mary Ann, I'll bite. What's your Plan?"

"Was. It's completed. I started here on the first of September, at $120 a month. September hath thirty days. That's four whole U.S. rasbuckniks a day."

"Um-hm. Shameful. We do everything we can to keep you yunkers out of the profession, including starve you out."

"We won't go into that either, overworked but wealthy old physician. Well, as of midnight last night I had worked ten days. That's forty dollars worth. I moved out. And left a note at the desk; I'm to receive only eighty dollars this month. We're even."

He leaned back and laughed. Loudly. Long. Eventually he grew rather red in the face and leaned over to slap his knee. His concerned young ward warned him about his blood pressure. He nodded, gasping and choking.

"Wait till they hear THIS! Wait'll Eli Hutch hears this! Oh, wonderful! We're shut of the Barber case at last!" He looked at her and frowned again. "Unless the rest of the Board decides to sue you . . . hm. I'll take care of that in *advance*. The only Barber I want to hear about hereafter is Doctor Barber. I hope I never hear the name Robert S. Barber again!"

"That's not very charitable, but Daddy and I are opposed to charity anyhow. I promise you this: my son won't be named Rober—what you said. He will be named William Robert Joseph Barber, OK?"

Dr. William Joseph Spaninger stared at her. "What . . . son?"

She shrugged. "Oh, the one I'll eventually have. I'm trying to decide now which of my fellow interns is the most promising-looking." She smiled at him. "No, I will *not* be an OB patient any ways soon. Not till I've finished up here, anyhow. And probably not till after I'm married."

"Thank god. But that's a dang lie—you're stuck on young Chris Andrews and you know it." He studied her thoughtfully. "Well. How the devil do you plan to exist on eighty bucks this month?"

"I won't have to. I am receiving forty dollars from Daddy. He says the bill was his responsibility, anyhow. We accept our responsibilities in my family."

Dr. Spaninger waved a hand at the hospital. "Nonsense. This is your family, and I haven't found two people here willing to accept responsibility in the past twenty years. And I hope you will allow me, as a token of an old girl-watcher's admiration for a very good-looking one, to give you

a check for exactly $40 for your birthday. Your father's giving you the forty sounds suspiciously like charity, and I really hate to see the old bas—rascal start changing, now. He's a great man. Just for god's sake don't ever tell him so. And . . . carry on his work."

"I intend to. I'll spend the rest of my life bucking the System and marking 'PLEASE' in all those nasty DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE blocks and punching extra holes in computer cards. But he's a greater man than you think, O Revered Father-image. I said I was *receiving* the money from him, Doctor. I did *not* say anything about charity. It's a business arrangement; Daddy pays only for value received. For the duration of the month, on my hours off-duty from here, I'm on KP at home."

Afterword:

This one wasn't too dangerous because it will probably happen. Only the IR (I do not call them "service" because I do not lie) people are more arrogant than hospital exchequers. They have to be; it's amazing how much costs have risen since free Medicare came along. If it paid *all* the bill for those people who are now going in hospital for rests, your tax bill and mine would be even worse. Since it doesn't, we have to pay for them when we're hospitalized, just like everything at the grocery is a penny or 3 higher because you and I help defray the cost of shoplifters.

Besides, "For Value Received" is half-true. Down to the break, when Bob Barber calls the hospital's bluff. Bob Barber is me. Jodie is my wife. Mary Ann is my daughter Scotty. I wanted to visit my wife when *I* wanted to, not when it was convenient for the hospitaleers. So I carried a black bag, acted brusque and Belonging, and was naturally mistaken for a member of the American Magicians' Association: AMA. The creature at the desk said everything to me the one in the story does. I owed a lousy forty bucks, and was not accustomed to being treated as if I were at a world sf convention or something. So I called her bluff. I said *exactly* what Mary Ann's dad says in the story. After staring at me in shocked silence, she backed apoplectically away and went into a little opaque-glass cubicle. (Just like the guy at the car lot. You know; he *always* has to go ask the boss if he can let you have the cigaret lighter for only $9.95 instead of $10.00.)

I waited. A black-bonneted head came out. Looked me over. I was in Uniform: suit, shirt, tie. Only a fool wears anything else at hospital check-out desks or in traffic court. Head withdrew. The Creature returned. I was let off; all she wanted was name and address and phone number, which she already had. Checking. I started to go, once again having

won a Great Victory over an Established Faith (did Harlan tell you about how I got the tax people off my back by writing The President?).

"Uh . . . Mister offutt . . . you WILL pay this, won't you?"

I swear. I gave her my best don't-you-wish-you-knew-who-your-father-was look and departed. With wife and offuttspring.

That became one of our three favorite stories to tell captive audiences dumb enough to beholden themselves by coming out to drink my liquor. (The other two are how-andy-scared-off-the-prowler-with-a-Daisy-air-rifle-while-scared-to-death-the-bb's-would-rattle, and how-andy-damnear-chopped-off-his-left-thumb-with-a-machete-while-cutting-weeds-and-thank-Mithra-he-types-with-only-the-index-finger-on-that-hand-anyhow.) Come out for a drink and we'll tell you. If you mix with 7-up or cola, you get cheap Ky bourbon. If you drink it bare, or with water or soda, you'll get Maker's Mark and the stories will be painless.

Anyhow, one night we told our friend Bill Hough the hospital story and he didn't laugh and beam at me as if I were god. Before I could snatch his drink and throw him out, he said:

"Ever think what might've happened if they'd called your bluff *back?*"

I gave Bill another drink and wrote the story next day. It was turned down by *Redbook, Satevepost* (which immediately went bust), *Atlantic, Good House,* and the *agent* I had at that time! Here's what he said:

"I'm sorry but—and I don't believe 'For Value Received' would make it. It has humor and truth to a point, but it's against the rules to spoof the medical profession. . . ."

So, obviously, this IS a dangerous vision. To dwarfs, anyhow. We're surrounded by them.

Gene Wolfe is a quiet, mostly amiable man with a sense of humor that has all the gentility of a carnivorous plant. I like and admire him more than I've ever told him. He is the author of a so-so novel, *Operation Ares,* and a horde of short stories that are well into the category labeled brilliant. He lives on Betty Drive in Hamilton, Ohio, the state from which I came; and when I left, Ohio got Gene, as the act of a benevolent God.

During the 1971 Nebula awards in New York, I sat in front of Gene during one of the most painful incidents it has ever been my gut-wrench to witness, and the way Gene reacted to it says much about the man.

Isaac Asimov had been pressed into service at the last moment to read the winners of the Nebulas. Gene was up in the short story category for his extravagantly excellent "The Island of Doctor Death And Other Stories" from Damon Knight's ORBIT 7 (Gene has appeared nine times in the eight ORBIT collections as of this writing) (thereby attesting to Damon's perspicacity as an editor) (taught the kid everything he knows, except table manners at banquets) (he throws peanuts and peas). Isaac had not been given sufficient time to study the list, which was hand-written, and he announced Gene as the winner. Gene stood up as the SFWA officers on the platform went pale and hurriedly whispered words to Ike. Ike went pale. Then he announced he'd made an error. There was "no award" in the short story category. Gene sat back down and smiled faintly.

Around him everyone felt the rollercoaster nausea of stomachs dropping out backsides. Had it been me, I would have fainted or screamed or punched Norbert Slepyan of Scribner's, who was sitting next to me. Gene Wolfe just smiled faintly and tried to make us all feel at ease by a shrug and a gentle nod of his head.

His three short stories in this book mark a departure in my DV policies: when I started assembling stories, I said no one writer would have more than a single story in the series. One shot and that was it. But I bought "Loco Parentis" in 1968, one of my first purchases, at the Milford SF Writers Conference, and the following year when the Conference was held in Madeira Beach, Gene showed up with "Robot's Story" and "Against the Lafayette Escadrille," neither of which I could resist. So I bought all three and Gene devised an umbrella overtitle for the group, and it subsequently allowed Bernard Wolfe and James Sallis to sell me more than one. There is simply no defense against a Gene Wolfe story.

For me, his is one of the wildest and richest imaginations in the genre. Here is what he says of himself:

"The usual middle class upbringing for kids born, as I was, in the worst of the depression. No brothers or sisters, the family moving around as my father tried to earn a living. (Mostly, he was trying to sell cash registers, God help him.) He was a man who was home only on weekends, and brought me one or two lead soldiers every time he came, until I had a corrugated board box of them so heavy I could not pick it up. If we're so much richer now, why can't you buy those lead soldiers anymore?

"My mother was from the deep south (North Carolina) descended through *her* mother from one of those real Scarlett O'Hara families that lost it all in the Civil War. (Oddly enough, my father's family also had roots in North Carolina, having come from there north about 1830, and I may be distantly related to Thomas Wolfe.) I remember her taking me to be shown to her parents, and how no one would explain why Grandfather kept those funny chickens that could not be let in with the regular chickens ("Or they'll kill 'em!") or the scarred white dog which had to be chained up when there were other dogs around. Grandfather had a wooden leg he kept out in front of him and was as deaf as a stump when he didn't want to hear you; I wish I could have known him better.

"*Something* must have happened during my school days, but I mostly remember that it was very hot. I am left-handed, and the chairs had their broad arm on the wrong side. My hands were always sweating and sticking to the paper. I remember that.

"The sports for which I showed some ability, boxing and shooting, were unimportant beside such necessities as basketball. I was good at baseball, except for the parts which involve catching or throwing the ball. In Junior High I acquired a distaste for compulsory athletics which has never deserted me.

"My father, who had little money to spare for sending a son to college (he was operating a food business or a restaurant by this time, I'm not quite sure when the change was made), obtained the promise of a senatorial appointment to West Point for me. Unfortunately by the time I graduated from High School in 1949 there had been a readjustment of the power structure, and the new man, a short-sighted fellow named L. B. Johnson, refused to honor his predecessor's commitment.

"A few years later I found myself a private in the 7th Infantry Division, attempting to excavate a foxhole with the buttons of my shirt. I had dropped out of Texas A&M, which is a land grant college and something of cross between V.M.I. and Tom Disch's CAMP CONCENTRATION but very cheap if you live in the state, and learned to my sorrow the meaning of 'student deferment.' That was the Korean Police Action—remember that?

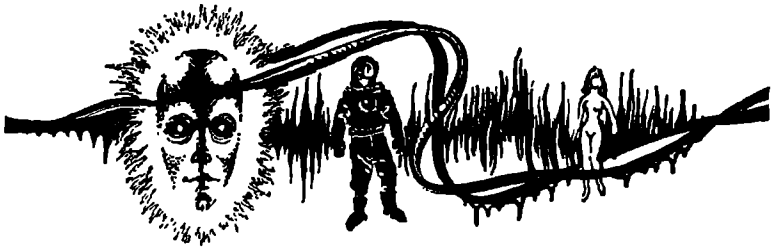
"The G.I. bill let me return to school at the University of Houston, and I got a B.S.M.E. there in 1956, following which I flew Texas, something I sometimes regret. I still hold the job I took when I graduated—that is to

say, I'm working for the same employer, but since the job is Research and Development things change almost from month to month.

"I have a wife and four children. They seem like more."

Gene Wolfe

MATHOMS FROM THE TIME CLOSET



1: Robot's Story

It's a cold night, and the wind comes in so there's no *inside*, only two *outsides*: the one there where it howls up from the river, and the one in here—a little more sheltered, a little warmed by our breath. Che's poster flutters on the wall as though he's trying to talk; the kids would say "rap."

The kids are the older ones, three sitting crosslegged on Candy's mattress. (That's the Chillicothe Candy: there are fifty others up and down Calhoun Street.) The kids are the younger ones, runaways: two virgin (or nearly) girl groupies, and a thin, sad boy who never talks. The kids are Robot, who has been down the hall where the plumbing works (it is stopped up here) and comes in, *step, step, step,* thinking about each move his legs make.

I've talked to Robot more than to any of the others because he is (perhaps) the least hostile and the most interesting. Robot is about nineteen, very tall, with a round, small head and a shock of black hair. Robot was custom-built, he tells me, in the thirty-third century to be the servant of an ugly woman who lived in a house floating on nothingness. Whenever Robot feels depressed he says: "I don't know how good I was made. Maybe I'm going to work for a thousand years; maybe I'm more than half used up already."

Robot says he is five. He escaped, or so he once told me, by spinning the dials of the ugly woman's time closet and stepping in while they were still

in motion. This, as he explains, was to prevent his whenabouts (emphasized by his voice so that I'll notice the word) becoming known; but he had hoped to arrive in the thirteenth century B.C., a period which exercises a fascination for him.

Candy and the two boys with her ignore him, and after watching them for a moment he sits on the floor with the groupies (self-proclaimed) and the sad-faced boy and me. The boy is almost asleep, but to get Robot talking I ask, "Don't you wish you were back now, Robot?"

He shakes his head. "This is better. That was a drag all the time." He thinks for a moment, then asks, "Do you mind if I tell a story?" I tell him to go ahead, and so do the groupies, but he still hesitates. "You don't mind? I'm programmed for them, and there wasn't anyone who would listen there, so I never got to get them out. When I get them out they're checked off, you know? It's kind of like being constipated."

The sad boy says, "Go on." This, I think, is what Robot has been waiting for.

"This is a fairy story," Robot begins. "It goes way back to the days when the little one-man scout ships went out from here in every direction looking for habitable spheres, scattering like sperm from semen dropped in the sea."

I had not known Robot possessed such a strain of eloquence, and I look closely at him. His eyes are staring straight ahead and his mouth is a round *O*, the way he holds it when he is pretending there is a speaker in his throat.

"Those days continued for many, many years, you must understand. And every year the ships left in tens or hundreds—up toward the pole star; out like spokes around the sun; down past the Southern Cross. This is about one of the ships that went down.

"It dropped for years, but it didn't count years. The pilot was asleep, and in a hundred days he would breathe three times. In a year, maybe, he would turn over and then plastic hands would come out of the wall and turn him right again. The ship woke him up when they had gotten somewhere.

"He woke up, and it knew he had forgotten almost everything except what he'd been dreaming of, so it explained it all to him while it rubbed him and gave him something to eat. When it was finished he thought, 'What a tourist I was to let them talk me into this.' Then he got up to see what this world he found was.

"It wasn't anything special; as near as he could see mostly high grass—higher than your head. He landed and the air was all right and he got out

and did all the things he was supposed to do, but there was really nothing there but all this grass."

(I wondered if the "grass" in the story was an unconscious reflection of the kids' obsession with marijuana; or if for Robot as for Whitman it represented the obliterations of time.)

"Then just when he was getting ready to go, this really lovely chick came out of the grass. No noise, you dig? No drums, no trumpets. She just pushed it back like a chick will push back her hair and came out. He was crazy about her as soon as he saw her, and they made a deal.

"He couldn't take her back in the ship with him and she wouldn't have gone anyway. But she told him she'd live with him there if he'd do three things, and she made him write them out in his own blood. He had to swear first of all that he'd do all the work, and never ask her to do anything. Then that he wouldn't tell people back here what he'd found, and that he wouldn't ask her any questions.

"He wrote it all and he signed it, and she had him build them a house, like out of sod and the grass and pieces of his ship. He dug a cistern and planted some seeds he'd had in the ship to get things started for the colony people who were supposed to come after him. And that was it, except that sometimes she would catch the soft little animals that lived in the grass and eat them. She never gave him any and he never asked for any, and they were too quick for him to catch himself.

"He got older but she didn't, and he thought that was groovy. He was getting to be an old guy but he still had a young wife as pretty as a girl. He had to do everything like he had agreed, but otherwise she was always nice. She sang a lot without words and played a thing like a flute, and she told him all the time what a great guy he was.

"Then one day just after sundown when he'd been out hoeing the crops and was just about to go in he saw a new spark up among the stars. He watched it for a long time, trying to straighten up his back and rubbing the white hair around his face. After that he saw it every night for three nights, moving across the sky. Then on the fourth day, when he was carrying water from the cistern there was a kind of whizz in the air and something big hit the ground a long way off. He was starting to think about that when his wife came down the path. She wasn't carrying anything, or doing anything to make her look different from the way she usually did, and she didn't wear clothes, but there was a kind of glow to her like she'd brushed her hair a little more than usual and maybe toweled herself harder when she washed. She went walking right past him and never said a thing.

"He watched her walk through all the place he'd cleared to grow food

and when she got to the grass she just kept going, opening it with her hands and stepping in. Then he yelled, 'Where are you going?'

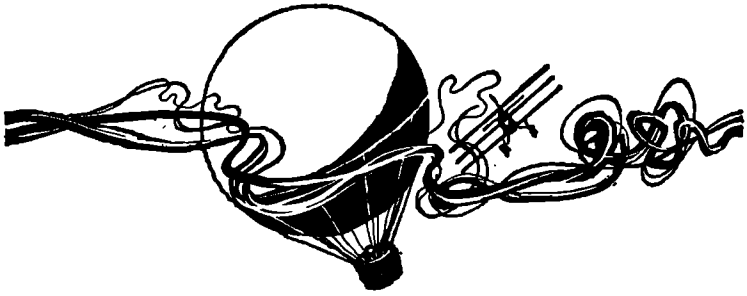
"She didn't even turn her head, but she yelled back, 'I'm going to get myself a new fool.'"

Robot pauses.

One of the groupies asks, "Is that all there is to it?"

Robot doesn't answer. Candy has come over, and she's saying, "Robot, we want you to go out and cop a nickel for us." Which means: "Buy us five dollars worth of marijuana."

Robot stands and holds out his hand, and one of the boys squatting on Candy's mattress laughs and says, "If we had it we'd cop ourselves." For a moment I think of lending Robot my coat (his own orange one belonged to a hotel doorman, and is so worn in spots that the lining shows through the napless fabric) but the way people usually do, I think too long before saying anything. He goes out, Candy and her two friends settle down on the mattress to wait for him, and now I think we are all going to sleep.



2: Against the Lafayette Escadrille

I have built a perfect replica of a Fokker triplane, except for the flammable dope. It is five meters, seventy-seven centimeters long and has a wing span of seven meters, nineteen centimeters, just like the original. The engine is an authentic copy of an Oberursel UR II. I have a lathe and a milling machine and I made most of the parts for the engine myself, but some had to be farmed out to a company in Cleveland, and most of the electrical parts were done in Louisville, Kentucky.

In the beginning I had hoped to get an original engine, and I wrote my first letters to Germany with that in mind, but it just wasn't possible; there

are only a very few left, and as nearly as I could find out none in private hands. The Oberursel Worke is no longer in existence. I was able to secure plans though, through the cooperation of some German hobbyests. I redrew them myself translating the German when they had to be sent to Cleveland. A man from the newspaper came to take pictures when the Fokker was nearly ready to fly, and I estimated then that I had put more than three thousand hours into building it. I did all the airframe and the fabric work myself, and carved the propeller.

Throughout the project I have tried to keep everything as realistic as possible, and I even have two 7.92 mm Maxim "Spandau" machineguns mounted just ahead of the cockpit. They are not loaded of course, but they are coupled to the engine with the Fokker Zentralsteuerung interrupter gear.

The question of dope came up because of a man in Oregon I used to correspond with who flies a Nieuport Scout. The authentic dope, as you're probably aware, was extremely flammable. He wanted to know if I'd used it, and when I told him I had not he became critical. As I said then, I love the Fokker too much to want to see it burn authentically, and if Antony Fokker and Reinhold Platz had had fireproof dope they would have used it. This didn't satisfy the Oregon man and he finally became so abusive I stopped replying to his letters. I still believe what I did was correct, and if I had it to do over my decision would be the same.

I have had a trailer specially built to move the Fokker, and I traded my car in on a truck to tow it and carry parts and extra gear, but mostly I leave it at a small field near here where I have rented hangar space, and move it as little as possible on the roads. When I do because of the wide load I have to drive very slowly and only use certain roads. People always stop to look when we pass, and sometimes I can hear them on their front porches calling to others inside to come and see. I think the three wings of the Fokker interest them particularly, and once in a rare while a veteran of the war will see it—almost always a man who smokes a pipe and has a cane. If I can hear what they say it is often pretty foolish, but a light comes into their eyes that I enjoy.

Mostly the Fokker is just in its hangar out at the field and you wouldn't know me from anyone else as I drive out to fly. There is a black cross painted on the door of my truck, but it wouldn't mean anything to you. I suppose it wouldn't have meant anything even if you had seen me on my way out the day I saw the balloon.

It was one of the earliest days of spring, with a very fresh, really indescribable feeling in the air. Three days before I had gone up for the first time that year, coming after work and flying in weather that was a little

too bad with not quite enough light left; winter flying, really. Now it was Saturday and everything was changed. I remember how my scarf streamed out while I was just standing on the field talking to the mechanic.

The wind was good, coming right down the length of the field to me, getting under the Fokker's wings and lifting it like a kite before we had gone a hundred feet. I did a slow turn then, getting a good look at the field with all the new, green grass starting to show, and adjusting my goggles.

Have you ever looked from an open cockpit to see the wing struts trembling and the ground swinging far below? There is nothing like it. I pulled back on the stick and gave it more throttle and rose and rose until I was looking down on the backs of all the birds and I could not be certain which of the tiny roofs I saw was the house where I live or the factory where I work. Then I forgot looking down, and looked up and out, always remembering to look over my shoulder especially, and to watch the sun where the S.E. 5a's of the Royal Flying Corps love to hang like dragonflies, invisible against the glare.

Then I looked away and I saw it, almost on the horizon, an orange dot. I did not, of course, know then what it was; but I waved to the other members of the Jagstaffel I command and turned toward it, the Fokker thrilling to the challenge. It was moving with the wind, which meant almost directly away from me, but that only gave the Fokker a tailwind, and we came at it—rising all the time.

It was not really orange-red as I had first thought. Rather it was a thousand colors and shades, with reds and yellows and white predominating. I climbed toward it steeply with the stick drawn far back, almost at a stall. Because of that I failed, at first, to see the basket hanging from it. Then I leveled out and circled it at a distance. That was when I realized it was a balloon. After a moment I saw, too, that it was of very old-fashioned design with a wicker basket for the passengers and that someone was in it. At the moment the profusion of colors interested me more, and I went slowly spiraling in until I could see them better, the Easter egg blues and the blacks as well as the reds and whites and yellows.

It wasn't until I looked at the girl that I understood. She was the passenger, a very beautiful girl, and she wore crinolines and had her hair in long chestnut curls that hung down over her bare shoulders. She waved to me, and then I understood.

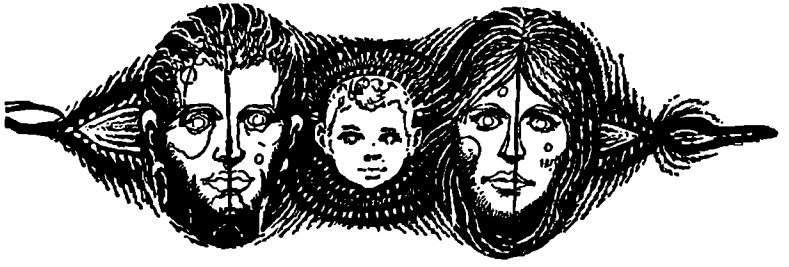
The ladies of Richmond had sewn it for the Confederate army, making it from their silk dresses. I remembered reading about it. The girl in the basket blew me a kiss and I waved to her, trying to convey with my wave that none of the men of my command would ever be allowed to harm her; that we had at first thought that her craft might be a French or Italian ob-

servation balloon, but that for the future she need fear no gun in the service of the Kaiser's Flugzeugmeisterei.

I circled her for some time then, she turning slowly in the basket to follow the motion of my plane, and we talked as well as we could with gestures and smiles. At last when my fuel was running low I signaled her that I must leave. She took, from a container hidden by the rim of the basket, a badly shaped, corked brown bottle. I circled even closer, in a tight bank, until I could see the yellow, crumbling label. It was one of the very early soft drinks, an original bottle. While I watched she drew the cork, drank some, and held it out symbolically to me.

Then I had to go. I made it back to the field, but I landed dead stick with my last drop of fuel exhausted when I was half a kilometer away. Naturally I had the Fokker refueled at once and went up again, but I could not find her balloon.

I have never been able to find it again, although I go up almost every day when the weather makes it possible. There is nothing but an empty sky and a few jets. Sometimes, to tell the truth, I have wondered if things would not have been different if, in finishing the Fokker, I had used the original, flammable dope. She was so authentic. Sometimes toward evening I think I see her in the distance, above the clouds, and I follow as fast as I can across the silent vault with the Fokker trembling around me and the throttle all the way out; but it is only the sun.



3: Loco Parentis

DAD: He's beautiful, isn't he?

MOM: So new and unscratched! Like a car in the showroom, or a turbine that's never turned! Like a new watch!

DAD: You're just enthusing, aren't you? Are you trying to tell me something?

MOM: I mean he's beautiful, just as you said. Stop scratching yourself.

NURSE: Isn't he lovely? But he's only ten months old. He'll need all sorts of care. Cleaning and feeding.

DAD: Oh, I know all about that. I've watched.

MOM: You mean we know.

NURSE: You'll both learn, I'm sure. (Leaves baby and exits.)

DAD: What did you mean, about the turbine? I've heard that because there are so many couples like us, who want children but can't have them, they build robots, half-living simulacra, like children, to satisfy the instinct. Once a month they come at night and change them for larger so that you think the child's growing. It's like eating wax fruit.

MOM: That's absurd. But they mutate the germ plasm of chimpanzees (Pan satyrus) to resemble the human, producing half-people simians to be cared for. It's as if the organ played its music when there was no one to hear except the organ grinder's monkey.

DAD: (Drawing away the baby blanket) He's not a mutated chimp. See how straight his legs are.

MOM: (Touching) He's not a machine. Feel how warm he is with the real warmth, even when none of his parts are moving.

SON: May I play outside?

MOM: With whom?

SON: With Jock and Ford. We're going to fly kites and climb trees.

MOM: I'd rather you didn't play with Ford. I saw him when he fell and cut his knee. The blood didn't come in proper spurts, but just flowed out, like something draining.

DAD: I'd just as soon you avoided Jock. He eats too much fruit, and I don't approve of his taste in clothing.

SON: He doesn't wear any.

MOM: That's what your father means.

SON: I love his sister. (Goes out)

DAD: Don't cry. They grow up so fast. Hasn't everyone always told you?

MOM: (Still sobbing) It isn't that. Jock's sister!

DAD: She's a lovely girl. Hauntingly beautiful, in fact.

MOM: Jock's sister!

SON: (Re-entering, followed by a middle-aged couple) Mom, Dad, these people tell me that they're my real parents; and now that I've grown enough to be very little trouble, except for tuition, they've come to claim me.

MR. DUMBROUSKI: We've explained to the boy how useful foster parent-things are, allowing real people necessary leisure.

MRS. DUMBROUSKI: I've always said it's an honorable calling; and by filling

desk space in offices when they're supposed to be at work, the father-things usefully increase the prestige of their nominal supervisors. Don't they, dear?

MR. DUMBROUSKI: Yes indeed. I've got several working for me, although I'd never admit it at the office.

SON: Goodbye, Mom and Dad. I know one or both of you may be a machine or an ape or both, but I'll never forget you. I won't come to see you, because someone might see me coming in, but I'll never forget you. (To Mr. Dumbrouski:) Will I know which is which when I've had time to think about it?

NURSE: Isn't he lovely? But he's only ten months old. He'll need all sorts of care. Cleaning and feeding.

DAD: Like a new bamboo shoot!

MOM: Like a new headlight socket just coming out of the plating tank!

NURSE: You'll learn, I'm sure. (Leaves baby and exits)

JUNIOR: May I just sit here by the clock to eat my banana?

MOM & DAD: *My son!*

Afterword:

Three stories: If you liked them you have three people to thank, of whom you yourself are one. If Harlan and I have messed with your mind in the pages just past it was because you have a mind to mess with. Many of the things you thought I said, you said.

Three ways of playing with time: If you're authentic enough, and so deep up the blue hole nothing contrasts with your authenticity, you've gone back—haven't you? Or, you're mature in an instant (we all were) and Mother is only a tall woman with copper hair, Father a short man with hairy arms. Or, you recite (having arrived from there last night) the enigmatic myths of the future.

Three guesses: Do you need them? I am Robot; I fly the soaring Fokker, though only in my mind (and yours, I hope); my parents were and are as described, and these are some of my Dangerous Visions, my hang-ups. You and I have walked among three wraiths. There are others.

Head up! You may be a prince (or princess) of Mars.



Introduction to TIME TRAVEL FOR PEDESTRIANS:

Recently, here in Los Angeles, and I presume all around our vital, healthy country, drive-ins and local neighborhood movie theaters played a charming double-bill. The upper, or A feature, was something called *I Suck Your Blood;* the lower half of the bill, the B feature, was *I Eat Your Skin.* After the hysterical convulsions pass, kindly note these two bum flicks were coded GP, which means kids can see them, but only with the consent and accompaniment of an adult. At the same time, a sex film titled *101 Acts of Love* was being shown in the area, with an X rating, meaning if you're a Catholic and go to see it, you'll burn in eternal hellfire. Kids strictly forbidden.

This is hardly an original thought I'm about to lay on you, but doesn't it seem strange to anyone else out there that it's okay for kids to see people having their necks bitten, their flesh eaten and their bodies used for fertilizer, but it is considered corrupting for them to watch two people having sex?

Where I'm going with this is toward Ray Nelson, but I'd like to make a couple of conversational stops on the way.

You see, DV (and surely A,DV will see a repetition of the problem) had some acceptability problems with certain libraries, with some bookstores, and when it was reprinted in the Science Fiction Book Club a number of scoutmasters and outraged mommies and common garden-variety guardians of public morality (like Keating, the head wimp of the Citizens for Decent Literature, on whose squamous skull a curse of succotash!) fired the book back with bleats of horror that their delicate children were being sent such mind-rotting filth that would obviously pollute their precious bodily fluids. In the general introduction I quoted one lady who wrote me directly. She was not alone in her vehemence.

It is to Doubleday's and Larry Ashmead's eternal glory that never once did they warn me away from "controversial" material, either in subject matter or treatment or language. The same has held true with this volume. They said, in fact, get it on, and do what has to be done. As a result, this book contains stories like Ray Nelson's that I'm sure will bleach white the hair of librarians and others invested with the fraudulent chore of protecting delicate young minds.

To simply state that Ray's story is a zinger and needs no further defense than its quality would be the wise course for me here, but as I have never

been known to exist in a territory of wisdom, I'll go on and make a few comments about censorship, about protecting those who need no protection, about hypocrisy, and about "dirty" language.

Those of you who've heard these things need not attend. The test afterward only counts for half your grade.

In any case: having traveled around the country a good deal these past few years, lecturing at colleges and high schools, I've found that while people under-thirty are no less susceptible to slogans and simplistic answers than their over-thirty counterparts, *on the whole* they don't have the same hangups about language and topics of forbidden discussion to which their elders subscribe. When I was nineteen I was still a virgin, but when I pass a high school now, and see the fifteen, sixteen and seventeen year old girls, I am struck by the resemblance to a casting call for *Irma La Douce,* and I am hip to the fact that young people are getting it on sexually much earlier than when I was their age. I think that's all to the good. Times have changed. The Pill and mass communications dissemination of hygienic information have made most of the restrictions against premarital sex invalid and outdated. Young people are reaching each other in some very natural, normal ways that were *verboten* to generations past, and along with that tacit acceptance of the body and its many uses, comes an acceptance of language. It is, for instance, virtually impossible today to shock kids by a discussion of masturbation. Everyone knows guys masturbate, and so do girls. If it comes up in conversation it's an accepted, like television or the jumbo jet. They grew up with it, and all the taboos about even owning up to the fact that you play with yourself strike them as pointless and hincty.

Which, perforce, brings me to Ray Nelson, "Time Travel for Pedestrians" and the hypocrisy of protecting those who need no protection. Ray's story deals, in small part, with the concept of masturbation as a triggering device for time travel. Its inclusion here, as well as publication of the stories by Piers Anthony, Richard Lupoff and Ben Bova, not to mention just the *title* of the Vonnegut story, promise trouble with bluenoses. Understand *please,* these stories are not to me "dirty" or "offensive" in any way. My contention is that *nothing* should be forbidden to a creator in the pursuit of an idea. But I am not fool enough to think these stories will slip by unnoticed when the hawklike eyes of the NODL and Citizens for Decent Everything get their white sheets on.

We had some of this, as I've said, with DV. In fact, for almost three years we could not get an edition contracted in Great Britain, because the publishers kept turning the book down as "unpublishable." In the light of subsequent books released with ease in England, this now seems wholly ridiculous, but when we first acquired an English publisher, Leslie Frewin, we insisted the book be published as it stood, in its entirety, without deletions or concessions to censorship. Frewin agreed, but when the

book was about to go to press, I learned that they were dropping the Theodore Sturgeon story because it dealt with incest, the Philip K. Dick story because it postulated God as a Chinese Communist, my own story because it used the word "fuck" and because it was clinically descriptive of a slaying by Jack the Ripper, and several others, including a story by Miriam Allen de Ford—on grounds I've *yet* to be able to name. Naturally, they were enjoined to cease publication, and the book was yanked away from them.

Fortunately, a more reliable and (one would presume) daring publisher in London, David Bruce & Watson, bought the rights and have published *Dangerous Visions* in two handsome volumes. But this was not the only instance of outright fear on the part of reprint houses to pick up the book. In Germany we were stuck with a wretched house, Heyne, who not only dropped stories without permission, but cut all the prefatory material, altered titles, changed copy beyond the normal considerations of translation into German, and in all botched DV hideously. (I have taken steps to insure there will be no repetitions of this with A,DV, but a pending lawsuit against Heyne is the residue of lack of foresight initially.)

I report all this in the (probably) vain hope that those who have nothing better to do with their time than worry that someone else will read what he wants to read, will think twice before pulling A,DV from library shelves or lobbying against it in their Saturday afternoon purity meetings.

For the rest of you, who can be shocked only by Calleys and Mansons and repression and violence, when you read this story you will more than likely say, "What the hell was all the shouting about? It isn't offensive. Is this Ellison on the hype again?" To you I say, these words were intended for the backward, the frightened, the sexually and emotionally constipated who exist in vast numbers out there.

And I'm sure this long preamble will surprise Ray Nelson, who never thought his story would be a bone of contention. Which brings me, at long last, to Radell Faraday Nelson himself, and his personal statistics, herewith proffered in his own words:

"When I was about fifteen years old I remembered being born. I didn't know that's what I was remembering until much later. There were no words in the memory, just the feeling of being squeezed rhythmically again and again. It wasn't unpleasant.

"I was born in a hospital in Schenectady, N.Y. on Oct. 3, 1931 at (for those who are astrologically inclined) 2 a.m. I was the fruit of the union of mixed RH factors, and my head was too big for my body. I looked like, they tell me, one of those beings from the distant future, from a time when the body has all but wasted away from disuse. But I lived. I have one brother who lived, too. And many sisters who were stillborn.

"Sometimes I think my sisters are near me, whispering things to me, guarding me from harm. I picture them covered with fine soft womb hair,

all hunched over with their noses on their knees, floating just at the edge of my field of vision so that I can almost see them but not quite.

"As a child I was carried from place to place by my parents, not seeing the world around me too much, but talking to beings that only I could see. We traveled from one state to another, following my father's work, and as I ran, dreaming, along a stone wall on the edge of the Grand Canyon, I struck my head against a branch and almost fell over the cliff. I still have the scar, just above my left eyebrow.

"The best scar on my body, however, is on one side of my lower stomach (the right side) where my appendix was removed. I had had a bellyache for a long time but I was very brave about it and as a result almost died in the last minute operation that was performed on me after I collapsed on the basketball court at high school. I couldn't do anything rough for over a year after that for fear I might open up again, so I discovered reading. I read science fiction and Little Literary Reviews, neither of which left any visible scars, at least on my body.

"That was how I became a science fiction fan and hippie, though that was before the word hippie had been invented. I was deeply religious and everybody hated me because, when one of my classmates stole a ballpoint pen in a drugstore, I went back and paid for it. They left many little scars all over my torso, particularly the ass. There's another interesting scar on my left forearm, while we're on the subject.

"That's where, after I graduated from college and was working as a silk screen printer in Oakland, California, I held a candleflame under my arm and cooked the flesh until it turned black, in order to show that the spirit need not be troubled by the sufferings of the flesh. Fortunately the friends of mine who were present had promised in advance not to turn me over to the mental authorities. It was interesting to watch the scab form and then, a few months later, crumble and fall away to reveal the image of a perfect egg in white skin on a field of tan.

"There are many other marks on my body . . . such as the little brown dots of various shapes all over me. I never noticed them until I dropped acid. Can you imagine that? Here I was, covered with little brown spots and I didn't even know it, then I expanded my consciousness and there they were. It was then that I noticed that my skin was also covered with a network of tiny diamond shaped lines, as if I were made of crystal, and that my flesh was everywhere touched with subtle blending shades of color, like coral. I don't know anything else about myself to speak of, since most of the things I've done have not marked my flesh and thus I can't be sure that they aren't false memories, like the events upon which the story, 'Time Travel for Pedestrians' is based, according to my analyst."

He may not know anything more of himself to speak of, but Your Dauntless Editor, up to his gunwales in Nelsonia, has a few more vitalistics. First, he is the co-author with Philip K. Dick of a novel titled

The Ganymede Takeover, he had an absolutely sensational story in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* a few years back, called "Turn Off the Sky," and he has written full volumes of material for amateur magazines, not to mention his cartoons which were a staple item of "fanzines" during the years he was a science fiction fan.

And Ray is a classic example of how science fiction, the only kind of fiction that does this, brings up its own new generations of writers from the ranks of amateurs. The list of Big Name SF Writers of today, who started out as fans is endless—Silverberg, Brunner, Benford, Hoffman, Bradbury, Lupoff, Carr, Asimov, Knight, Pohl, Blish, Tucker, White—and both A,DV and *The Last Dangerous Visions* will showcase many of them.

A discussion of fandom is here improper, yet a few words from Nelson of the days when we were both fans, seem nostalgically appropriate, so once again:

"I remember a little café just outside Detroit.

"You and I were there, and George Young and all those other truefans, and we were all underage and we were all (except you, who don't drink) drinking beer and playing the electric bowling machine, and the manager came around and started asking for I.D. cards, and you had on a suit and tie and a large, literary-looking pipe, and when they came to you, you said, 'They're all right. I'll vouch for them.' And they didn't ask you for your I.D., though I believe you were the youngest one there.

"You just stood there drinking ginger ale and smoking and looking like our legal guardian.

"That's what we really are, Harlan. Feuds, the National Fantasy Fan Federation, letters to the prozines, mimeo ink under the fingernails, dreams of the Hugo while high on corflu (which you actually have gotten, at last, old superfan), articles typed straight on stencils, frightful poems and worse fannish imitation pro fiction, costumes at cons and musical beds, hateful monster movies that we just can't resist, Seventh Fandom, talking philosophy all night in greasy spoons, and that whole wild scene.

"I'm not just me, and you're not just you.

"Whenever I open my trap, the little microcosm that produced me is speaking through me, as if I were a ventriloquist's dummy. If you look down my throat you'll see, way back by the tonsils, the tiny figure of Claude Degler proclaiming in a piping voice, 'Fans are Slans.'

"So write anything about fandom, anything at all, and that will also be about me."

And so that future historians, coming to this book as a reference, will have *all* the facts, Ray Nelson . . .

Is a graduate of the University of Chicago (1960) where he majored in liberal arts and received his B.A. He has an Operation and Wiring Certificate for IBM machines from the Automation Institute (head of the

class, 1961) and is familiar with the IBM 514, 522, 077, 403, 407, 604 and 632. He is presently employed as a Machine Accountant Assistant with the University of California.

He was a translator and administrative assistant to a French author named Linard in Vesoul, France from 1957 to 1960. He has held jobs as a silk screen printer, sign writer, cartoonist, IBM machine programmer and operator, Great Books salesman, fork-lift truck operator, beatnik poet (one slender book of poems published, entitled, *Perdita: Songs of Love, Sex and Self-Pity*) (named for his first wife), movie extra, Abstract Expressionist, interior decorator (with a paint mixing stick in one hand and a bottle of Jack Daniels in the other), Dixieland banjo player, folknik guitar player and singer, bum, and etc.

He briefly attended the Art Institute of Chicago, and The Sorbonne, has lived in or visited all the states in the original 48, plus Canada, Mexico, England, and all the nations of free Europe. He is married to a beautiful Norwegian girl named Kirsten, whom he met while living in Paris. They have a son named Walter and they live in El Cerrito, California.

Married, speaks fluent French, student at The Sorbonne, a father . . . now I ask you, censors and trembling uptights of the world, is *this* the sort of man who could write a dirty story? Shit, no!



Ray Nelson

TIME TRAVEL FOR PEDESTRIANS

Masturbation fantasy is the last frontier.

When we travel to other planets we won't find much that we can't see or guess at from here, but there are things so strange we can hardly get the fingers of our minds around them that are closer to us than our own skin. Martin Esslin said it, in *The Theatre of the Absurd:*

"In a world that has become absurd, transcribing reality with meticulous care is enough to create the impression of extravagant irrationality."

Have you ever seen those photographs in magazines of familiar objects taken from an unfamiliar angle or from very close up? It's hard to recognize even such an everyday thing as the end of a cigarette when you see it up close. Why is this true? Because you never do look at things, not really. The closer a thing is to you, the less you examine it, the more you take it for granted and ignore it. On TV you learn all about the private lives of the famous, but what about your own private life? What do you know about that?

What do you really know, for instance, about the stag films projected on those dark night flights into your own private lost continents, projected against the inner surfaces of your closed eyelids when you sit in the Cock Pit and grasp the Joy Stick in a sweating hand? There's no movie reviewer to tell you whether the film is good for you or not. Perhaps the plot, if written down, would seem rather idiotic, yet this sort of film, that you project for yourself and yourself alone, seems to hold you spellbound. You return to it again and again, never growing weary of repeating the same arbitrary details over and over.

What do you think about when you jack off, or when you "make love"? Is it torture? And if it is, are you the tortured or the torturer? Is it leather clothes? Or rubber clothes? Is it high heels? Or do you dream of dressing in the clothes of the opposite sex, or even of trading bodies with the "loved one"? Is your mother there watching you in your mind, or your father, or someone who once rejected you? Is God watching you, condemning you? Is it silk? Nylon? Huge heaving breasts or wiggling rumps? Or is it the mouth of the womb itself, giving you a bearded kiss or spreading wide open to allow your return to the soft, warm darkness from which you came? Is it little girls or little boys, great round eyes fixed upon your hand as you slowly unzip your fly?

Are you thinking about it now? Is the picture once again flickering before your eyes? If it is, then this time look at it, long and hard. Examine it as if it were a masterpiece of art. Meditate on it as if it were the words of a great teacher. For it is the one thing in the universe that you have made for yourself alone, and not to impress someone else or to gain the approval of the church, the government, or the "respectable community." It may well be the only doorway that will ever open to allow you entrance into your own inner self.

Why do you hang back? Haven't you always thought Socrates was so frightfully wise when he took as his motto, "Know thyself"? Come. Let us enter. "It isn't as easy as all that," you may say. And you're right. There's

something blocking your way. Let's put it a little more poetically. There's an angel guarding the entrance, with a flaming sword. He's been there a long time, but he is never tired. Angels don't need to sleep. You'll have to trick him, or drug him, if you want to get past.

I chose to drug him.

I went to the Five-and-Ten at the local shopping center and bought some very ordinary flower seeds. The pusher was a middle-aged Catholic saleslady in the garden department.

I think her name was Eve.

Then I went home and took a hammer and pounded the seeds to powder. I kept them in their packages while I pounded, so that they wouldn't fly all over the place. I had to sift them many times through a tea sieve before they formed a fine enough powder to suit me. Then I spread the powder over the surface of a dish of strawberry ice cream.

The angel in my mind touched me with fear, standing between me and the ice cream, but I knew from the Bible that if you fight an angel and win, the prize can be very great sometimes, so I ate it anyway. The ground seeds tasted like sawdust.

Then I went upstairs to my bedroom, where I had a double bunk all prepared for the occasion. Beside the bunk was a tape recorder on which I had recorded my own voice reading, over and over again, the First Bardo from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* as translated by Timothy Leary. That's the chapter all about Ego Death. The *Book of the Dead* was the "In Thing" at that time, if you recall.

I lay down on the lower bunk.

From there I could see, scotch-taped to the lower face of the upper bunk, a Hindu hypnograph I had put up there some months ago when I had used it to soothe a toothache through hypnosis. As you can see, everything was "programmed." Did I tell you that I once was an IBM computer programmer?

I turned on the tape recorder and relaxed, listening to my own boring voice droning on and on, waiting for something to happen. (I had "tripped" before, but never with such elaborate preparations.) After a while something did happen. I got sick to my stomach.

I ran down to the bathroom and knelt before the john and threw up once, twice, three times. But it wasn't unpleasant, as it usually is. It was good. It was more than good. It was ecstatic. I was throwing up with my whole body, holding nothing back. It was an orgasm, or at least what an orgasm can be when it's good, when nobody is likely to bust in on you or when nobody is saying "Shhh, someone might hear you."

So I knew I was high.

And the light was different, too. You know, sort of bluewhite, as if everything were under water on a bright day. And the flickers of flame were silently dancing on every polished surface.

I lay down again.

The tape recorder was still talking.

God, I sounded pompous and stupid on the tape!

But still I decided to co-operate with that idiotic other self of mine who had set up this elaborate farce. Like, why not?

I looked at the hypnograph above me, at the dot in the middle you're supposed to concentrate on, and the voice on the tape machine said "Ego Death." I couldn't seem to catch the rest of it. "Ego Death. Ego Death. Ego Death."

Then it was only, "Death. Death. Death. Death."

"For Chrissakes," I thought, in momentary terror. "This is a trap!"

The angel was laughing now, but he was dark, and huge, and monstrous, and I knew that angels and devils are really the same. They are angels if you are on their side and devils if you're against them.

I sprang up, soaked in sweat, and tore off my clothes until I stood naked in the center of the room, panting and licking my salt lips. The titles of the books in my bookcase seemed to be speaking to me, and it was all about death that they were speaking.

I took hold of my dick. It was stiff and hard.

I felt safe, holding it.

I lay down on the lower bunk again, slowly, gently milking Old Dick with a practiced hand.

I looked at the hypnograph. Portions of it were starting to black out from time to time, winking out of reality and back again. The voice on the tape must be obeyed! The voice on the tape was the voice of my angel, perhaps even the voice of God.

"Death," said the pompous voice of absolute authority. "Death. Death. Death."

Then I remembered my favorite masturbation fantasy, the one where I am a girl with beautiful long black hair being fucked by a man with a beard. In an instant the fantasy took hold and I could no longer see the hypnograph, no longer hear the voice that said "Death." I returned to the reality of the bunk in my room just long enough to grab a black candle I had intended to burn later, after dark. I looked at it wildly for an instant, then thrust it brutally up my ass as the room I was in and some other room, where I was that girl with the long black hair, flickered rapidly in and out of my consciousness. The angel was trying to hold me back (Was there something protective about the clawed hand he laid on my arm?) but I

shook him off and fell out of twentieth century America into . . . where? And when?

But who cared when the bearded man was so wonderfully rough, thrusting so deep up inside me, kissing my shoulders, my arms, my breasts? To be pierced! To be run through, to be stabbed deep again and again by that hard knife of blood-bloated flesh! Oh my God! How good it was!

My head was suddenly full of German. I was German. I was in Germany.

And there were other men and women in the room. I could hear them shout and laugh and struggle. I could smell the stink of bodies long unwashed and sweating. The air was hot and wet and close and full of smoke from torches stuck into the walls that threw dancing shadows on the mass of naked and half-clothed bodies that writhed about me.

Now another man was mounting me, and then another.

Oh, my God, it was good!

And at last the Great One came.

The Great One was a man wearing the skin of an animal.

Or was it the spirit of an animal wearing the body of a man?

"My Lord," I whispered to him.

With a savage snarl, half-rage, half-tenderness, he threw me to the hard earthen floor of the hut and entered me, and it was painful but it was good. The drug in my blood make it good. The Great One was so huge in his dick he almost split me in half, but still it was good.

Then it was morning and I wandered away from the hut, still naked, dancing aimlessly, without rhythm, through the tall, dew-wet weeds. The sun was just coming up. The birds were singing in the autumn trees. Nobody was with me. I came to the coven alone. Alone I left. Marriage is for Christians, not for those who remember the Old Religion, not for a girl who is the wife of the God or the wife of all men or no men. I sang a song against marriage as I walked up the hill.

From the hilltop I looked down on the village and the church in the center of it. Perhaps I was cold. I know not. The drug kept me warm. I could have stood naked in the snow with the drug in me and not felt the cold.

How small the church looked, down there, how small and weak. In their book the Christians claim they once healed the blind and lame with a touch, but if that's true, why can they do it no longer? I can do it. We can do it. I laughed at them, prisoners in their safe little town, for they could not even walk the woods at night, as I could, for all that lives is my friend and their enemy.

Great power is given to the free! The power to cure . . . or kill, with a glance of the eye.

I felt weak. Dizzy.

And this was not right. The dancing with the Great One was more restful than sleep. They know the Great One's wives, down in the town, by the lightness of their step and the song on their red lips. The Christians know us and are afraid. Their skins are pale and they are always sick, knowing not how to eat and drink to live long and fuck merry.

But now I was sick. I was sick! How could that be?

I felt then, for the first time, the wetness on my leg. I looked down and saw the blood running from my cunt down my legs. My blood, and my power, and my life, were running out, and so quickly!

"Oh, must I die so soon?" I said softly.

For when we die we know it. The body tells so many things to those who listen to it. But my angel said, "Your sacrifice was not good."

"Not good?" I cried. "I burned my own newborn babe to the God tonight!"

"Not as one who gives a priceless gift," said the dark angel, "but as one who rids herself of an unwanted burden. As one who gives garbage to the God!"

"No! No! It's not true!" I called out.

The angel saw my lie and only smiled. "The Christians made you ashamed," he said. "Ashamed of being a mother with no husband."

"No!" I shouted again, but it is useless to shout against angels.

"I tell you this," said the angel. "If you falter in your faith, if you listen to the Christians and become ashamed, I shall turn my face away from you and the world will be given to them instead. There is a trial in the other world between the Gods, and you are the jury. I give you knowledge and freedom, while my Brother gives only commands. If your body dies, it is nothing. You'll soon be back in another body. But if your faith dies, the case will be won by the Tyrant, and you and I shall both die the second death from which there is no return."

"No," I cried a third time, for now the fear of death was coming on me. "Help me! Don't let me die!"

"You are losing me," said the angel softly. "Remember. Remember when you were on earth before."

"I remember nothing! *Oh, save me, angel!*"

But the angel was gone.

I wandered down the hill toward the road.

I climbed over a fence of loose-piled stones.

I cried and sobbed and tried to stop the blood with my hand, but

it flowed steady and only made my helpless fingers red and sticky. The flies were after me now. I hate flies.

I reached the road, but I was too weak to go on, so I half-fell, half-knelt in the sand. Now I no longer cried. Crying uses precious energy, and I had so little of that left.

Also, I was no longer afraid or unhappy.

While I lived many an animal gave his life to feed me, and many a plant. Even plants have spirits, and animals certainly do, no matter what the foolish Christians say. They died for me. Now I die for them. That is the world's agreement with us. There were some ants in the dust of the road. They began crawling on me. They began to gather around the spreading stain of my blood, like my brothers and sisters in the coven gathering to the great feast of Midsummer's Eve.

"Merry meet, merry part, my darlings," I said to the ants, as I lay down gently in the sand, trying not to crush any of them. The sun came up and warmed my naked flesh, which was good, since as the drug wore off I began to feel the cold in the morning breeze. I lay so still a bee landed close to my nose and I could see the beautiful shifting colors in his wings.

The flies were there too, and they also had pretty wings.

I don't really hate flies.

And then I died.

And dying, I remembered.

I was a boy and I tended goats.

My meat was goat meat. My drink was goat milk. My clothing was goat skins. I tended goats and protected them from wild animals and demons. My God had the face of a goat, and the blood of goats was poured out to Him on the stone before our hut.

When the man with the clothes that were not made of skins came to us and told us of Jesus and showed us the dead man on the cross we were kind to him, as we are kind to all strangers, as it is certainly true that all of us are strangers passing through this world again and again. But we could not believe in the things he said and besides he spoke with such an accent some young men could not help but laugh at him. He then grew angry and went away, this Jesus man.

Before he left, he said, "Those who cannot learn from the word must then learn from the sword." We knew what he meant and were troubled. We have never learned the arts of war in this rough land, depending on the unpleasantness of our climate and the infertility of our soil to discourage invaders. The Jesus man did not want our land, as an ordinary enemy might. He wanted us. He wanted us to become his goats, that he could protect or kill, as he wished.

But months passed with no word of him, and we forgot him in our daily round with the goats and our private feuds between families. (These fights between families rarely produced fatalities, since they were fought almost exclusively with quarterstaffs.)

Then, one afternoon when the sun was warm and the sky without a cloud, I was watering the goats at a stream near the Dun bridge when I heard a horse coming at a slow walk in the distance. I ran up and stood on the bridge, trying to catch a glimpse of the rider, for the truth is that horses are rare things in this country.

In a moment I saw him, coming up the rocky pitted road.

The cross on his shield was plain enough even at a distance, so I knew he was the man with the sword the Jesus man had promised to send after us. I knew also that I was not going to let this man pass over our bridge, save after I was dead. It's little enough our people have, but we do have our pride, and that no man can take from us.

All the same I was scared.

This horseman rode so slow and steady. He must have seen me, standing in the middle of the bridge with my quarterstaff, but he rode neither slower nor faster than he had before sighting me. Perhaps the horse had but one gait, and that a slow one, for he was surely the biggest, heaviest beast that ever bore the name of horse. I suppose he had to be a big one to carry the weight of all the armor the rider wore. When this great monster of a horse and his rider all bound up in metal were within earshot I called out, "Hey, what's your business here?"

"I've come to teach good Christian ways to you and your demon-loving people," he answered, and oh, his voice was cold.

"It's we who may be teaching you manners," I shouted. "We are many and there's but one of you."

"One of us is enough," he said, "with God and cold metal on my side." He raised his lance and kept on coming, neither slower nor faster than before.

"Stop!" I shouted, raising my stick. I had been taught that a well-used quarterstaff could deflect a lance, if you were quick enough with it. "Stop, I say!"

He bent forward slightly in the saddle and gave his horse a little kick with his heels. The ungainly creature broke into a heavy trot. In an instant those great hoofs sounded on the bridge and that sharp bright point of the lance was bearing down on me. I held my staff in both hands, waiting for the exact instant to jerk it up and send the lancepoint harmlessly to one side. Then, a quick thrust between the horse's legs and . . .

Now!

I brought up my staff smartly, exactly right, but the man in metal was too strong for me. His lance went into my belly, deep in, and came out again through my back. It was painful, being pierced, but not so bad as I had expected. I didn't faint. I didn't even cry out. I was just . . . surprised.

The horseman reined in and backed off, pulling his lance carefully free of me. That's what really hurt! And seeing that point swing up and back, covered with my blood and bits and strings of my guts. It was the thought of it that hurt me, really. The idea of being pierced, stabbed, run through. The idea was what hurt most.

I stepped back, and my foot came down on empty air.

I made a futile try at keeping my balance, but it was too late. Down I went with a rush and a wet thump, into the shallows of the stream under the bridge. I looked up. The horseman was laughing so hard he almost fell off his horse, looking down at me through the slits in his helmet. He was still laughing when he turned his horse and continued on across the bridge.

I tried to move my legs, but they no longer obeyed me. I thought then that perhaps I had broken my back in the fall.

My people could place no blame on me. I had done all I could to stop the invader. Then I thought, "No, I could have run ahead and given warning. Now he will take my people by surprise." Only then did I begin to cry. My bravery had been all for nothing, where my cowardice might have made possible some defense, however feeble.

The water went on flowing over my half-submerged body. I watched, through my tears, the sunlight dancing on the surface like leaping fire, and I said to myself, very softly, "If I return to Earth again, I shall return as one of the strong, like that horseman."

And that thought made me smile as I died.

When I did return to the world it was in Southern France, near the Spanish border. I had, of course, forgotten all about my past life. Or had I? There was something about the passing of mounted men of arms that made me excited beyond belief, and when I saw the sign of the cross a strange emotion, awe mixed with fear and, perhaps, a touch of hate, swept over me.

Once, in a parade, I saw some high church dignitaries riding, all covered with jewels and fine clothing, and I thought, "Some day, I shall be like that."

My parents owned a house and lands, but overseers and servants saw to the running of them. My father worked and studied in one little room in the great house, writing far into the night by candlelight and reading ancient scrolls in Greek and Latin. He was a hard man to talk to, but one

day I went to him (I was then in my early teens) and told him I wished to become a priest.

He did not answer me at first, as he sat there in his carved chair, one arm on an octagonal wood-inlaid table and the other hanging loose so his fingertips touched the rug, while I stood tongue-tied before him. At last he slowly shook his head, as if an infinite weariness had come over him.

"Do you think I've cared for you all these years only to hand you over to the Pope?" he demanded, his long, delicate scholar's fingers doubling into fists.

"What's wrong with that?" said I.

"Let me show you," he said, gentle now, no longer angry.

He showed me things he had translated out of the ancient scrolls in Latin and Greek, showed me quotations from the Bible, quotations from Josephus, one dusty scroll after another until my vision blurred and my head was spinning. "You see?" he kept saying eagerly. "You see?"

At last I could contain myself no longer. I cried out, "No, I don't see! I don't understand!"

"But it's so clear," said my father, fixing me with his great dark hollow eyes. "The Pope is the anti-Christ. The Catholic Church is not Christ's mission in the world, but the Devil's."

For a moment I was too stunned to speak, then I shouted, "No! No! I won't listen!" and ran from the room. I knew then, for the first time, that my father was a heretic.

He never spoke to me again on the subject of religion, and rarely on any other subject. It was my sister, two years younger than I, who became from that day forward his constant companion, who now wore boy's clothing and began to be raised as a boy, and I understood that she had taken my place with my father, that he had meant for me to inherit his house and lands and carry on his demon-inspired work with the old books and scrolls, but that now everything, everything would go to her.

When he lay on his deathbed, it was she, not I, that he called to his side, while I stood outside the closed door, straining to hear their whispering. And when he died, it was she who put on his emerald ring and great green cloak and went every day into the little room to work until after midnight behind locked doors. She and I had been so close, when we had been younger, and had played at being knight and lady in the open fields, even at being lovers. (A sister's kiss is the sweetest of any, because it's forbidden.) Now that was all done and finished. The locked door and the piles of ancient manuscripts lay between us like a curse.

I went to the village priest and told him everything, including the demon work of my father and sister, and my own desire to become a priest.

It was in my mind that I was really helping her, as if calling in a doctor for someone who is ill, and it was also in my mind that I wanted an education, so that I could read Latin and Greek as my sister could, so that I could become the wise child my father had wanted me to be.

The angel laughs a mocking laugh and says, softly, "Is that all?" No, no, that's not all. Perhaps, perhaps I may have given a few moments' thought to the house and lands, too, that would be mine if she were gone.

I don't know how she knew, but she knew what I had done. She was not angry with me, but only gave herself over more feverishly than ever to her writing and her ancient scrolls in that damned little room. All she said to me was, "If they take me, my brother, you must hide the book I'm working on from them. There's our father's life's work in that book, and you mustn't let them destroy it."

I promised. I could never refuse her anything, to her face.

So, one night, when it was raining hard and the wind was screaming over the rooftops, they did finally come for her. I was in the upstairs hall, leaning my head against the uneven greenish glass window above the front door, feeling the cool glass against my forehead, when I heard the cart in the distance, bumping and rumbling over the cobblestones.

They came to the door.

They knocked, with the great iron doorknocker.

My sister went down to let them in, reaching the door before any of the servants, as if the devil had told her that it was she they were seeking. She went with them without a word, and I listened to the cart rumble away until its sound was drowned in the hiss of the rain.

Then I went to the little room, where all the ancient scrolls in Greek and Latin were hidden, and, one by one, I burned them all in the vast fireplace under the tapestry of the unicorn kneeling before the Tree of Knowledge. Yes, all of them, even the huge book begun by my father and carried on by my sister.

Then I went to bed, but I did not sleep well.

The Church was good to me. The good fathers took me in and taught me Greek and Latin and the Bible and obedience. In return I worked hard for the Church all the rest of my life. They found I had a talent for sniffing out heretics, so that became my work. There were in the land at that time many false Christians who claimed that we are born again and again and that the Pope is not to be obeyed, but rather the spirit of Christ in one's own heart. I cannot count the number of those I brought back to the Church, either through argument or prayer or, all else failing, torture. But there were many who slipped away from me, dying while still in a state of sin, and some were braver than any Christian I have known, and died

with a smile on their lips, damning me with their forgiveness. It was those that smiled that haunted my sleep, more than those that screamed and pleaded. Again and again they said to me, with their last breaths, "We do not fear you, who can only harm our bodies." I began to drink more good wine than the worst slave of sin, but nobody reproached me for it. Indeed, all my fellow heretic hunters drank too much, and some, while drunk, more than once broke their vows of chastity.

When I reached the age of fifty, I longed to die, I even prayed to die, but God does not listen to such requests, and I lived on and on and on, as if the alcohol in my blood preserved me from all decay.

I thought more and more often of my sister. I had never seen her again. I did not know if she were alive or dead, though once I heard a rumor that she had died in a nunnery, still faithful to her demonic heresy. I could not ask my superiors about her and, in truth, I preferred not to know her fate, whatever it might be.

Was I in my seventies or my eighties when I found myself at last on my deathbed, surrounded by my withered comrades in their dark robes, their faces all shadows in the candlelight? I don't know. I no longer counted the years, or even the days.

They all knew I was dying, but they tried to cheer me with talk of all we would do when I was "up and around again." Then the Bishop came in to give me final absolution from my sins, and that was the end of the cheerful lies. It was quite an honor, to be thus attended by the Bishop himself, and my ancient friends nodded to each other about it knowingly. I had given my life for the Church, and now I was going to get my reward.

But then, before he could begin, I raised myself on my elbow and croaked out to him, "Stop that! I won't have it! No absolution for me!"

"What?" cried the Bishop, amazed. "But then you'll be damned!"

"So let it be!" I rasped out. "But you can't grant me absolution, nor can your Church!"

"Why not?" demanded the Bishop, his face turning livid with anger.

"It's you who have damned me!" I exclaimed, then fell back on my pillow. As if from very far away I heard the Bishop going on with the ceremony, but now I was powerless to stop him, or even to speak.

"I'm damned," I whispered to myself. "Damned. Damned. Damned."

"Hey, don't take it so hard just because you can't get a hard-on," said Marie, lifting her head from where she was uselessly sucking on my dick, my flabby, hopeless, impotent dick.

Outside, in Montmartre, it was raining, but the night people still walked the streets, shouting and laughing and pretending to have fun, and the accordion in the Lapin Agile cabaret down the street played a heavy-

footed waltz. I reached over to the bedtable and poured myself a drink.

"That won't help you fuck," said Marie. "That's what's damning you, in fact, if you ask me."

I ignored her and drank deep.

"Hey, my friend," she said. "Were you ever a monk?"

"Hell no," I snapped. "Do I look like one?"

"You drink a lot and can't make love. That's the way it is with a monk, eh?"

"I was born a second-rate piano player," I growled. "That's all I ever was and that's all I ever will be."

"You aren't much of a lover, my friend," she said, sitting up on the edge of the bed and reaching for her bloomers, "but I like the way you play piano, and the songs you sing. They tell the truth about what a shithouse we live in, and besides, people pay good money to hear them. That's the important thing, if you ask me."

"I'm damned," I said again. "I wish I was dead."

"Are you going to get into that? Listen, you promised me you wouldn't try to kill yourself again, right?"

"That's right."

"Well, promise me again."

"I won't try to kill myself," I said, gloomily. "Now how much do I owe you?"

"Listen, my friend. Forget it. Nothing for nothing, right? We've been friends so long we're like brother and sister, eh? It's all in the family."

"Brother and sister? Shit. If you were my sister I wouldn't let you sell your ass for a living."

"How do you know, my friend? Brothers don't always treat their sisters so very well. Now help me into my corset like a good brother. Then you can walk me down to the Gare St. Lazare. I have to catch a train."

"Walk all that way? In the rain? Shit!"

"It'll be good for you, my drunken brother. It'll sober you up."

"Oh, what the hell. All right. I don't give a fuck!"

She stood in front of the mirror, putting on her little silver crucifix.

"What do you wear that thing for?" I asked her as I searched for my pants.

"I know what's good for me," she answered with a shrug.

When we were finally dressed and stumbling down the steep streets trying not to get run over by the passing horses and carriages, I asked Marie, "Where are you going, anyway, on that train?"

"I am going to make my visits," she answered simply, clutching my arm

to steady herself, though lord knows I could have used a little steadying myself.

"Visits?"

"To my family. Everyone makes visits, you know."

"I don't," I told her.

"Poor man," she said sadly. "A veritable orphan!"

"I have parents . . . right here in Paris. They have no more wish to see me than I have to see them."

"Poor man," she repeated.

After a while we were in the station. It was crowded as hell.

We stood together on the platform for a while, not speaking, and then she said, "Listen, my friend. I have nothing to read on the train. Can you run down to the stand and buy me a newspaper or something?"

"All right."

"But hurry. The train is due any minute."

I started off through the crowd, but it was slow going.

I saw an old woman sitting on a bench, and I thought she was dead because her skin was so blue, but then she moved. Old age is always horrible. Only fools see anything good in it.

"You won't be old," said the dark angel in my ear.

I was used to hearing strange voices when I drank too much, so I paid no attention. I just bought a few newspapers at random and started back through the milling mob.

Then I heard the train coming in, puffing and chugging and hissing like a winded dragon. And I saw it . . . or anyway the clouds of smoke it was belching out, so I tried to run, but the crowd was so thick it was like swimming in molasses. At the edge of the platform there seemed to be some clear space, so I tried to get through there.

The locomotive was coming now, drivers pumping with a slow easy roll.

Then someone pushed me.

I went off balance for an instant, then fell onto the tracks, landing on my side with a painful thud. There were two thoughts in my head, before the train hit me. The first was of Marie, that she would think I had done it on purpose. The second was of my songs. "Oh, why didn't I ever write anything down?"

Miriam apo Magdalla, when I spoke of writing down her account of the Master's life and sayings, answered mockingly, "If Jesus had wanted a book written he would have written it himself. It was to free us from a book that He took on flesh! What need have we of a book when God speaks through us directly? Did Jesus not say, 'The letter brings death; the spirit, life'? He who lives by a book is unfaithful to the Holy Spirit within him-

self, as if God, having spoken once, could never speak again. I say, on the day that men open the book of ink and papyrus, they will close the book of the Spirit, and men will no longer do good, but only devote their lives to catching each other in errors, pointing to the papyrus and saying, 'See! I am right and you are wrong!' Is this faith, to say that God's words may be lost? I say, if all record of God's words be lost, He need but say them again, and those who have ears to hear will hear. And I say further that those who love a book more than God will become murderers and torturers and liars and tyrants and be able to justify every sort of monstrous cruelty by quoting their book. *God is within me, or there is no God!* And if He is within me, He will tell me Himself, directly, all that I should know."

So I left the old woman, Mad Miriam of Magdalla, without the words I had come to record on my scroll, and walked the streets of the Jewish quarter in Alexandria. A grim-faced Roman soldier passed in a chariot, red cape twisting in the hot, sand-laced wind. The wheels of the chariot were bright-painted wood rimmed with iron, and the sound of the iron clattering on the stones of the street lingered in the air long after the chariot had passed. I, an Egyptian by birth but a Greek by education, had no love for the Roman conquerors, but on these streets the sight of a servant of law and order was a welcome sight indeed, what with the riots and violence that filled our streets every night. And now night was almost upon me!

I was dressed as a Jew, and so was fairly safe from the knives of the Jews, but what if I should meet a Greek? Would I have time to tear the Jewish deep blue tassels from the hem of my tunic? What indignity! That the life of a gentleman, a scribe of the Great Library of Serapis, should hang upon a blue tassel!

And yet, would you believe it, I ventured into that lawless, bloodstained quarter again and again, drawn as if by a wizard's spell to that strange old woman who claimed to have kissed the lips of the God-King of the Jews. There were those who said she was a witch. And more who said she was possessed by seven demons.

For my superiors, religion was but an instrument of politics, and a new gospel from this old woman would serve no other purpose than to be another means of holding down the fanatical rebelliousness of the Jews. If they must have a Messiah, let it be a Messiah of Peace, not like the others who spring from every stone in the streets of Jerusalem to raise a sword against Rome.

At first, I felt the same.

And then, who knows? Perhaps she bewitched me.

Why else would I listen to tirades like this one?

"You should have seen how grudgingly the Twelve allowed my presence by the Master's side. Those idiots! How many times did their slow wits try the patience of my Rabbi, my Lord, my King? I, only I, really understood Him, for only the mad can know the mad. His kingdom had three ranks . . . those who know, those who only believe, and those who neither know nor believe, but only wander in ignorance. Only He and I dwelt in the highest rank, for only to us did the voices speak and the visions appear. Because of our visions, this lower world cast us out, and we lived in another, but the Twelve remained in this lower world. They chose which world they'd follow. When my Rabbi went to the stake, they ran and hid themselves while I stayed with Him to the end. In their shame they could not bear to see me or hear my scorn for their cowardice, and they quickly did what they dared not do while the Master was alive. They sent me away, saying that because I was a woman I was not worthy to be one of them. Now we hear talk that they, too, see visions, hear voices and even speak in tongues, yet I know that whoever it is that speaks through them, it is not my Rabbi! My Rabbi, in the flesh, never preached the Jewish virtues of law, work, family and ritual. When He said He had come to fulfil the Law, He meant He'd come to end it! The Law called for an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but Jesus freed us to become kind."

Or fantastic claims like this?

"The Great Beast, Nero, is not dead forever, but will return, as shall we all, in a new body, when the time is ripe. We all come, the good, the evil, the indifferent, again and again into the world. John, the Baptist, was, before this, Elijah, the prophet, and I was before this the sister of Moses."

No, it was a certain ring, a certain feeling that hooks the mind, in stories she told about Jesus. Like this one:

A certain Zealot asked Jesus, "If the Romans threaten our religion, should we not defend our God with the sword?"

Jesus answered, "Who is stronger, you or God?"

The Zealot said, "God, of course!"

And Jesus said, "Then God has no need of your defense. It is you who need His."

Or another like it, about a Roman Centurion who was questioned by Jesus in the marketplace:

Jesus said to the Centurion, "Why do you need armies?"

The Centurion answered, "To defend the borders of our Empire."

Then Jesus said, "If your Empire had no borders, what, then, would you have to defend?"

Or this one:

Jesus said, "Some build temples by laying one dead stone on another,

but how can dead things ever give life? I have made my temple as a living tree is made, growing outward from the seed, and in the fruits of that tree are the seeds of new life."

When she told a story she would then explain it, like this:

Miriam said, "The Master's thought is like a great tree. It has many leaves and branches and bears rich fruit, but it all grew from one little seed, and that seed is that Man was created in the image of God. Everything else grows outward from that."

I managed to write down a few of her stories from memory, but what I really needed was a full story, with a beginning, middle and end, like the scroll the Jew, Mark, had made a few years ago for the followers of Jesus in Alexandria, but more complete and bringing out more the radical pacifism of this particular Messiah. Such a document, with the authority given it by an eyewitness like Miriam, could do more to tame the bloodthirsty Jews than seven legions of Caesar's finest.

All the news was of endless bloodshed in the war between the Romans, led by General Vespasian and his son Titus, and the Jewish fanatics in Judaea, so that at times I wondered if my mission of peace would have any effect, even if I were to produce the manuscript I felt the occasion demanded. And now, with the death of Nero, civil war broke out in Rome itself, where first one emperor, then another, laid claim to the throne of the world.

It was useless to appeal to Miriam on humanitarian grounds. She felt those Jews who put their faith in Herod's defiled temple deserved whatever they got. It was only by chance that I finally hit upon a way to secure her co-operation.

I happened to mention Mark's gospel to her.

"What? Mark wrote a gospel? But he never knew the Master! He was no more than Peter's scribe! How can he write of that which he knows nothing?" she shouted, smashing her withered old fist on the table.

Jealousy! How could I have guessed that saints could be jealous? Yet it had been obvious all along.

"If you were to dictate another," I said carefully, "perhaps Mark's foolish impulsiveness could be corrected."

"You're a sly one," she said to me. "But yes, I'll do it. I'll do it after all!"

I knelt at my writing table, took a reed brush from behind my ear, wet my writing ink, and waited. Miriam's Greek was crude and ungrammatical, but I could polish it as I wrote. Together we might well produce a work of lasting value.

"But first," she said, "you must promise me something."

"Of course," I said, my eagerness overcoming my caution.

"You must promise to defend the truth I give you from all those who would change or corrupt it."

"Of course," I easily agreed.

"Until the end of time," she added.

"Until the end of time? How can I promise that?" I demanded.

"You will remember, from one life to the next, what you have promised to me here, even if you forget me, even if you forget everything else. Is it agreed?"

In my heart I did not believe a man has more lives than one, so why not humor the old woman? "Agreed," I said. And so she began:

"When he was a child, Jesus was brought here to Alexandria to escape Herod, who called himself King of the Jews, though he was neither King nor Jew. Herod slaughtered all who had rightful claim on the Jewish throne, and Jesus was of royal blood, of the House of David. Like Buddha, Jesus was born an earthly ruler, but renounced earthly rule for the other kingdom, that is not of this world. He was a student, not of one religion, but of them all, for that is what it means to be raised in Alexandria, where every god in the universe has at least one follower. From the Buddhist Theraputae by the lake He learned monasticism and meditation, from the Rabbi the whole of Jewish law and tradition, and from the shaven-headed priests of Osirus He learned how a man can save his soul by identification with a sacrificial god, and it was from them, too, that He learned baptism and the wearing of the Cross of Life. Yet He never forgot his people, the Jews, never forgot that He and His brothers and sisters were the true royal family of Judaea, and many were the times, while He was still only a boy, that He spent the whole of the night talking of the sad plight of the Jews with His cousin, John, who was later called 'The Baptist.' He saw, clearer than anyone else, that the Jews could never throw off the Roman rule by force of arms, and that by trying to, they would only bring down upon themselves destruction. He saw, clearer than anyone else, that the Jews had been led away from the religion of their fathers and of the prophets by the false king, Herod, and the false priests Herod appointed, and the false temple Herod built in Jerusalem.

"I knew Him then, but I did not learn holy things from Alexandria. For a young girl who has no money and cannot speak Greek like a lady, Alexander's city of marble has other lessons to teach. I learned that there was something between my legs that I could sell again and again, yet never lose. Jesus said my cunt was like knowledge in that way, or like truth, for though all my family and friends turned away from me because of what I did, Jesus never turned away. You know that a woman is counted lower than a horse or cow in this world, but though I was a woman, and the low-

est of women, Jesus spoke to me as if I were a man, and His equal, and defended me from His friends, who were forced to put up with me, at least until Jesus was dead.

"When I returned to my home in Magdalla, on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus and John returned also, and John went south to preach the things he and Jesus had learned in Alexandria, and he soon had a great following, because the people of Judaea were simple and unlearned, except in the Torah, and John had sharpened his wit in debate with the school-trained philosophers from the Alexandrian library. Even on the subject of the Torah and the Jewish traditions, there was not one Rabbi who could best him in a fair argument, and you should know that the Jews decide all things by learned argument, whether it be the origin of the universe, or the proper preparation of food, or the number of days in a year.

"But the people of that day were not content with a prophet. They called out for a Messiah, and many were the false Messiahs who stepped forward to lead them to destruction against the Romans. In all Judaea, in all the world, there was only one who, by right of blood, could be a true Messiah, and that was Jesus, the eldest prince in the House of David. So Jesus went to join John in Judaea, and I believe it was in His mind to look for some sign from Heaven that would tell Him whether or not He was truly the savior His people longed for and cried out for night and day.

"When it came, the sign was a simple thing. At other times it would have passed without notice, but it came at the exact moment that John was baptizing Him. A bird, I think it was a dove, came down and lighted on Jesus' arm, and He ran from the water into the wilderness like a man possessed by demons."

"Go on!" I cried. "Continue!"

"No, not now," she said, lowering her head into her hands. "I'm an old woman, and tired. Come back again tomorrow."

So I went away, and returned again the next day.

But it was even more dangerous than usual to pass through the streets of the Jewish quarter. The Jewish garments that kept Jewish knives away from me now invited attack not only from the Greeks, but from the Roman soldiers in Vespasian's army, now commanded by the general's son, Titus, since the father had become our new emperor. They had defeated the Jews in Jerusalem, but not before many a good Roman had lost his life, and the sight of a Jew could make a soldier draw his sword, particularly if the soldier was drunk. Titus was young, and the troops did not fear him as they did his father.

I breathed a sigh of relief when I was (as I thought) safely inside the

filthy little hole where Old Miriam lived, and sat down to wet my ink and unroll my scroll.

It was then that a great pounding at the door destroyed any feeling of safety I might have had, and a loud, drunken voice shouted out in Latin, *"Open the door, you filthy Jew bastard! We know you're in there!"*

They must have followed me, I realized with horror.

"If you won't open the door," came another brutal voice, *"we'll break it in!"*

Calmly Miriam stepped toward the door.

"Wait!" I shouted, and drew my sword.

But as the soldiers burst in she pushed between me and them, saying scornfully, "How many times shall my Jesus and I be betrayed? How can they hurt us? *Are we not immortal spirits?*" And a moment later my chance to fight had passed and we were both dragged roughly into the street and bound.

Have you ever seen a man nailed to a stake? The crowd cares not how that man has lived, only how he dies, so that the most vicious, brutal, stupid murderer can win the favor of the mob if only he can say something defiant or simply keep silent and not cry out when the nails go through his wrists. Miriam died well, even after torture. Though her eyes had been put out with hot irons, still she said to the man who drove the nails, "It is not I, but you who are the prisoner."

As for me, I thought at first to do honor to Miriam's Jesus by saying something worthy of a gentleman, when my time came.

But instead I . . .

Instead I . . .

Instead I screamed and pleaded and wept and begged and shouted, as the nails went through my flesh and the crowd of drunken Romans and Greeks cheered. "It's all a mistake! I'm not a Jew! I'm not a Christian! I'm an Egyptian and a Roman citizen! No! No! Don't! For God's sake don't do it!"

Soon I could no longer form words, but only screams, like an animal in labor, but nobody listened to me. They only laughed at me, and drank, and threw empty wine jugs at me.

And finally, with a gesture of contempt, one of the soldiers buried his spear in my belly.

To be pierced! To be pierced! Oh, my God, have you any idea what it feels like to be pierced? Yet there's some good in it. There's some good. Because it is a pain that brings release from pain, one big pain that ends all the little ones.

I stood, after a while, on a vast empty plain beneath a gray, overcast

sky. I was naked, and it was cold. Some distance ahead of me was a crossroads, with paths that led away from it in all directions like strands in a gigantic spiderweb. There were no trees, no grassy areas, no hills or mountains or streams or bodies of water; just bare dust in all directions as far as the eye could see.

But wait. There was something.

A lone figure was walking slowly toward me from the opposite side of the crossroads. As the figure drew closer I could see that it had wings on its back, and then, a moment later, I could make out that it had a sword in one hand and a silver cup in the other. It had long dark hair, but I could not tell for sure whether it was a man or a woman. Perhaps it was both. Perhaps neither.

It was my angel.

"Drink," said the angel, stopping and holding out the cup to me.

"First tell me, Angel, what's in the cup!"

"Forgetfulness."

"There's nothing I want to forget," I said quickly.

The angel smiled. "Not even what you have done?"

I thought a moment. "No," I answered, but this time with hesitation.

"Not even what was done to you?"

"No."

"Not even the pain?"

I paused. Being pierced. If I could forget that . . .

"You must forget all or nothing," said the angel, apparently reading my thoughts.

So. Then what is *"being-pierced,"* after all? Every day dead things enter my mouth and pass through my body and out my asshole. In every life my spirit pierces a new body and passes through it, coming out the other side.

"Don't you understand?" said the angel. "I am only trying to protect you."

"From what?"

"From the knowledge of good and evil. Only gods and angels can stand to know what evil there is in the best of earthly things. For you it is a forbidden fruit, so drink. Drink and forget."

I needed time to think. Stalling, I asked, "Where are we?"

"This is the land of Woomtoom, beyond time and outside space. All these paths lead back into the world, at different points in history."

"There seem to be thousands of them," I said.

"But all are for your feet and yours alone," said the angel. "Now drink, and return to your body."

"No," I said softly.

"So be it," said the angel, pouring out the cup in the dust at his feet. I stepped forward and the angel raised his sword.

"You cannot return now," said the winged being. "You must remain here. You can never return to the world."

But then I remembered again that according to the Bible it was possible to wrestle with angels, and win! I pretended to lunge forward, and the angel's sword swung downward toward me, but at the last possible split-second I sidestepped and avoided the sword at the same time as I leaned close and grabbed the angel's arm. To his intense amazement, I threw him, with a simple Judo spring-hip throw, then threw myself onto him from the rear, in spite of his wildly thrashing wings. The sword flew harmlessly from his hand and skittered into the dust well out of arm's reach, while I leaned in between his two wings, passed my right arm around his neck and snapped the hand back toward me so that it grasped my left arm just above the elbow. Then I placed the palm of my left hand against the back of the angel's head, pressing forward with it while pulling back with the other.

"Give up?" I demanded.

The angel only struggled all the harder.

I tightened the choke hold.

"What do you say now?" I asked coldly.

There was no answer, only more thrashing and writhing. I squeezed harder, and the struggling grew weaker and finally ceased. I held the choke a little longer, just to make sure, then let go. The angel rolled over in the dust, completely limp.

I listened for his heartbeat, felt for his pulse.

There was nothing. The angel was dead.

I picked up the sword and the empty cup and, choosing a direction at random, began walking.

I opened my eyes and looked up at the Hindu hypnograph on the lower face of the upper bunk above me. Nearby the tape spun uselessly in my tape recorder. Flap flap flap flap.

I sat up and turned the machine off.

By the clock only about an hour had passed. It seemed more like two thousand years.

I was still pretty high, but I knew, somehow, that the peak of the "trip" had passed. I got dressed and went downstairs.

The mail had come. It was lying next to the front door, under the mail slot. I picked it up and glanced over it. There were two form letters, one from the John Birch Society and one from the Peace and Freedom Party.

They both wanted me to join their organizations. Each wanted my help in fighting the other.

I took a coin from my pocket and looked at it for a while, smiling to myself.

Then I flipped it.

Afterword:

I have not written much science fiction in the last few years, though the little I have written has been well-received. The reason for this is simple. In spite of regularly repeated claims that the science fiction field enjoys a freedom of thought and speech greater than that found in any other field, my own experience has been that this boasted freedom is a pure illusion. In spite of the courageous efforts of such pioneers as Avram Davidson, Damon Knight, Phil Dick and Judith Merril, not one of my stories has reached print without either minor or major deletions designed to mollify the bluenoses.

There is a constant cry from editorial circles for new ideas and new writing approaches, but when this demand is answered by stories which dare to indicate that the sexual morality or the political system we now enjoy may not last forever, or that even today there may be a rather large leap from where things are to where they officially are said to be, the call for "something new" is instantly replaced by calculations of what middle-western high-school librarians might consider proper. I love the science fiction field. I have loved it ever since childhood, but it seems to me that science fiction only rarely does more than scratch the surface of its potential, so long as it remains contained within the boundaries imposed by such calculations, so, even though, or perhaps because, I love the genre so well, I have turned my hand to other fields for the most part.

It is possible that, had not Harlan dared to break through the Middle-westernlibrarian Barrier, I would never have written another science fiction story. His anthology, *Dangerous Visions,* is the first ray of real hope I have seen in this country. One of the standard cornball plots in the field is the one where one man saves the whole universe. I used the plot once, in *Eight O'Clock in the Morning,* but I never really believed in it until now. It may well turn out that one man, Harlan Ellison, actually will save the dying universe of science fiction writing.

In literature there is only one unforgivable sin, and that is not the portrayal of sex or violence or unpopular religious and philosophical ideas. The one unforgivable sin is boredom. And science fiction, in recent years, has become boring. There have been signs of life in England, but up until *Dangerous Visions* the U.S. has gradually been sinking into the mud.

Made-up jargon has passed for technology, allowing the old entrenched fan to feel smug while making the story almost impossible for the new reader to understand. Story after story has revolved around phony "plants" of unimportant or incorrect tidbits of science. Story after story has marched the same old WASP engineer paperdoll through the same old story lines, most of which were very good when they were used by H. G. Wells, but which are now showing signs of wear.

"Time Travel for Pedestrians" is a story I have had in my head for several years, ever since some experiences with LSD and numerous other drugs that showed me, among other things, how limited my views and the views of other SF writers were. When, at the annual science fiction convention in Oakland, Harlan mentioned that he was looking for stories for a second volume of *Dangerous Visions,* I instantly left the convention, went home and wrote "Time Travel" at one sitting, in an ecstasy of freedom and creative delight. I have been off drugs for over a year now, but in writing this story I got zonked out of my mind all over again. I still feel pretty high now, as I write this.

But what I'm high on is hope, the hope that now that Harlan has broken the ice we'll see some real fireworks again in the field . . . we'll see some controversy, some brilliance, some writing that has a real sense of life, some real guts and glory. I like Star Trek a lot, but I can't see tying down magazine and book science fiction to what could easily be broadcast over family TV. Even Star Trek, which feeds off ideas tried and proven in the magazine field, will eventually go stale unless there is a massive influx of new approaches and ideas in the field as a whole. Like, it's no use picking a blank mind.

But now I'm high on hope, fellow fans.
Zonked out of my mind.
Please, baby, don't bring me down.



Introduction to

CHRIST, OLD STUDENT
IN A NEW SCHOOL

Ladies and gentlemen, a man who needs no introduction . . .

Probably no other writer in this book could I get away with introducing in that way. But who in the civilized, book-reading world doesn't know the name Ray Bradbury? When the time came to write a few words to preface Ray, I suddenly was struck with the impossibility of the act. There have been whole treatises written on Bradbury, his poetic images, his humanity, his blue period, his chrome period . . . who the hell was I to write about him?

Well, I'm a Bradbury fan, and that's not bad for openers. Not only because it indicates an affection for the man and his work that stretches back over twenty-one years to that first reading of "Pillar of Fire" in a copy of August Derleth's excellent *The Other Side of the Moon* anthology I'd pilfered from the Cleveland Heights High School library, but because too many chuckleheads have taken to balming their own mingey little egos by mumbling Bradbury ain't as good as we thought he was. I sneer at them; may the milk of their mothers turn to yogurt; may all their children be harelipped; may they (in the words of an ancient Yiddish curse) be so poor they come to me for a loan and may I be so poor I haven't got it!

Ray Bradbury is very probably better than we ever imagined him to be in our wildest promotion of him as the first sf writer to escape the ghetto and win approbation from such as Isherwood, Wilder, Fadiman, Algren, Gilbert Highet, Graham Greene, Ingmar Bergman, Francois Truffault and Bertrand Russell, for God's sake!

Let's face it, fellow sf readers, we've been living off Ray Bradbury's success for twenty years. Every time we try to hype some non-believer into accepting sf and fantasy as legitimate *literature,* we refer him or her to the works of Ray Bradbury. Who the hell else have we produced who has approached the level of Bradbury for general acceptance? I mean, there's a *Viking Portable Library* edition of RAY BRADBURY. Sure, Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov are well-known and much-beloved, but if you go out on the street and buttonhole the average *shmendrik,* and ask him to name a dozen famous American writers, if he isn't a dullard who'd name Erich Segal and Leon Uris and Jacqueline Whatshername, he'll rattle off Hemingway, Steinbeck, Mickey Spillane, maybe Faulkner, and very probably Bradbury. That's a load of ego-boost for all of us, and it's about time someone said it. When we do the conversion bit with scoff-

ers, we whirl them over to the meager sf racks in most bookstores and we may find no Delany, no Lafferty, no Knight or Disch or Dickson, but by God we always find *The Martian Chronicles.*

And we say, "Here try this. You'll love it." And the chances are we've handed the reluctant one "Small Assassin" or "Mars is Heaven!" or "The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl" or *Fahrenheit 451* or "I Sing the Body Electric" or "The Veldt" or "The Long Rain" or "A Sound of Thunder" or "The Jar" or . . . jeezus, once you get started it's impossible to stop remembering all those great moments you had from all those fine Bradbury stories, and I don't just mean excitement like seeing "The Kilimanjaro Machine" in *Life* or seeing "The Jar" done so it scared the piss out of you on *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour.* I mean those private blessed moments when you lay up on your back under a tree or on a sofa or down on the floor, and started reading something that began, "It was a warm afternoon in early September when I first met the Illustrated Man."

I mean come *on,* all you smartass literary cynics who make points off other men's careers, can you ever *really* forget that thing that called to the foghorn from the sea? Can you really forget Uncle Einar? Can you put out of your mind all the black folk leaving for Mars, years before the black folk started telling you they wanted out? Can you forget Parkhill in "—And the Moon Be Still as Bright" doing target practice in one of the dead Martian cities, "shooting out the crystal windows and blowing the tops off the fragile towers"? There aren't many guys in our game who've given us so many treasurable memories.

And the really lovely thing about Bradbury is that he started out a fan, a runny-nosed, hungry-to-make-it fan like so many of us. Hung up on Lovecraft and Burroughs and Poe and *Weird Tales* and Walt Disney and Hemingway and Saroyan and Dickens and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur,* homage to all of whom he has paid in his fictions. But he *had* it, he had that extra spark that fired him, and he made it; big enough and good enough and forever enough that now we take him a bit too much for granted.

We see *The Illustrated Man* made into a not-too-distinguished film, and *Fahrenheit 451* and the not-yet-released *Picasso Summer* and maybe even some day (if they lick the script) *The Martian Chronicles,* and it becomes very chic to dismiss Ray Bradbury as though he were a literary snail like Segal. Well, not here, my friends. Here, Ray Bradbury gets his praise, because . . . well, it's my book in large part, and twice I've been in Bradbury's company where great things happened, and anybody wants to put down the author of "Henry IX" (which, under the title "A Final Sceptre, a Lasting Crown" I tried to buy for DV), well they got to fight me first. And I'm mean.

I was going to go into detail about those two swell times I had with Bradbury—one at the newsstand on Cahuenga and Hollywood Boulevards, the other an afternoon we spent on the same podium with Frank Herbert,

where the spark-gap was leapt and seven hundred California English teachers wept and laughed and gave us a standing ovation and for one of the rare moments in my life I *truly* believed, down to the gut core of myself, that it was the noblest thing in the world to be a writer—but space doesn't permit, and besides I'd rather tell it to you when we meet and have more time to talk.

So I'll just tag out by saying Ray Bradbury is a man who has written some 300 stories that have been collected in books like *The October Country, Dark Carnival, The Golden Apples of the Sun, The Illustrated Man, Something Wicked This Way Comes, The Anthem Sprinters, I Sing the Body Electric!, The Martian Chronicles, A Medicine for Melancholy, The Machineries of Joy, Dandelion Wine* and *Fahrenheit 451*. He wrote the screenplay for John Huston's production of *Moby Dick* (which, strangely, looks much better on a TV screen than in a theater). He also wrote the script for an animated film history of Hallowe'en in collaboration with Chuck Jones, *The Halloween Tree*, and he's now at work on a stage play titled *Leviathan '99*. He wrote a "space age cantata" dealing with the possible images of Christ on other worlds, *Christus Apollo*, music by Jerry Goldsmith, and he is a very good, kind, committed man who was in no small part responsible for getting LBJ booted out of office.

And he's the only man whose poetry I would have included in this, a book of stories. Well, maybe Robert Graves . . .



Ray Bradbury

CHRIST, OLD STUDENT IN A NEW SCHOOL

O come, please come, to the Poor Mouth Fair
Where the Saints kneel round in their underwear
And say out prayers that most need saying
For needful sinners who've forgotten praying;

And in every alcove and niche you spy
The living dead who envy the long-since gone
Who never wished to die.
Then, see the Altar! There the nailed-tight crucifix
Where Man in place of Christ gives up the ghost,
And priests with empty goblets offer Us
As Host to Jesus Who, knelt at the rail,
Wonders at the sight
Of Himself kidnapped off cross and man nailed there
In spite of all his cries and wails and grievements.
Why, why? he shouts, these nails?
Why all this blood and sacrifice?
Because, comes from the belfries, where
The mice are scuttering the bells and mincing rope
And calling down frail Alleluiahs
To raise Man's hopes, said hopes being blown away
On incensed winds while Christ waits there
So long prayed to, He has Himself forgot the Prayer.
Until at last He looks along a glance of sun
And asks His Father to undo this dreadful work
This antic agony of fun.
No more! He echoes, too. No more!
And from the cross a murdered army cries: No more!

And from above a voice fused half of iron
Half of irony gives man a dreadful choice.
The role is his, it says, Man makes and loads his dice,
They sum at his behest
He Dooms himself. He is his own jest.
Let go? Let be?
Why do you ask this gift from Me?
When, trussed and bound and nailed,
You sacrifice your life, your liberty,
You hang yourself upon the tenterhook!
Pull free!

Then suddenly, upon that cross immense,
As Christ Himself gives stare
Three billion men-in-one blink wide their eyes, aware!
Look left! Look right!

At hands, as if they'd never seen a hand before,
Or spike struck into palm
Or blood adrip from spike,
No! never seen the like!

The wind that blew the benedictory doors
And whispered in the cove and dovecot sky
Now this way soughed and that way said:
Your hand, your flesh, your spike.
You will to give and take,
Accept the blow, lift the hammer high
And give a thunderous plunge and pound,
You make to die.
You are the dead.
You the assassin of yourself
And you the blood
And you the one Foundation Ground on which red spills
You the whipping man who drives
And you the Son who sweats all scarlet up the hills
to Calvary;
You the Crowd gathered for the thrill and urge
You both composer and dear dread subject of the dirge
You are the jailor and the jailed,
You the impaler and you the one that your own
Million-fleshed self in dreams by night
Do hold in thrall and now at noon must kill.

Why have you been so blind?
Why have you never seen?
The slave and master in one skin
Is all your history, no more, no less,
Confess! This is what you've been!

The crowd upon the cross gives anguished roar;
A moment terrible to hear.
Christ, crouched at the rail, no more can bear
And so shuts up his ears with hands.
The sound of pain he's long since grown to custom in his wits,
But this! the sound of wilful innocence awake
To self-made wounds, these children thrown

To Revelation and to light
Is too much for his sanity and sight.
Man warring on himself an old tale is;
But Man discovering the source of all his sorrow
In himself,
Finding his left hand and his right
Are similar sons, are children fighting
In the porchyards of the void?!
His pulse runs through his flesh,
Beats at the gates of wrist and thigh and rib and throat,
Unruly mobs which never heard the Law.
He answers panic thus:
Now in one vast sad insucked gasp of loss
Man pries, pulls free one hand from cross
While from the other drops the mallet which put in the nail.
Giver and taker, this hand or that, his sad appraisal knows
And knowing writhes upon the crucifix in dreadful guilt
That so much time was wasted in this pain.
Ten thousand years ago he might have leapt off down
To not return again!
A dreadful laugh at last escapes his lips;
The laughter sets him free.
A Fool lives in the Universe! he cries.
That Fool is me!
And with one final shake of laughter
Breaks his bonds.
The nails fall skittering to marble floors.
And Christ, knelt at the rail, sees miracle
As Man steps down in amiable wisdom
To give himself what no one else can give:
His liberty.
And seeing there the Son who was in symbol vast
Their flesh and all,
Hands him an empty cup and bades Him drink His fill
And Christ, gone drunk on laughter,
Vents a similar roar,
Three billion voices strong,
That flings the bells in belfries high
And slams, then opens, every sanctuary door;
The bones in vaults in frantic vibrancy of xylophone

Tell tunes of Saints, yes, Saints not marching in but out
At this hilarious shout!
And having given wine to dissolve thrice ancient hairballs
And old sin,
Now Man puts to the lips and tongue of Christ
His last Salvation crumb,
The wafer of his all-accepting smile,
His gusting laugh, the joy and swift enjoyment of his image:
Fool.
It is most hard to chew.
Christ, old student in a new school
Having swallowed laughter, cannot keep it in;
It works itself through skin like slivers
From a golden door
Trapped in the blood, athirst for air;
Christ, who was once employed as single son of God
Now finds himself among three billion on a billion
Brother sons, their arms thrown wide to grasp and hold
And walk them everywhere,
Now weaving this way, now weaving that in swoons,
Snuffing suns, breathing in light of one long
Rambled aeon endless afternoon. . . .

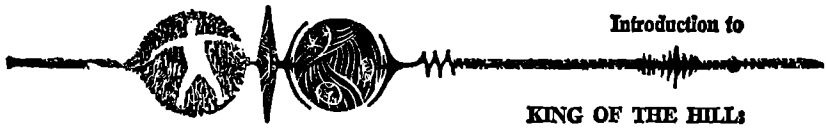
They reach the door and turn
And look back down the aisle of years to see
The rail, the altar cross, the spikes, the red rain,
The sad sweet ecstasy of death and hope
Abandoned, left and lost in pain;
Once up the side of Calvary, now down Tomorrow's slope,
Their palms still itching where the scar still heals,
Into the marketplace where, so mad the dances
And the reels, Christ the Lord Jesus is soon lost
But found again uptossed now here, now there
In every multi-billioned face! There! See!
Some sad sweet laughing shard of God's old Son
Caught up in crystal blaze fired out at thee.
Ten thousand times a million sons of sons move
Through one great and towering town
Wearing their wits, which means their laughter
As their crown. Set free upon the earth
By simple gifts of knowing how mere mirth can cut the bonds

And pull the blood spikes out;
Their conversation shouts of "Fool!"
That word they teach themselves in every school,
And, having taught, do not like Khayyam's scholars
Go them out by that same door
Where in they went,
But go to rockets through the roofs
To night and stars and space,
A single face turned upward toward all Time,
One flesh, one ecstasy, one peace.

The cross falls into dust, the nails rust on the floor,
The wafers, half-bit through, make smiles
On pavements
Where the wind by night comes round
To sit in aisles in booths to listen and confess
I am the dreamer and the doer
I the hearer and the knower
I the giver and the taker
I am the sword and the wound of the sword.
If this be true, then let the sword fall free from hand.
I embrace myself.
I laugh until I weep
And weep until I smile
Then the two of us, murderer and murdered,
Guilty and he who is without guile
Go off to Far Centauri
To leave off losings, and take on winnings,
Erase all mortal ends, give birth to only new beginnings,
In a billion years of morning and a billion years of sleep.

Afterword:

What to say about this poem? Say that it is a metaphor of Christ and Man and the fact of man finding himself trapped in a flesh where the Beast rends Human and the Human tries to tame the Beast. Out of this stuff comes War. The trial of man trying to become truly Human over the centuries, in spite of his blood-lust, forces him to weep for his lost opportunities, his many murders, his dead children, done in by those Wars. Christ is the symbol of that failure, and the promise of new opportunities to have a final winning. So Bradbury says.



One night in College Station, Texas, in the company of Chad Oliver—almost a legendary name in science fiction because of the scarcity and impossibly high quality level of his stories—I demolished a restaurant and turned a formal banquet at which I was speaking into a scene of loot and pillage.

Now. You hear these myth fables about writers. About Scott Fitzgerald's "crazy Sunday" in which he threw himself into the pool at a producer's mansion. About Hemingway tossing his first novel, the one *before The Sun Also Rises,* overboard on the ship back from Paris, because he felt a writer should never publish his first novel. About Steinbeck going into deadly barrooms on the Jersey docks and challenging whole groups of wallopers to bare knuckle contests. About Faulkner when he worked in one of the Hollywood studios, sitting there for hours typing over and over again on the same sheet of paper, "Boy gets girl, boy gets girl, boy gets girl . . ." And there are stories told about your Gentle Editor—who does not for one *moment* publicly cop to an ego that puts him in the same league with the gentlemen noted above—and these are stories of rape and ruin that sound like the purest bullshit. Some of them are. But some actually happened, and there is always one person who was there and saw it: Silverberg was there when the drunken giant Puerto Rican came at me with the broken quart beer bottle; Avram Davidson was there when I walked into the middle of a street gang in Greenwich Village as they were getting ready to stomp us; a girl named Toni Feldman was there when I dragged an old woman out of a burning car after it had crashed into a fence and before it blew up; Norman Spinrad was there when I got the crap kicked out of me by a guy who was the muscle for a gang of ripoff artists in Milford, Pennsylvania; and Chad Oliver was there when I mobilized the restaurant.

I treasure these people. Not only because they are the unimpeachable verification that the contretemps in which I find myself actually took place—thereby staving off the label of righteous liar I might otherwise wear—but because they are reference points for me, enabling me to distinguish between the colorful lies I tell about myself to enhance my own image of myself, and the truly unbelievable things that actually happen.

It is my most fervent wish that these people stay alive and well, because if they go, then with them go the few pieces of reality to which I cling ferociously.

So ask Chad about that evening.

It was the only time we've ever been in each other's company, and exhausts my anecdotes about Chad. Except that he is a big, charming, pipe-smoking dude. The rest he can relate for himself:

"DEMOGRAPHIC DOPE. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1928. All male Olivers were doctors (father, grandfather, uncle). I am therefore a mutant. Moved to Crystal City, Texas, when I was a sophomore in high school. I loved it—played football, edited the school paper, made friends that are still with me. (It's the town used as background in *Shadows in the Sun.*) Moved around some in Texas since (Galveston, Kerrville, now Austin) but I guess it's fair to say that Texas is Home. Married a Texas girl in 1952; she is known variously as Betty Jane, Beje, and B.J. Have two children: daughter Kim, 17 years, and son Glen, 5½. You might call that spacing them out.

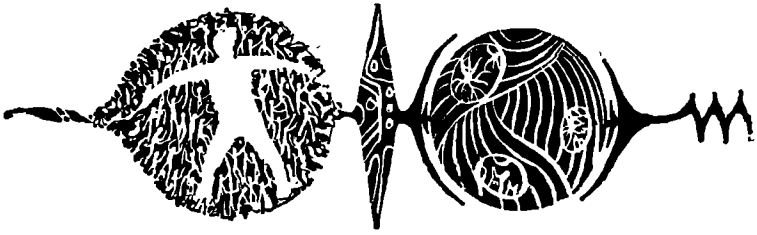
"ACADEMIC. I got my B.A. and M.A. at the University of Texas. Took my Ph.D. (in anthropology) at UCLA. I'm a cultural anthropologist, with particular interests in cultural ecology, the Plains Indians, and the ethnology of East Africa. My rank is Full Professor, not that anyone cares, and I am Chairman of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. I am peculiar in that I happen to like to teach, especially undergraduates. I normally teach several hundred students each semester; out of that number, maybe 3 or 4 know that I write science fiction. I can recognize them by their beady little eyes.

"WRITING. I discovered science fiction when I was a kid, back in the Paleolithic. I remember the story that hooked me: Edmond Hamilton's 'Treasure on Thunder Moon' in the old, fat *Amazing.* I hopped on my bicycle and went back to the newsstand and bought every science fiction magazine I could find. I bought a second-hand typewriter and—aged 15—began to Write. Seven years later, Tony Boucher bought my first story. I've sold virtually everything I have written since then—mostly science fiction, but also a few historical westerns for *Argosy* and *The Saturday Evening Post.* I fear I have not been terribly prolific—it comes to around 50 short stories and novelettes, most of which have been anthologized.

"Books include *Mists of Dawn* (1952), *Shadows in the Sun* (1954), *Another Kind* (1955), *The Winds of Time* (1957), *Unearthly Neighbors* (1960), and *The Wolf Is My Brother* (1967). The latter won the award as Best Western Historical Novel of 1967 from the Western Writers of America. I have a new science fiction novel, *The Shores of Another Sea,* from NAL (Signet) and a new collection, *The Edge of Forever* (Sherbourne), both published in 1971.

"All of this, I guess, tells you very little about me. Maybe that is just as well. I am serious about my writing and I try to write as well as I can. If there is anything about me worth knowing, I hope it can be found somewhere in all those words I have struggled to put on paper."

And finally, these three items. 1) The full name is Symmes Chadwick Oliver. In anthropology he uses Symmes C. Oliver; for fiction, he uses Chad. 2) *Publishers' Weekly* for 3 May 71 announces, "Sherbourne Press of Los Angeles has signed Chad Oliver for his first hardcover collection of science fiction short stories. All of the stories have an anthropological theme." See above. 3) "King of the Hill" is one of the best, tightest, most memorable stories Chad has ever written and I am deeply honored he sold his first short story in years to this anthology. Now go and enjoy it.



Chad Oliver

KING OF THE HILL

She floated there in the great nothing, still warm and soft and blue-green if you could eyeball her from a few thousand miles out, still kissed under blankets of clouds.

Mama Earth. Getting old now, tired, her blankets soiled with her own secretions, her body bruised and torn by a billion forgotten passions.

Like many a mother before her, she had given birth to a monster. He was not old, not as planets measure time, and there had been other children. But he was old enough. He had taken over.

His name?

You know it: there are no surprises left. Man. Big Daddy of the primates. The ape that walks like a chicken. Homo sap. Ah, the tool-maker, flapper of tongues, builder of fires, sex fiend, dreamer, destroyer, creator of garbage . . .

You know me, Al.

Mirror, mirror, on the wall—

Ant is the name, anthill is the game.

There were many men, too many men. They have names.

Try this one on for size: Sam Gregg. Don't like it? Rings no bells? Not elegant enough? Wrong ethnic affiliation?

Few among the manswarm, if any, cared for Sam Gregg. One or two, possibly, gave a damn about his name. A billion or so knew his name.

Mostly, they hated his guts—and envied him.

He was there, Sam Gregg, big as life and twice as ugly.

He stuck out.

A rock in the sandpile.

They were after him again.

Sam Gregg felt the pressure. There had been a time when he had thrived on it; the adrenaline had flowed and the juices bubbled. Sure, and there had been a time when dinosaurs had walked the earth. Sam had been born in the year that men had first walked on the moon. (It had tickled him, when he was old enough to savor it. A man with the unlikely name of Armstrong, no less. And his faithful sidekick, Buzz. And good old Mike holding the fort. Jesus.) That made him nearly a century old. His doctors were good, the best. It was no miracle to live a hundred years, not these days. But he wasn't a kid anymore, as he demonstrated occasionally with Lois.

The attacks were not particularly subtle, but they were civilized. That meant that nobody called you a son of a bitch to your face, and the assassins carried statistics and platitudes instead of knives and strangling cords.

Item. A bill had been introduced in Washington by good old Senator Raleigh, millionaire defender of the poor. Stripped of its stumbling oratorical flourishes, it argued that undersea development was now routine and therefore that there should be no tax dodges for phony risk capital investment. That little arrow was aimed straight at one of Sam's companies—at several of them, in fact, although the somewhat dim-witted Raleigh probably did not know that. Sam could beat the bill, but it would cost him money. That annoyed him. He had an expensive hobby.

Item. Sam retained a covey of bright boys whose only job it was to keep his name out of the communications media. They weren't entirely successful; your name is not known to a billion people on a word-of-mouth basis. Still, he had not been subjected to one of those full-scale, no-holds-barred, dynamic, daring personal close-ups for nearly a year now. One was coming up, on Worldwide. The mystery man—revealed! The richest man in the world—exposed! The hermit—trapped by fearless reporters! Sam was not amused. The earth was sick, blotched by hungry and desperate people from pole to shining pole. There had never been an uglier joke than pinning man's future on birth control. A sick world needs a target for its anger. Sam's only hope was to be inconspicuous. He had failed in that, and it would get him in the end. Still, he only needed a little more time . . .

Item. The U.N. delegate from the Arctic Republic had charged that Arctic citizens of Eskimo descent were being passed over for high administrative positions in franchises licensed to operate in the Republic. "We must not and will not allow," he said, "the well-known technical abilities of our people to serve as a pretext for modern-day colonial exploitation." The accusation was so much rancid blubber, of course; Sam happened to like Eskimos as well as he liked anybody, and in any event he was always very careful about such things. No matter. There would be a hearing, facts would have to be tortured by the computers, stories would have to be planted, money would be spent. The root of all evil produced a popular shrub.

There were other items, most of them routine. Sam did not deal with them himself, and had not done so for fifty years. ("Mr. Gregg never does anything *personally,*" as one aide had put it in a famous interview.) Sam routed the problems down to subordinates; that was what they were for. Nevertheless, he kept in touch. A ruler who does not know what is going on in his empire can expect the early arrival of the goon squad that escorts him into oblivion. There were the usual appeals to support Worthy Causes, to contribute to Charity, to help out Old Friends. Sam denied them all without a qualm and without doing anything; his lieutenants had their orders. A penny saved . . .

Sam was not really worried; at worst he was harassed, which was the chronic complaint of executives. *They* were not on to him yet. There was no slightest hint of a leak where it counted. If *that* one ever hit the air cleaner there would be a stink they could smell in the moon labs.

Still, he felt the pressure. He was human, at least in his own estimation. There was a classic cure for pressure, known to students of language as getting away from it all. It was a cure that was no longer possible for the vast majority of once-human beings, for the simple reason that there was nowhere to go.

("To what do you attribute your long and successful life, Mr. Gregg?" "Well, I pension off my wives so that I always have a young one, and I see to it that she talks very little. I drink a lot of good booze, but I never get drunk. I don't eat meat. I count my money when I get depressed. If I feel tense, I knock about the estate until I feel better. I try to break at least three laws every day. I owe it all to being a completely evil man.")

Sam Gregg could take the cure, and he did.

He did not have to leave his own land, of course.

Sam *never* left his Estate. (Well, hardly ever.)

He took the private tube down from his suite in the tower and stepped

outside. That was the way he thought of it, but it was not precisely true. There was a miniature life-support pod that arched over a thousand acres of his property. It was a high price to pay for clean air, but it was the only way. Sam needed it and so did the animals.

There were two laws that he broke every day. In a world so strangled by countless tons of human meat that land per capita was measured in square feet, Sam Gregg owned more than a thousand *acres*. Moreover, he did nothing useful with that supremely illegal land. He kept *animals* on it. Even dogs and cats had been outlawed for a quarter of a century, and what passed for meat was grown in factory vats. When people are starving, wasting food on pets is a criminal act. (Who says so? Why, people do.) Most of the zoos were gone now, and parks and forests and meadows were things of the past.

Sam took a deep breath, drinking in the air. It was just right, and not completely artificial either. Cool it was, and fragrant with living smells: trees and wet-green grass and water that glided over rocks and earth that was soft and thick.

This was all that was left, a fact that Sam fully appreciated.

This was the world as it once had been, lost now and forever.

Man had come, mighty man. Oh, he was smart, he was clever. He had turned the seas into cesspools, the air into sludge, the mountains into shrieking cities. Someone had once said that one chimpanzee was no chimpanzee. It was true; they were social animals. But how about ten thousand chimpanzees caged in a square mile? That was no chimpanzee also—that was crazy meat on a funny farm.

Oh, man was clever. He raped a world until he could not live with it, and then he screamed for help.

Don't call me, Al. I'll call you.

Sam shook his head. It was no good thinking about it. He could not ride to the rescue, not with all of his billions. He had no great admiration for his fellow men, and it would not matter if he had.

There was only one thing left to try.

Sam tried to close his mind to it. He had to stay alive a little longer. He had to relax, value, enjoy—

He walked along an unpaved trail, very likely the last one left on the planet. He breathed clean air, he felt the warmth of the sun glowing through the pod, he absorbed . . .

There were squirrels chattering in the trees, rabbits busy at rabbit-business in the brush. He saw a deer, a beautiful buck with moss on his horns; the buck ran when he spotted Sam. He knew who the enemy was. He saw a thin raccoon, a female that stared at him from behind her

bandit's mask. She had three young ones with her and they were bold, but Mama herded them up into an oak and out of danger. He could see the three little masks peering down at him from the branches.

The trail wound along a stream of cold, fast water. Sam watched the dark olive shadows lurking in the pools. Trout, of course. Sam drew the line at bass and carp.

He came out of the trees and into a field of tall grass. There were yellow flowers and insects buzzed in the air. He sensed the closeness of shapes and forms, but he could not see them in the breeze-swept grass. There was life here, and death, and life again.

But not for long.

He turned and retraced his steps. He felt a little better.

The raccoons were still in the oak.

Sam went back inside. Back to the salt mine.

He worked hard until dinner.

"What was the exact hour?" Lois asked him, absently stroking one of her remarkable legs. (She had two of them.)

"I don't remember," Sam said. "I was very young."

"Come on, Sam. I'm not stupid. You *can't* tell me that with all the resources of your mysterious enterprises you can't find out the exact time."

"I am telling you. I don't know." Sam looked at her, which was always pleasant in a tense sort of way. Lois was sensual but there was no softness in her. She had a lacquered surface stretched like a drumhead over taut springs. She always looked perfect, but even her casual clothes were somehow formal. She never forgot herself. She was a challenge, which was fine once in a while. Sam was old enough to decline most challenges without dishonor.

Lois did not have to remind Sam that she had a brain. Sam never made *that* mistake. Her little reference to "mysterious enterprises" was an effective threat. At thirty, she had climbed the highest pinnacle on her scale of values: she was the wife of the richest man in the world. She didn't want a settlement. She wanted it all. Sam had no children.

Bright, yes. Cunning, yes. Skilled, certainly. Faithful with her body, yes—Lois took no needless risks. But that fine-boned head enclosed a brain that was all output; not much of significance ever went *in*. The hard violet eyes looked out from jelly that had been molded in Neolithic times.

She would have made a dandy witch.

She spent her days puttering with expensive clothing and obscure cosmetics. She had a library of real books, thus proving her intellectual capacity. They were all about reincarnation and astrology. She considered

herself something of an expert with horoscopes. A pun had frequently occurred to Sam in this connection, but he had refrained. He was not a cruel man.

"I want to do it for you," she said. "You have decisions to make. It would help. Really, Sam."

She was quite sincere, like all fanatics. It was a gift she could give him, and that was important to her. It was an ancient problem for women like Lois: what do you give to a man who has everything? The gag presents get pretty thin very quickly, and Sam was not a man who was easily convulsed.

He sipped his drink, enjoying it. He always drank Scotch; the labs could create nothing better. "Well," he said. "I haven't a clue about the minute of my birth. I'd just as soon forget my birthday."

Lois was patient. "It would be so simple to find out."

"But I don't give a damn."

"I give a damn. What about me? It's a small thing. I know the day, of course. But if the moons of Saturn were in the right position . . ."

Sam raised his eyebrows and took a large swallow of Scotch before he answered. "They are always in the right position," he said carefully. "That's the way moons are."

"Oh, Sam." She did not cry; she had learned some things.

Sam Gregg stood up to refill his glass. He did not like to have obtrusive robots around the house. Self-reliance and all that.

He was not unaware of himself. He did not look his age. He was a tall, angular man. There was still strength in him. His hair was gray, not white. His craggy face was lined but there was no flab on him. His brown eyes were sharp, like dirty ice.

Sam sometimes thought of himself as a vampire in one of the still-popular epics. ("Ah, my dear, velcome to Castle Mordor. A moment vhile I adjust my dentures.") Splendid looking chap, distinguished even. But then, suddinkly, at the worst possible moment, he dissolves into a puff of primeval dust . . .

"Let's go beddy-bye," Sam said, draining his glass. "Maybe I can remember."

"I'll help you," Lois said, reporting for duty.

"You'll have to," Sam agreed.

Sam worked very hard the next few weeks. He even found time to check the hour and the minute of his birth. He was being very careful indeed, trying to think of everything.

Lois was delighted. She retreated to her mystic stewpot, consulted her

illustrated charts, talked it over with several dead Indians, and informed Sam that he was thinking about a long, long journey.

Sam didn't explode into laughter.

His work was difficult because so much of it involved waiting. There were many programs to consider, all of them set in motion years ago. They had to mesh perfectly. They all depended on the work of other men. And they all had to be masked.

It wasn't easy. How, for instance, do you hide a couple of spaceships? Particularly when they keep taking off and landing with all the stealth of trumpeting elephants?

("Spaceship? I don't see any spaceship. Do you see a spaceship?")

Answer: You don't hide them. You account for them. For all practical purposes, Sam owned the space station that orbited the Earth. He controlled it through a mosaic of interlocking companies, domestic and foreign. It was only natural for him to operate a few shuttle ships. A man has a right to keep his finger in his own pie.

Owned the space station, Daddy?

Yes, Junior. Listen, my son, and you shall hear . . .

The great space dream had been a bust. A colossal fizzle. A thumping anticlimax.

The trails blazed by the space pioneers led—quite literally—Nowhere.

Fortunately or otherwise, Mighty Man could not create the solar system in his own image. The solar system was one hell of a place, and not just on Pluto. There were no conveniently verdant worlds. There were just rocks and craters, heat and cold, lifeless dust and frozen chemicals.

There were other suns, other planets. Big deal. There were no handy space warps, no faster-than-light drives. Unmanned survey ships took a very long time to report, and their news produced no dancing in the streets: rocks, craters, desolation. Who would spend a lifetime to visit Nothing?

Would you? (Naw, I'd rather go see Grandma.)

Scientific bases had been established on Luna, and they survived. They survived with enormous expense, with highly trained personnel, with iron discipline. Even the scientific teams had to be replaced at short intervals.

Radiation, you know. Puts funny kinks in the old chromosomes.

The Mars Colony of half a century ago, widely advertised as a solution to the population crisis, was a solution only in the grim sense of a Final Solution. Even with the life-support pods—Sam had lost a fortune on the early models, but he had learned a few things—it was no go. Five thousand human beings had gone to Mars to start the New Life. (A drop in the bucket, to be sure. But there was much talk about Beginnings, and Heroic Ancestors, and First Steps.) A few of them had gotten back. Most

had died or gone mad or both. Some of them were still there, although this was not generally known. They were no longer human.

The problem was that it was perfectly possible to set up a scientific base on Mars, or even a military base if there had been any need for one. But soldiers on Mars are a joke, and appropriations committees had long since stopped playing the old game: *Can You Top This?* Scientists could do little on Mars that they could not do on Luna. And people—plain, ordinary people, the kind that swarmed the Earth and scratched for a living, the kind that had to go—could not exist on Mars.

And so?

And so, kiddies, what was left of the space program was taken over by what was referred to as the Private Sector of the Economy. Got your decoder badges ready? It works out to S-a-m G-r-e-g-g. Governments could not continue to pour billions into space when there was no *earthly* reason for doing so. But with existing hardware and accumulated expertise it was not prohibitively expensive for Sam Gregg to keep a few things going. There was the matter of motive, of course. Sam Gregg had one, and he made money besides.

There were other projects to conceal, but they were easier than spaceships. Genetics research? Well, cancer was still a killer and everyone wanted to live forever. Such work was downright humanitarian, and therefore admirable. Ecological studies? The whole wretched planet was fouled by its own ecology—a solution *had* to be found. (There was no solution at this late date, but so what? It was a Good Thing. Everyone said so.) Computers, robots, cybernetics? Certainly *they* were beyond reproach. Hadn't they ushered in the Golden Age? Well, hadn't they?

Sam Gregg had his faults—ask anyone—but wishful thinking was not among them. He *knew* that he could succeed if he just had time. He could succeed if they didn't get him first. He could succeed because he had the resources and because the problem was essentially one of technology. No matter how complex they are, technological problems can be solved unless they involve flat impossibilities. You can build a suspension bridge, send a man to Mars or wherever, construct cities beneath the sea.

There are other problems, human problems. How do you build a bridge between people? How do you send a better man to Mars? How do you construct an anthill city that is not a bughouse? Money will not solve those problems. Rhetoric will not solve them. Technology will not solve them.

Therefore, Sam did not fool with them. He used them for protective coloration, but he did not kid himself.

He stuck to the art of the possible.

Oh yes, he had a dream.

There was justice in it, of a sort. But human beings care nothing for justice. They look out for Number One.

Number One?

Sam permitted himself a brief, cold smile.

They would tear him apart if they knew, all those billions of Number Ones . . .

A day came when all the bits and pieces fell into place. The data came back, coded across the empty hundreds of millions of miles. The columns added up. The light turned green.

Sam was exultant, in a quiet sort of way. He had expected it to work, of course. He had checked it all out countless times. But that was theory, and Sam was a skeptic about theories.

This was fact.

It was ready. Not perfect, no—but that too had been anticipated.

Ain't science wunnerful?

He could not stay inside, not when he was this close. He had to get outside, taste what was left of freedom. At times like these, it was not enough to know that it was there. He had to *see* it.

He walked on the Estate.

Lois joined him, which was a pain in the clavicle but Sam did not allow her presence to destroy his mood. Lois had on one of her cunning Outdoor Suits. She always professed to adore what she called Nature, but she walked as though every blade of grass were poison ivy.

(Poison ivy had been extinct for decades. Lois would soon follow suit.)

"It's so peaceful," Lois said. She usually said that here.

Rather to his own surprise, Sam answered her. He wanted to talk to somebody, to celebrate. Failing that, he talked to Lois. "No," he said. "Not really. It only seems peaceful because we are observers, not part of it. And it *is* controlled, to some extent."

Lois looked at him sharply. It had been one of his longer speeches.

"See that cedar?" Sam pointed to it, knowing that she did not know a cedar from a cottonwood. "Tough little tree. It'll grow in poor soil, it doesn't take much water. See how the roots come up near the surface? It's brittle, though. Won't last long. That oak is crowding it, and it's got a century or two to play with. See that little willow—there, the droopy one? It needs too much water and the drainage is wrong. It'll never make it. Am I boring you?"

"No," Lois said truthfully. She was too amazed to be bored.

"See the bunny rabbit?" Sam's voice lapsed into parody. "See bunny

run! He'd better run. Lots of things eat bunny rabbits. Hawks, bobcats, wolves. Snakes eat little bunnies—"

"Oh, Sam."

As if to prove his point, a beagle hound stuck his wet nose out of the brush. His white-tipped tail wagged tentatively. His liquid eyes were pools of adoration. (Beagles were originally bred as hunters. Remember?)

Sam turned his back on the dog. "Man's best friend. The supreme opportunist. He figured the odds twenty thousand years ago and threw in with us. K-9, Secret Agent. Con. Fink. Surplus now. Dear old pal."

"I don't understand you sometimes," Lois said with rare perception.

I don't understand them, either, Sam thought. *Animals, not women. Little Forest Friends. Nobody understands them. We were too busy. There wasn't even a decent field study of the chimpanzee until around 1930. Seventy years later there were no chimpanzees. We didn't bother with the animals that were not like men; who cared? We learned exactly nothing about kudus and bears, coons and possums, badgers and buffalo. Too late now. They are gone or going, and so is their world.*

Sam Gregg was not a sentimental man. He was a realist. Still, the facts bothered him. It was hard not to know. He would never know, and that was that. There was no way.

They walked along the trail together. (Arm in arm, lovely couple, backbone of empire.) Sam was a little nervous. It had been a long fight and—as they used to say—victory was at hand.

He felt a little like God and a lot like an old man.

From the branches of a gnarled oak, a masked mother and three small bandits watched them pass.

There were ancient raccoon thoughts in the air.

You are ready.

So do it. Don't wobble.

Sam did it.

Sound dramatic?

It was (in the very long run) and it wasn't (here and now). An extremely well-balanced, insulated, innocuous conveyor left the main lab and hissed gently to the spaceport. A large gray metallic box was loaded into a shuttle ship and locked into place. The box was ten feet square, and it was heavy. It could have been much smaller and lighter—about the size of a jigger glass—except for the refrigeration units, the electronic circuits, the separation cubicles, and the protective layers.

The shuttle lifted to the space station. Strictly routine.

The gray cube of metal was transferred very gingerly to a larger ship.

She (that was surely the proper pronoun) was a special ship, a swimmer of deep space. She was crammed with expensive gear. Say, a billion dollars worth. Maybe more.

She took off. She was completely automated, controlled by computers, powered by atomics.

There were no men on board.

The ship was never coming back.

Sam?

He stayed home.

There was nowhere for him to go.

Remember?

It is curious how a small gesture will offend some people.

There was no more capital punishment, unless living on earth was it, but good men and true were willing to make an exception in Sam's case.

"So you sunk twenty billion into it over a ten-year period," his chief lawyer said. He said it the same way he might have asked, "So you think you're a kumquat, eh?"

"Give or take a few million. Of course, some of the basic research goes back more than ten years. If you figure all that in, it might go to twenty-two billion. Maybe twenty-three."

"Never mind that." The lawyer groaned. He really did.

Lois was not happy and developed a case of severe frigidity. She was not only married to a man confronting bankruptcy, but she was also the wife of a Master Criminal. It does imperil one's social position.

(There was no way to keep it quiet, naturally. Sam had known that. Too many people were involved.)

They had a great time, the venom-spewers: senators and editorialists, presidents and kings, cops and commissions, professors and assorted hot-shots. All the Good People.

Sam had, to put it mildly, violated a public trust. (Translation: he hadn't spent his money on what *they* wanted.)

He was guilty of a crime against humanity. (Judge and jury, definer of crime? Humanity. All heart.)

It did not matter in the least that twenty billion dollars (or twenty-two, or twenty-three, or a hundred) could not have saved the earth. Earth was finished, smothered by her most illustrious spawn. It would take a few years yet, while she gasped for breath and filled the bedpan. But she was through.

Man had never cared overmuch for facts.

He believed what he wanted to believe.

("Things may be bad, but they are getting better. All we have to do is like be relevant, you know? Enforce the Law. Consult the swami. Have a hearing. Salvation through architecture. When the going gets tough the tough get going. All problems have solutions.")

There was one other thing that made Sam's sin inexcusable.

You see, animals have no votes.

The defense?

It was clear, simple, correct, and beyond dispute. It was therefore doomed.

("We'll give him a fair trial, then hang him.")

Way down deep where convictions solidify, Big Man had expected to meet his counterpart on other worlds. ("Ah, Earthling, you surprise I speak your language so good.") He had failed. He had found only barren rocks at the end of the road.

From this, he had drawn a characteristically modest conclusion.

Man, he decided, was alone in the accessible universe.

This was a slight error. There were primitive men who would not have made it, but there were no more primitive men.

The plain truth was that it was *Earth* that was unique and alone. Earth had produced life. Not just self-styled Number One, not just Superprimate. No. He was a late arrival, the final guest.

("All these goodies just for *me!*")

Alone? Man?

Well, not quite.

There were a million different *species* of insects. (Get the spray-gun, Henry.) Twenty thousand kinds of fish. (I got one, I got one!) Nine thousand types of birds. (You can still see a stuffed owl in a museum.) Fifteen thousand species of mammals. (You take this arrow, see, and fit the string into the notch . . .)

Alone? Sure, except for the kangaroos and bandicoots, shrews and skunks, bats and elephants, armadillos and rabbits, pigs and foxes, raccoons and whales, beavers and lions, moose and mice, oryx and otter and opossum—

Oh well, *them.*

Yes.

They too had come from the earth. Incredible, each of them. Important? Only if you happened to think that the only known life in the universe was important.

Man didn't think so. Not him.

Not the old perfected end-product of evolution.

He didn't kill them all, of course. He hadn't been around that long. The

dinosaurs had managed to become extinct without his help. There were others.

He did pretty well, though. He could be efficient, give him that.

He started early. Remember the ground sloth, the mammoth, the mastodon? You don't? Odd.

He kept at it. He was remarkably objective about it, really. He murdered his own kin as readily as the others. The orang had gone down the tube when Sam was a boy, the gorilla and the chimp and the gibbon a little later.

Sorry about that, gang.

In time, he got them all. It was better than in the old days. He took no risks, dug no traps, fired no guns. He simply crowded them out. When there were billions upon billions of naked apes stacked in layers over the earth, there was no room for anything else.

Goodbye, Old Paint.

So long, Rover.

Farewell, Kitty-cat.

Nothing personal, you understand.

All in the name of humanity. What higher motive can there be?

This is a defense?

What in hell did Sam do?

In hell, he did this:

Sam Gregg decided that mankind could not be saved. Not *should* not (although Sam, it must be confessed, did not get all choked up at the thought of human flesh) but *could* not. It was too late, too late when Sam was born. Man had poisoned his world and there were no fresh Earths.

Man could not survive on other planets, not without drastic genetic modifications.

And man would not change, not voluntarily.

After all, he was perfect, wasn't he?

That left the animals. Earth's other children, the ones pushed aside. The dumb ones. The losers. The powerless.

You might call it the art of the possible.

Did they matter? If they were the only life in the universe? Who knew? Who decided?

Well, there was Sam. A nut, probably. Still, he could play God as well as the next man. He had the money.

Pick a world, then. Not Mars. Too close, and there were still those ex-human beings running around there. Don't want to interfere with *them*.

Sam chose Titan, the sixth moon of Saturn. It was plenty big enough; it

had a diameter of 3550 miles. It had an atmosphere of sorts, mostly methane. He liked the name.

Besides, think of the view.

It was beyond human engineering skill to convert Titan into a replica of Mother Earth in her better days. Tough, but that's the way the spheroid rebounds.

However, with atomic power generated on Titan a great deal could be done. It was, in fact, titanic.

The life-support pods—enormous energy shields—made it possible to create pockets in which breathable air could be born. It just required heat and water and chemical triggers and doctored plants—

A few little things.

A bit of the old technological razzle-dazzle.

Men could not live there, even under the pods. Neither could the animals that had once roamed the earth.

Sam's animals were different, though. He cut them to fit. That was one thing about genetics. When you knew enough about it, you could make alterations. Not many, perhaps. But enough.

Getting the picture?

Sam did not line the critters up two by two and load them into the Ark. (Noah, indeed.) He could not save them all. Some were totally gone, some were too delicate, some were outside the range of Sam's compassion. (Who needs a million kinds of bugs?) He did what he could, within the time he had.

He sent sex cells, sperm and ova, one hundred sets for each species. (Was that what was in the box? Yes, Junior.) Animals learn some things, some more than others, but most of what they do is born into them. Instinct, if you like. There was a staggering amount of information in that little box.

The problem was to get it out.

Parents have their uses, sometimes.

But robots will do, if you build them right. You can build a long, long program into a computer. You can stockpile food for a few years.

So—get the joint ready. Then bring down the ship and reseal the pods. Activate the mechanisms. Fertilize the eggs. Subdivide the zygotes. Put out the incubators. Fill the pens.

And turn 'em loose.

Look out, world.

That was what Sam Gregg did with his money.

They didn't actually execute him, the good people of Earth. There was

not even a formal trial. They just confiscated what was left of his money and put him away in a Nice Place with the other crazies.

It would be pleasant to report that Sam died happy and that his dust was peaceful in its urn. In fact, Sam was sorry to go and he was even a little bitter.

If he could have known somehow, he might—or might not—have been more pleased.

Millions of lonely miles from the dead earth, she floated there in the great nothing. Beneath the shimmering pods that would last for thousands of years, a part of her was cool rather than cold, softer than the naked rocks, flushed with green.

Saturn hovered near the horizon, white and frozen and moonlike.

The ancient lifeways acted out their tiny dramas, strange under an alien sky. They had changed little, most of them.

There was one exception.

It might have been the radiation.

Then again, the raccoon had always been a clever animal. He had adroit hands, and he could use them. He had alert eyes, a quick intelligence. He could learn things, and on occasion he could pass on what he knew.

Within ten generations, he had fashioned a crude chopping tool out of flaked stone.

Within twenty, he had built a fire.

That beat man's record by a considerable margin, and the point was not lost on those who watched.

A short time later, the dog showed up, out in the shadows cast by the firelight. He whined. He thumped his shaggy tail. He oozed friendship.

The raccoons ignored him for a few nights. They huddled together, dimly proud of what they had done. They thought it over.

Eventually, one of the raccoons threw him a bloody bone, and the dog came in.

Don't like the ending?

A trifle stark?

Is there no way we can communicate with them from out of the past? Can't we say something, a few words, now that we are finished?

Ah, man. Ever the wishful thinker.

Still talking.

Sam had tried. He was human; he made the gesture.

There was a small plaque still visible on the outside of the silent ship that had brought them here. It was traditional in spaceflights, but Sam had done it anyhow.

It could not be read, of course.

It could not be deciphered, ever.

But it was there.

It said the only words that had seemed appropriate to Sam:

Good luck, old friends.

Afterword:

I won't write an editorial. I have already cheerfully sinned: there is a message in my story. If you didn't receive it, look out your window. Or pry open the lid on your coffin.

What triggers a story? Harlan triggered this one. If he had not asked for it, I probably would not have written it, at least not now. So he is to blame.

But why this particular story? I can't explain, of course. No writer can. You might be interested in a few personal notes:

It is early in September, 1969. I've just come back from a month in the mountains of Colorado. I consider myself a trout fisherman, dry flies only. (I don't keep many of them; I return them to the streams. Cheers.) I walked a lot, through country that was almost deserted twenty years ago. I can testify that there are few streams so remote that someone has not tossed a beer can into them. Trailers are everywhere, a pox on the land. Kleenex hangs from the bushes, the final mark of man. Beaver dams are ripped apart for sport. Trees are slashed with initials. There are even, so help me, Development Schemes. Ain't nature keen?

When I was in Kenya a few years ago, I did a little demographic work with just one tribe. Back in 1850, the first explorer in the area (a missionary type named Krapf) estimated that there were about 70,000 Kamba. A bit later, in 1911, the British took a kind of a census. There were 230,000 Kamba. As of right now, the figure is pushing 900,000. This, mind you, is on the same land area. You should see it.

I saw the pictures from Mars. You did too. It does not look one hell of a lot like Barsoom.

The summer is ending and soon the cold winds will blow. When fall comes, we feed the raccoons on our porch. They have to eat a fair amount before winter. They look at me and I look at them. There will be fewer of them this year, and more of them will be hurt and dragging shattered feet. Bulldozers have torn their environment apart. Old men set traps and the kids blaze away with popguns.

This morning, driving to work and trailing exhaust fumes, I saw raw sewage from an overflow line dumped into the lake.

Had enough?

Me too.

I hope someone reads my story, and doesn't like it.



Introduction to

THE 10:00 REPORT
IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY . . . :

As I sit down to write this introduction to Ed Bryant and his story, he lies sleeping in the blue bedroom with the enormous bird kite hanging from the ceiling, in the "west wing" of my home here in Los Angeles. About half an hour ago he took home his date, a gorgeous lady named Roz, who had too much cheap wine to drink and got kittenish as hell.

It ain't easy to write about Bryant. He has become one of my very closest friends, and all the things I'd like to tell about him, like the morning I'd lost touch with reality and desperately needed to know what day it was, and he told me with grave seriousness that it was "National Mackerel Commemorative Day," won't mean a thing to you. You'd have to know Bryant and his warped, utterly black sense of guillotine humor to know what a trauma that was.

For openers, he is a rare delight as a human being; a genuinely good man with the kind of sensible morality and ethic that Jim Sutherland says is holding the frangible world together. For seconds, he is a joy to the heart of any writer who takes another writer "under his wing" and hopes the acolyte will break away and develop his own voice, his own successful career. On that point, in short, Bryant is getting it on. In one year he's sold twenty-five very good, very professional stories and articles. And he's getting laid regularly now. For a WASP from Wyoming, that's enormous forward-striding.

Yet Bryant is peculiar, and it is this peculiarity that makes him something that should be on display in the Smithsonian. Today, for instance, I said to him, "Ed, you're getting weirder and weirder. I can't put my finger on it, man, but you seem to be getting more surreal." He looked at me from above his ginger-colored mustache with the odd unfocused stare of a Polynesian water bird, and mumbled, "You mean I'm not relating to everyday objects." Yes, I agreed, that was it. "Start relating, Ed. Talk to your rug, listen to your hand, get chummy with a coffee pot and the doorknobs. Make friends." He stared at me.

"I can't talk to my rug," he said sadly, "it's too self-involved. It has piles."

I walked away.

Born 27 August 1945 in White Plains, New York, Edward Winslow Bryant, Jr. moved at the age of six months with his family to southern Wyoming, where the elders took up cattle ranching. He attended a one-room country school for the first four grades and spent the rest of his secondary education in Wheatland, Wyoming (population 2350). Thus far his life

parallels that of Lincoln. He attended college at the University of Wyoming, treading water for a year as an embryo aerospace engineer then, recognizing the error of his ways, switched to liberal arts. He received his B.A. in English in 1967 and an M.A. in the same field a year later. In his "official" biography, Bryant lays down all the preceding dull information, neglecting to mention the one truly important act of his otherwise pedestrian life. He noticed, picked up and bought the August 1957 issue of *Amazing Stories* and became a—shhhh!—science fiction fan. Somehow, he managed to keep it a secret from all of those in the literary world who've seen him burst on the scene these last couple of years, who envision him as being untainted by the fannish life, a pure creature of Mainstream Literary Origins. Nonsense. He was a *fan*, a grubby, scrofulous fan who published an illiterate fanmagazine called *Ad Astra*.

(Incidentally, that August 1957 *Amazing Stories* included in its contents one of the classic tales of modern sf, "The Plague Bearers," which opened with these deathless lines:

> I came up behind the Screamie as he grabbed the girl, and shoved the bayonet into his neck. It was a rusty blade, and went in crookedly. I had to stick him again to finish the job. He fell, moaning and clutching at his streaming neck. I kicked him under some rubble.

Modesty forbids me heaping the unstinting praise due the author of that now-classic tale of man's nobility, but it is easy to see where Bryant's deranged inspiration came from. Yechhh.)

Because of this unnatural interest in Things God Never Intended Man to Screw Around With At Toward, he attended the first and second Clarion (Penna.) College Workshops in SF & Fantasy, 1968 and 1969, which is where I first encountered him. Bryant tells it like this:

". . . a traumatic experience which Changed My Life; I received the criticism, instruction and encouragement necessary to make me believe that maybe, just maybe, there was something in my writing worth sharing with the universe."

In actuality, the pathetic quality of his attempts at writing so touched the hearts of all of us on the staff—Robin Scott Wilson, Damon Knight, Kate Wilhelm, Fritz Leiber, Fred Pohl and a lady anthologist whose name escapes me—that we labored harder with him than those who genuinely had talent. You know how it is: you always feel warmth for the retard in the group.

Well, as it turned out, Bryant, this lame, who up till then had been making a precarious living in and around Wheatland, Wyoming as a deejay, shipping clerk in a stirrup buckle factory and as general layabout, fastened leechlike on your editor and the next thing I knew he was inhabiting (like some fetid troglodyte) the blue bedroom here at Ellison

Wonderland. Like the man who came to dinner, he ventured out of Wyoming to attend the SFWA banquet, West Coast division, in early 1969, stayed awhile and went away till September of that year, when he returned, saying he was just "stopping by." Nine months later I was compelled to hire a young lady of great personal warmth and questionable morality, to lure him away to New York. I wanted to change the linen and air out the blue bedroom. He returned here in March of 1971 and as of this writing he doesn't look like he's *ever* going to leave. The pile of gnawed bones is growing larger in the blue bedroom. The smell is something Lovecraft would have called "a stygian uncleanliness, foul beyond description, spoor of the pit and festooned with moist evil."

Nonetheless, Bryant keeps working, his only saving grace. He's appeared in *Quark, Orbit, National Lampoon, New Dimensions,* the *LA Free Press, Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, Worlds of Tomorrow, If, New Worlds, Infinity, Nova, Universe,* both *Clarion* anthologies and a host of men's magazines, such as the quality periodical *Swingle,* which refuses to run a photo of a woman unless she has 53D breasts.

Appearances in these one-handed publications have so permanently warped Bryant's already twisted view of the universe that when I had a few dates with a young lady who is the current rage of the sexploitation films, he ran amuck and wound up at one of her film producers', and the next thing I knew he had a part in a class epic titled—are you ready for a consummate horror?—FLESH GORDON.

Now he lurches about the house looking like a detail from one of the deranged etchings by the Marquis von Bayros, and tells me about Flesh, Dr. Jerkoff, Prince Precious and something called the giant Penisaurus, which is large and wormlike and slides in and out of a soft, pink, moist, undulating cave.

It is very difficult retaining one's lunch in company of Edward Winslow Bryant, Jr.

The story that follows, however, was his first sale. It was, in fact, the first story bought for this book. Which, because of the time it took to put this book together, makes it four years old. Many there may be among you who will contend this makes it unrepresentative of the advances in technique and tone that have informed Mr. Bryant's subsequent already-published works. Not so. He has made *no* advance in four years, and this is *still* the best thing he ever wrote.

And finally, those out there who have heard unsavory rumors of a novel Bryant is writing, will have to wait a while longer for confirmation. Oh, the novel is almost finished, and he has several publishers nibbling (but then, let's not get into Bryant's sexual proclivities), but as I had written and sold a sensational short story titled "At the Mouse Circus," I felt it a bit crummy of him to title his *novel, The Mouse Circus.* We had quite a go-around about that. He steadfastly refused to change the title, told me,

in fact, to fuckoff. So I "persuaded" him to change it. I waited till four in the ayem, when he was asleep in his cave, and sneaked in with a wet sponge. Sitting on his chest, I awakened him to face the possibility of clean water actually touching his body. Like the Wicked Witch of the West, the thought of water so terrified him, he acceded to my polite request, and as of this writing the novel is untitled. Until he comes up with a new one, he can't market the book.

So if you like the story that follows, why not send some title suggestions to Bryant. Send them care of General Delivery, Wheatland, Wyoming, because I *swear* by the time this book is released, eight months from now, he ain't gonna be *here!*



Edward Bryant

THE 10:00 REPORT IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY . . .

FADE IN:

EXTERIOR SHOT—NIGHT

They cornered her in the alley. The chase had been short and never in doubt; not to the three men who stalked, shadowed, between her and the flickering light of the street. The girl crouched among the garbage pails and tried to hold her breath. She had run too far; her lungs were too starved for oxygen. She attempted to hold back a gasp for air, and choked.

One of the three hunters laughed softly. "Takes your breath away, don't it, chick?" Softer, "Wait, baby, just wait."

The girl cowered deeper into the narrow gap between two pails and the brick flank of a building, the side of her face pressing hard against corrugated chill. Her knees were insensitive to the rough pavement. The three men converged on the stack of pails, making no attempt at stealth. The

girl tensed. On three sides of her refuge, leather scuffed on gravel and asphalt.

She broke for the mouth of the alley. Four steps. An explosion of pain hurled her against the bricks. A hand jerked her violently to her feet. The man slapped her again. There was no pain now; only the dull sensation of something sticky trickling down her face. The man shoved her roughly and she sprawled on her side.

Above her loomed three shapes, black on black. The girl whimpered and tried to crawl. The man on the left kicked her in the belly; not too hard, just enough to jackknife her body. Her eyes hazed and this time she felt pain because she could not breathe.

"That's plenty," said the man on the right. "The chick's got to be able to enjoy this. Carl, you're first. Tico, you hold her shoulders."

The girl struggled.

A deer fights briefly before the wolf pack rends it.

"Baby, this'll blow your mind," said Carl.

In the darkness, a whir. Overhead, the scarlet Cyclops stare.

DIRECT CUT TO:

Barney Chandler stared intently at the television screen and tried to keep his attention on the program. Barney wanted out. Not yet, but he would. Or, to be more precise, his wife wanted out. Ella usually got what she wanted.

"Barney," she said, "Hank's not going to keep that job open forever." Hank was Ella's brother; he owned the largest Chevy dealership in Burbank.

A noncommittal grunt. Barney Chandler used his remote-control switch to turn the television set to Channel 34. He upped the volume. Barney picked up his beer and swore in annoyance when the napkin clung to the bottom of the bottle.

"Barney! Will you turn down the set and listen to me? Hank's coming over for supper tomorrow. He's going to want an answer about that manager's job."

"For Chrissake, Ella!" Barney slammed the edge of his hand down on the remote-control and the TV blinked off. "Can't I even watch the competition in peace without you bugging me?"

Ella rolled her faded blue eyes heavenward. "Mister Chandler," she said. "This just happens to be the big chance of your life, and I'm not about to see you blow it." This was a practiced speech. Barney had heard it often enough the past week. "You're almost forty. You've been a millhand, a taxi driver, and a lousy insurance salesman. Now you're a news camera-

man for a TV station. Barney, it's just not taking you anywhere. Now Hank's impressed with you. He really is. He thinks you'd make a fine assistant manager. And once you got into management, there'd be no telling where you could end up. Please, Barney, when Hank comes over tomorrow, tell him you'll take it." She turned away and walked into the kitchen.

Barney looked at his beer and said nothing. He liked being a cameraman. He didn't particularly relish the idea of becoming the assistant manager in the largest Chevy dealership in Burbank. But Ella wanted him to take Hank's offer. Barney gulped and drained his bottle. He reached for the opener. Another few beers and he wouldn't feel so badly about telling Ella that he'd say yes to Hank.

He sat back heavily in the chair and flicked the TV switch on. Barney turned the channel selector to 27. It was almost time for "Saga of the Sage." Barney enjoyed watching adventure series. He seldom watched other programs with the exception of newscasts; Barney liked viewing the clips he himself had filmed. Too, he enjoyed keeping up with the work of his competition at the other stations.

In the hall the phone rang. Ella answered it.

"Barney," she called. "It's for you. It's Parker down at the studio. He says it's important."

DISSOLVE TO:

How many forests did it take, Calvin Randall wondered, *to panel all these offices?* So much of the earth had gone into the making of the KNBS-TV Building; mahogany, polished stone, many metals. Randall glanced around the reception room as he had done so many times before. The decor was just a bit too flashy for his taste. He vaguely wished that the mahogany were back alive and growing in its original groves, that the polished granite was once again buried inside rough Colorado mountains.

"Mr. Carmine will see you now, sir," dimpled the blonde receptionist.

"Thank you," said Randall. He picked up his attache case and walked past the prominent brass plaque that indicated the imminent presence of L. J. Carmine, Program Director, KNBS-TV. Randall grimaced at the 36-point tempo bold lettering. Ostentatious.

There was someone new with Carmine today, someone Randall didn't know. Randall had a bad feeling. The stranger was short and pudgy, gray hair thinning above black-rimmed glasses. "Network" was stamped all over him. *Trouble,* Randall thought.

"Cal, baby," said Carmine, enthusiastically clapping Randall on the shoulder. "Come in, boy, come in. Here, I want you to meet Arthur Hed-

ley. Art's with the Public Events Department over at the Network." Randall shook hands with the chubby stranger. Carmine turned and addressed the Network man: "This is the boy I've been telling you about, Art. Cal's one of the bright young talents around here, and he's definitely the best news director this station's ever had."

What's he building up to, the axe? Randall speculated.

"Cal, baby," Carmine continued, "Art suggested that I call you in here today for a little conference."

Public execution? wondered Randall.

"It's like this," said Carmine. "KNBS-TV has one of the best equipped, best staffed, most competent news teams of any station in the metro area—in fact, we probably have *the* best news department. Of course, Cal, the credit's got to go to you for doing such a tremendous job reorganizing the staff and lifting it to where it is now. Naturally we're looking forward to seeing you keep up the good work."

"The point is, Mr. Randall," interjected Hedley, "the good work is going to have to be accelerated. The Network has closely studied your operation here at KNBS and we generally agree with Mr. Carmine's evaluation of your news staff. Unfortunately an external factor has entered the situation. Are you aware of this station's present rating figures, Mr. Randall?"

SHOCK CUT TO:

Naked, the figure of the girl lay motionless. Tico's rough hands pressed heavily against her shoulders and she felt the gravel bite into her back. Carl and the third man stood above her, panting.

"Man, this chick's got a real hang-up about losing her clothes," Carl said. "If I had to work this hard to undress my old lady I'd be too tired for anything else."

"Too tired now?"

"Hell no." Carl kneeled and unbuckled his belt. "Now relax, baby. This'll be a groove." He touched her hip.

"Christ!" Carl screamed in agony and toppled onto his side on the rough pavement. His body doubled over, he retched in the darkness.

The third man laughed. "Keep hold of her shoulders," he said. He looked down at the girl. "You're a real tiger, aren't you baby. Looks like Carl's going to have to hold your legs when he figures out how to breathe again." His voice was flat, emotionless. "Sorry you did this, baby. I mean it was just going to be good, clean fun and games. But now it's going to be something else, chick. Really something else."

Overhead, the voyeurs.

DIRECT CUT TO:

"The rating figures?" *I knew it,* Calvin Randall thought. *Those goddam ratings.* "More or less," he said.

"Let me refresh your memory, then," said Hedley. "As you are no doubt aware, our new rating system is quite reliable. The electronic equipment we have installed in our aircraft and trucks is quite accurate in detecting and measuring the small amounts of radiation emitted by each and every television set in the city. We can depend upon the computer-evaluated interpretation of this data to get a very clear picture of where we stand in the ratings competition. I'm sorry to say that this station has consistently fallen below par in its averages over the past few months, particularly during the time-slots allotted for news broadcasts."

"And does the Network have a solution?" asked Randall rather stiffly. *Other than firing the news director?* "Do we know exactly why KNBS has fewer viewers during our news-shots?"

"Yes," said the Network man. "NBS Audience Analysis has discovered what they are confident is the root of the problem."

"I'm sure Cal would be interested in hearing about their analysis," Carmine interjected. Hedley shot an annoyed glare at the Program Director.

"It's relatively simple," continued Hedley, "and it is something I truly regret having to say." The Network man's voice took on a distinctly paternal tone, a bit scolding. "Mr. Randall, the Network feels that your news department here at KNBS has been letting the viewing public down."

Randall was startled. "Letting them down? My God, we've broken our necks getting the most comprehensive news coverage possible."

"But you have still failed. *We* have failed," said Hedley. "Let me offer two cases in point. If you will, please recall last November when Congressman Coghill was so tragically murdered. You may remember that Channel 34, as it happened, was on the scene taping the final seconds of the Congressman's speech when the fatal shot was fired. Thirty-four was the only major station present. As a result, they presented the viewing public with a videotape of the assassination a full half-hour before any other metropolitan station could assemble a special newscast. We were one of those other stations. By falling down so badly in our coverage of the tragedy, we did our public a disservice.

"Another case I might mention was that unfortunate disaster at Los Angeles International when that 737 liner exploded on takeoff. By coincidence it was being filmed by a Channel 34 crew engaged in doing promotional shots for an airline. Because of this chance circumstance, Channel 34 was able to beam live, vital coverage of the catastrophe to the

public almost immediately. KNBS crews, however, did not reach the area of the crash until minutes after Thirty-four had already aired their first comprehensive report.

"What I am trying to illustrate by these examples, Mr. Randall, is that this station must now make an increased effort to keep abreast of the very immediacy of the news. This is certainly not a problem revolving solely around audience ratings. You must realize that we are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission to broadcast in the public interest. In the public interest, Mr. Randall. Our license obliges us to keep that duty always in view; indeed, obligates us."

"That's all well and good," said Randall. "But the practical aspect of what you're describing depends a lot on the breaks of the game. My staff has a conscious dedication to covering as much news as quickly and comprehensively as is humanly possible. But we can't tell the future and figure out where to assign teams to catch the news as it happens. We're just not—" Randall searched for a word "—not fortune tellers."

"Admittedly," Hedley said, "we cannot foresee the future. But on the other hand, neither can we talk about 'the breaks of the game.' The Network feels that competent news reporting cannot afford to deal in such imprecise concepts. That is for the past. This is 1980, and the key word now is professionalism."

Wasn't it always? Randall thought.

"That's right," said Carmine. "Professionalism. The Public Events Department at the Network has been doing some fine work on this. They've really come up with something exciting, Cal; what I believe are the freshest and most radical innovative concepts in news coverage I've ever seen. Mr. Hedley and I want to bat them around with you." He picked up a yellowed newspaper clipping from his desk and handed it to Randall. "Here," Carmine said. "Read this first."

Less than an hour later, Calvin Randall, News Director of KNBS-TV, resigned his position. Two hours later, he was very drunk.

DIRECT CUT TO:

Sweat flowed and dripped from the florid little man who was mayor of Carroll, California. In the everyday real world he was the owner of a hardware store. Now he cowered shaking in his leather chair in the Carroll City Council chambers. He was stripped of everything that seemed to him important: his clothes, his dignity, his courage.

"What has this town ever done to you and your friends?" he pleaded.

"Nothing," answered the mayor's black-jacketed warden. "Nothing but exist."

"But why us? Why Carroll?"

The mayor's captor grinned wolfishly, his dark glasses glinting above bared teeth. "Why not, man?"

DIRECT CUT TO:

The rest of the team was assembled in the KNBS briefing room when Barney Chandler arrived. The team director, Mike De La Ree, was speaking as Barney seated himself.

"Remember that this is a major coverage operation," said De La Ree. "There'll be three mobile crews placed at strategic positions through the town. They'll use hand-held Sony SonoVid units. Chuck"—he gestured at his assistant—"Chuck and I will be back at the chopper with the monitor equipment. Everyone will be plugged into a central radio link." He checked his watch. "Okay, we're behind schedule already. Let's move out. I'll finish the briefing with you individually in the copter."

The men scrambled to their feet and began picking up equipment cases.

"Hey, Chandler," called De La Ree. "When did you come in? I think you missed out on the first part of the briefing. Get Parker to fill you in while you're getting your gear."

"Okay," responded Barney, unclipping his SonoVid from its rack. "Parker, what gives? How come all the big rush?"

Parker's sandy eyebrows rose and he shrugged his thin shoulders. "Beats me, Barney. De La Ree's been pretty close-mouthed about the whole operation. Apparently there's some kind of cycle gang running around in the hills out west of Barstow. I guess they're hitting a town tonight and we're going to take pretty pictures of the mess."

"Oh great," said Barney. "An all-nighter. Ella's going to kill me."

DISSOLVE TO:

TEASER

"Carroll, California, high in the Santa Mira Hills west of Barstow, was attacked tonight by a rampaging motorcycle gang.

"Hi, this is Irvin Conley. I'll have a complete report on this and other late-breaking events from around the Golden State at ten tonight on the Enerco Ten O'Clock Report."

DIRECT CUT TO:

Slowly and nearly silent, the dirigible swam across the smoggy sky. From the pods of sophisticated equipment freckling the airship's belly,

electronic fingers reached down and precisely measured the tiny amounts of energy radiated by each of the millions of television sets scattered through the sprawling city. Telemetry relayed each bit of information to a computer miles to the north. Machines and men teamed in the attempt to read the composite mind of that mythic figure, the average televiewer.

"It's incredible," the night-man at the computer center muttered to himself. "Eighty-seven per cent of the sets in the whole city still on at midnight—and more than ninety per cent of those tuned to one station." He scanned the read-out card again. The numbers hadn't changed. "The KNBS brass'll go out of their skulls when they see these figures."

DISSOLVE TO:

"Violence headlines the news tonight.

"Good evening. This is Irvin Conley with the Friday edition of the Ten O'Clock Report. I'll have news for you from around the state of California right after this word from Enerco, the kerosene fuel that keeps your turbine humming like a top. . . ."

DISSOLVE TO:

The dim light from the monitors washed the color out of De La Ree's face. His gaunt features evoked the image of a specter crouched over scenes from hell.

"Two, pull back to cover the whole crowd by the bar. Now pan up to the broken windows. One, get ready to cut in with a close shot of the looters." De La Ree's voice was level and professional. "Three, move to the east edge of your position. Look for an alley below and to your left. There should be some action soon. Switch in your starlight scope; I don't think there'll be enough available light from the burning stores."

Three was the designation for Barney Chandler's SonoVid unit. Parker and Barney crossed to the east edge of the roof. The Farmer's Bank of Carroll was solidly constructed of brick—it wouldn't burn. Barney looked down and to the left as De La Ree had ordered.

"Dark as sin," Barney said. "I'll switch on the scope." The four figures in the alley below sprang into sharp relief in the starlight scope's eyepiece. Barney violently drew in his breath.

"Mike," he whispered into the throat-mike. "You sure you want us to shoot this bit in the alley?"

"Hell yes," returned De La Ree from the KNBS copter. "Shoot everything—they'll edit it back at the studio."

DIRECT CUT TO:

Calvin Randall, one-time KNBS News Director, nursed his drink in morose silence. He had been conserving a steady procession of drinks for almost a day now. Calvin Randall was worried about his future.

You should have gone along with Carmine, he thought wryly. *Stayed with a young station on the make. Stayed on the make yourself. In six months that station will be the highest-rated channel in L.A.*

The TV above the bar was tuned to KNBS. So were most of the television sets in the Los Angeles area. Other stations had rushed teams to Carroll; millions of feet of tape had whirred through cameras and recorders. Everyone had beautiful shots of the aftermath. But only KNBS had footage of the real thing; the actual events as they were occurring. The fires, murders, lootings, rapes.

The men and women seated on either side of Randall watched the screen as though hypnotized. Their eyes reflected the flickering shadows of the television. KNBS was running an in-depth report on the rape of Carroll, California.

"My God," the man on Randall's left hoarsely whispered. "How can they show pictures like that?"

Inside Randall a delayed explosion found release. He jumped to his feet. His arm flailed against his glass, smashed it to diamond tears scattered across the bar.

"Because you bastards watch them!" he screamed. He turned and rushed blindly for the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT—IRVIN CONLEY

". . . and now the news.

"One of the most brutal dramas in the history of California was played out tonight in the sleepy little town of Carroll, high in the Santa Mira Hills west of Barstow. Carroll is customarily a quiet agricultural community of a thousand inhabitants. This evening the summer calm was shattered when a roving gang of black-jacketed motorcycle toughs, estimated to number at least three hundred, invaded Carroll. Preliminary reports from the scene indicate extensive looting and bloodshed. KNBS airlifted a complete news team to Carroll tonight and is on the scene. Here now is correspondent David Parker with an exclusive report videotaped earlier this evening . . ."

SHOCK CUT TO:

They finally left her there in the alley. She didn't note their leaving. She was incapable of that now. The girl never saw the monitor light of the distant SonoVid wink out, never heard the mechanical purr click off. She lay motionless in a swell of pain, hardly breathing. For a brief minute her mind swam close to consciousness. She moved her hand and was vaguely aware of the blood dappling her legs.

DIRECT CUT TO:

CLIPPING (YELLOWED) FROM LOS ANGELES TRIBUNE-OBSERVER, JULY 28, 1966

SET ON BROAD MAHOGANY DESK-TOP

CAMERA MOVES IN:

Rumbles for Rent?

Los Angeles (UniPress) An unidentified spokesman for a major television network today revealed his organization last week was offered "the inside track" in covering the activities of a notorious California motorcycle gang. A man purporting to be the gang's "press officer" approached Hollywood representatives of the network July 13 with the proposal that in exchange for an undisclosed sum of money, the gang would create a "rumble" in any small town the network chose. For its money the network would receive exclusive photographic coverage of the event.

The unidentified network spokesman stated: "We turned down the offer, of course. It was never treated as a serious proposal by any of the network management personnel. If the self-appointed "press officer" were quite sincere in proffering his offer, then his proposition is a deplorable commentary on our times. If he were attempting some sort of hoax, then his effort was in the worst possible taste."

The network spokesman stated further that the man's description has been turned over to Los Angeles County authorities for possible investigation.

DIRECT CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

The Personnel Director was kind, but firm. "I'm sorry, Mr. Randall, but I'm afraid that KNBS cannot see fit to rehire you in any capacity." The Network was not, however, without a sense of largesse. *Don't rock the boat, Cal. We'd hate to put your name on a blacklist.*

"Tell your brother to shove his car-peddling job," Barney told his wife in the morning. "I'm sticking with KNBS. News reporting's gonna be a job with a future."

A still form, white against the darkness of the alley. Not dead yet, but waiting. Hoping.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

The plastic flash of capped teeth. Feral, somehow. The television-blue shirt. The pleasantly deep baritone.

". . . and those are the latest stories currently making headlines in the Golden State. From behind the Enerco News Desk, this is Irvin Conley saying good night, and have a good weekend."

FADE OUT:

Afterword:

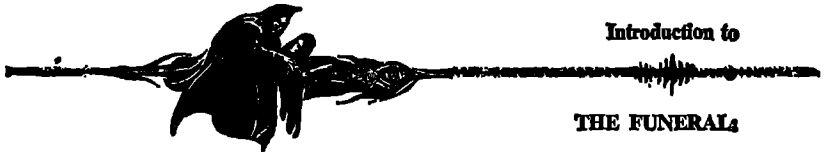
"Ten O'Clock Report" is a story about prostitution. I was angry when I wrote it and I become angry each time I read it again. I am angry with the vast majority of good citizens who sell out their souls for their particular messes of pottage, be they money, prestige, emotional titillation, or whatever. I am angry with everyone who submits peacefully to having his mind seduced by the vast-scaled rotten things that pervade our society. Further, I am angry with all you people who don't even attempt *to do* anything about those aforementioned rotten things. And that includes me. After all, all I did was to write the story.

No, I don't have a thick, black beard and dwell sullenly back in the hills in a cave. My beard is brown and scraggly and I live out in the world, just like the rest of you. But I *have* worked as a broadcast newsman and have had experiences with events such as described in "Ten O'Clock Report," although on a much less spectacular scale. And I *have* grown up as a member of the generation which has seen America adopt violence as a spectator sport second in popularity only to sex (sex as a spectator activity doesn't turn me on either, but that's a theme for another story . . .).

One June evening in 1968 I was seated in a grubby pizza parlor in a small western Pennsylvania town with a little group of both established and would-be SF writers. At the time I was still luxuriating in the warm glow of having made my first professional sale. SF author Chip Delany then intruded into that pleasant glow with an uncomfortably pointed question. "Ed," he asked. "Just why do you want to write?" That was a tough question. It still is. The answer I gave then, after a lot of desperate

thinking, was: "I write because I want to tell people something." I think that answer still holds true for me. This story is an embodiment of that thought; it contains elements of both commentary and warning. Beyond that, it is designed to be entertainment.

I never intended to become a preacher.



Introduction to THE FUNERAL

It is so easy to be charmed by the total *womanness* of Kate Wilhelm, so easy to lose one's perspective of her as a human being in pure affection and admiration, that I sometimes forget for a moment that she is one of the very finest writers in America today. She is certainly the very best we have working in the field of speculative fiction. I will not defend that statement, nor elaborate upon it. Her work speaks most eloquently to the point.

Kate is a very private sort of woman, and so the background data I have at hand is skimpy. She was born in Toledo, Ohio on June 8th, 1928; she has two semi-adult sons by her first marriage and a third—Jonathan the Loud—by her current spouse, Damon Knight. She is on the Visiting Lecturer staff of the Tulane University Workshop in SF & Fantasy, as she was on the staff of the original Clarion College Workshop. She is the author of *The Mile Long Spaceship, The Nevermore Affair, The Downstairs Room, Let the Fire Fall, More Bitter Than Death, The Killer Thing* and *Abyss.* With Ted Thomas she is the author of *The Clone* and *The Year of the Cloud.* Her big new novel, *Margaret and I* is a marvel, despite the uninformed and bestial review in *Newsweek.*

She is not only a writer *sui generis,* but a student of the English language and as sure and incisive a critic as any writer could be blessed to have appraising his manuscript. She is also one of the gentlest, toughest creatures God ever put on this Earth.

"The Funeral" is so good, it hurts. I hope I have not invaded her privacy with these brief comments.



Kate Wilhelm

THE FUNERAL

No one could say exactly how old Madam Westfall was when she finally died. At least one hundred twenty, it was estimated. At the very least. For twenty years Madam Westfall had been a shell containing the very latest products of advances made in gerontology, and now she was dead. What lay on the viewing dais was merely a painted, funereally garbed husk.

"She isn't real," Carla said to herself. "It's a doll, or something. It isn't really Madam Westfall." She kept her head bowed, and didn't move her lips, but she said the words over and over. She was afraid to look at a dead person. *The second time they slaughtered all those who bore arms, unguided, mindless now, but lethal with the arms caches that they used indiscriminately.* Carla felt goose bumps along her arms and legs. She wondered if anyone else had been hearing the old Teacher's words.

The line moved slowly, all the girls in their long gray skirts had their heads bowed, their hands clasped. The only sound down the corridor was the sush-sush of slippers on plastic flooring, the occasional rustle of a skirt.

The Viewing Room had a pale green, plastic floor, frosted-green plastic walls, and floor to ceiling windows that were now slits of brilliant light from a westering sun. All the furniture had been taken from the room, all the ornamentation. There were no flowers, nothing but the dais, and the bedlike box covered by a transparent shield. And the Teachers. Two at the dais, others between the light strips, at the doors. Their white hands clasped against black garb, heads bowed, hair slicked against each head, straight parts emphasizing bilateral symmetry. The Teachers didn't move, didn't look at the dais, at the girls parading past it.

Carla kept her head bowed, her chin tucked almost inside the V of her collarbone. The serpentine line moved steadily, very slowly. "She isn't real," Carla said to herself, desperately now.

She crossed the line that was the cue to raise her head; it felt too heavy

to lift, her neck seemed paralyzed. When she did move, she heard a joint crack, and although her jaws suddenly ached, she couldn't relax.

The second green line. She turned her eyes to the right and looked at the incredibly shrunken, hardly human mummy. She felt her stomach lurch and for a moment she thought she was going to vomit. "She isn't real. It's a doll. She isn't real!" The third line. She bowed her head, pressed her chin hard against her collarbone, making it hurt. She couldn't swallow now, could hardly breathe. The line proceeded to the South Door and through it into the corridor.

She turned left at the South Door, and with her eyes downcast, started the walk back to her genetics class. She looked neither right nor left, but she could hear others moving in the same direction, slippers on plastic, the swish of a skirt, and when she passed by the door to the garden she heard laughter of some Ladies who had come to observe the viewing. She slowed down.

She felt the late sun hot on her skin at the open door and with a sideways glance, not moving her head, she looked quickly into the glaring greenery, but could not see them. Their laughter sounded like music as she went past the opening.

"That one, the one with the blue eyes and straw-colored hair. Stand up, girl."

Carla didn't move, didn't realize she was being addressed until a Teacher pulled her from her seat.

"Don't hurt her! Turn around, girl. Raise your skirts, higher. Look at me, child. Look up, let me see your face . . ."

"She's too young for choosing," said the Teacher, examining Carla's bracelet. "Another year, Lady."

"A pity. She'll coarsen in a year's time. The fuzz is so soft right now, the flesh so tender. Oh, well . . ." She moved away, flicking a red skirt about her thighs, her red-clad legs narrowing to tiny ankles, flashing silver slippers with heels that were like icicles. She smelled . . . Carla didn't know any words to describe how she smelled. She drank in the fragrance hungrily.

"Look at me, child. Look up, let me see your face . . ." The words sang through her mind over and over. At night, falling asleep she thought of the face, drawing it up from the deep black, trying to hold it in focus: white skin, pink cheek ridges, silver eyelids, black lashes longer than she had known lashes could be, silver-pink lips, three silver spots—one at the corner of her left eye, another at the corner of her mouth, the third like a dimple in the satiny cheek. Silver hair that was loose, in waves about her face, that rippled with life of its own when she moved. If only she had been

allowed to touch the hair, to run her finger over that cheek . . . The dream that began with the music of the Lady's laughter, ended with the nightmare of her other words: "She'll coarsen in a year's time . . ."

After that Carla had watched the changes take place on and within her body, and she understood what the Lady had meant. Her once smooth legs began to develop hair; it grew under her arms, and, most shameful, it sprouted as a dark, coarse bush under her belly. She wept. She tried to pull the hairs out, but it hurt too much, and made her skin sore and raw. Then she started to bleed, and she lay down and waited to die, and was happy that she would die. Instead, she was ordered to the infirmary and was forced to attend a lecture on feminine hygiene. She watched in stony-faced silence while the Doctor added the new information to her bracelet. The Doctor's face was smooth and pink, her eyebrows pale, her lashes so colorless and stubby that they were almost invisible. On her chin was a brown mole with two long hairs. She wore a straight blue-gray gown that hung from her shoulders to the floor. Her drab hair was pulled back tightly from her face, fastened in a hard bun at the back of her neck. Carla hated her. She hated the Teachers. Most of all she hated herself. She yearned for maturity.

Madam Westfall had written: Maturity brings grace, beauty, wisdom, happiness. Immaturity means ugliness, unfinished beings with potential only, wholly dependent upon and subservient to the mature citizens.

There was a True-False quiz on the master screen in front of the classroom. Carla took her place quickly and touch-typed her ID number on the small screen of her machine.

She scanned the questions, and saw that they were all simple declarative statements of truth. Her stylus ran down the True column of her answer screen and it was done. She wondered why they were killing time like this, what they were waiting for. Madam Westfall's death had thrown everything off schedule.

Paperlike brown skin, wrinkled and hard, with lines crossing lines, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, leaving little islands of flesh, hardly enough to coat the bones. Cracked voice, incomprehensible: *they took away the music from the air . . . voices from the skies . . . erased pictures that move . . . boxes that sing and sob . . .* Crazy talk. And, . . . *only one left that knows. Only one.*

Madam Trudeau entered the classroom and Carla understood why the class had been personalized that period. The Teacher had been waiting for Madam Trudeau's appearance. The girls rose hurriedly. Madam Trudeau motioned for them to be seated once more.

"The following girls attended Madam Westfall during the past five

years." She read from a list. Carla's name was included on her list. On finishing it, she asked, "Is there anyone who attended Madam Westfall whose name I did not read?"

There was a rustle from behind Carla. She kept her gaze fastened on Madam Trudeau. "Name?" the Teacher asked.

"Luella, Madam."

"You attended Madam Westfall? When?"

"Two years ago, Madam. I was a relief for Sonya, who became ill suddenly."

"Very well." Madam Trudeau added Luella's name to her list. "You will all report to my office at 8 A.M. tomorrow morning. You will be excused from classes and duties at that time. Dismissed." With a bow she excused herself to the class Teacher and left the room.

Carla's legs twitched and ached. Her swim class was at eight each morning and she had missed it, had been sitting on the straight chair for almost two hours, when finally she was told to go into Madam Trudeau's office. None of the other waiting girls looked up when she rose and followed the attendant from the anteroom. Madam Trudeau was seated at an oversized desk that was completely bare, with a mirrorlike finish. Carla stood before it with her eyes downcast, and she could see Madam Trudeau's face reflected from the surface of the desk. Madam Trudeau was looking at a point over Carla's head, unaware that the girl was examining her features.

"You attended Madam Westfall altogether seven times during the past four years, is that correct?"

"I think it is, Madam."

"You aren't certain?"

"I . . . I don't remember, Madam."

"I see. Do you recall if Madam Westfall spoke to you during any of those times?"

"Yes, Madam."

"Carla, you are shaking. Are you frightened?"

"No, Madam."

"Look at me, Carla."

Carla's hands tightened, and she could feel her fingernails cutting into her hands. She thought of the pain, and stopped shaking. Madam Trudeau had pasty, white skin, with peaked black eyebrows, sharp black eyes, black hair. Her mouth was wide and full, her nose long and narrow. As she studied the girl before her, it seemed to Carla that something changed in her expression, but she couldn't say what it was, or how it now differed

from what it had been a moment earlier. A new intensity perhaps, a new interest.

"Carla, I've been looking over your records. Now that you are fourteen it is time to decide on your future. I shall propose your name for the Teachers' Academy on the completion of your current courses. As my protege, you will quit the quarters you now occupy and attend me in my chambers . . ." She narrowed her eyes, "What is the matter with you, girl? Are you ill?"

"No, Madam. I . . . I had hoped . . . I mean, I designated my choice last month. I thought . . ."

Madam Trudeau looked to the side of her desk where a records screen was lighted. She scanned the report, and her lips curled derisively. "A Lady. You would be a Lady!" Carla felt a blush fire her face, and suddenly her palms were wet with sweat. Madam Trudeau laughed, a sharp barking sound. She said, "The girls who attended Madam Westfall in life, shall attend her in death. You will be on duty in the Viewing Room for two hours each day, and when the procession starts for the burial services in Scranton, you will be part of the entourage. Meanwhile, each day for an additional two hours immediately following your attendance in the Viewing Room you will meditate on the words of wisdom you have heard from Madam Westfall, and you will write down every word she ever spoke in your presence. For this purpose there will be placed a notebook and a pen in your cubicle, which you will use for no other reason. You will discuss this with no one except me. You, Carla, will prepare to move to my quarters immediately, where a learning cubicle will be awaiting you. Dismissed."

Her voice became sharper as she spoke, and when she finished the words were staccato. Carla bowed and turned to leave.

"Carla, you will find that there are certain rewards in being chosen as a Teacher."

Carla didn't know if she should turn and bow again, or stop where she was, or continue. When she hesitated, the voice came again, shorter, raspish. "Go. Return to your cubicle."

The first time, they slaughtered only the leaders, the rousers, . . . would be enough to defuse the bomb, leave the rest silent and powerless and malleable . . .

Carla looked at the floor before her, trying to control the trembling in her legs. Madam Westfall hadn't moved, hadn't spoken. She was dead, gone. The only sound was the sush, sush of slippers. The green plastic floor was a glare that hurt her eyes. The air was heavy and smelled of death. Smelled the Lady, drank in the fragrance, longed to touch her.

Pale, silvery-pink lips, soft, shiny, with two high peaks on the upper lip. The Lady stroked her face with fingers that were soft and cool and gentle. . . . *when their eyes become soft with unspeakable desires and their bodies show signs of womanhood, then let them have their duties chosen for them, some to bear the young for the society, some to become Teachers, some Nurses, Doctors, some to be taken as Lovers by the citizens, some to be . . .*

Carla couldn't control the sudden start that turned her head to look at the mummy. The room seemed to waver, then steadied again. The tremor in her legs became stronger, harder to stop. She pressed her knees together hard, hurting them where bone dug into flesh and skin. Fingers plucking at the coverlet. Plucking bones, brown bones with horny nails.

Water. Girl, give me water. Pretty, pretty. You would have been killed, you would have. Pretty. The last time they left no one over ten. No one at all. Ten to twenty-five.

Pretty. Carla said it to herself. Pretty. She visualized it as p-r-i-t-y. Pity with an r. Scanning the dictionary for p-r-i-t-y. Nothing. Pretty. *Afraid of shiny, pretty faces. Young, pretty faces.*

The trembling was all through Carla. Two hours. Eternity. She had stood here forever, would die here, unmoving, trembling, aching. A sigh and the sound of a body falling softly to the floor. Soft body crumbling so easily. Carla didn't turn her head. It must be Luella. So frightened of the mummy. She'd had nightmares every night since Madam Westfall's death. What made a body stay upright, when it fell so easily? Take it out, the thing that held it together, and down, down. Just to let go, to know what to take out and allow the body to fall like that into sleep. Teachers moved across her field of vision, two of them in their black gowns. Sush-sush. Returned with Luella, or someone, between them. No sound. Sush-sush.

The new learning cubicle was an exact duplicate of the old one. Cot, learning machine, chair, partitioned-off commode and washbasin. And new, the notebook and pen. Carla had never had a notebook and pen before. There was the stylus that was attached to the learning machine, and the lighted square in which to write, that then vanished into the machine. She turned the blank pages of the notebook, felt the paper between her fingers, tore a tiny corner off one of the back pages, examined it closely, the jagged edge, the texture of the fragment; she tasted it. She studied the pen just as minutely; it had a pointed, smooth end, and it wrote black. She made a line, stopped to admire it, and crossed it with another line. She wrote very slowly, "Carla," started to put down her number, the one on her bracelet, then stopped in confusion. She never had considered it before,

but she had no last name, none that she knew. She drew three heavy lines over the two digits she had put down.

At the end of the two hours of meditation she had written her name a number of times, had filled three pages with it, in fact, and had written one of the things that she could remember hearing from the gray lips of Madam Westfall: "Non-citizens are the property of the state."

The next day the citizens started to file past the dais. Carla breathed deeply, trying to sniff the fragrance of the passing Ladies, but they were too distant. She watched their feet, clad in shoes of rainbow colors: pointed toes, stiletto heels; rounded toes, carved heels; satin, sequinned slippers . . . And just before her duty ended for the day, the Males started to enter the room.

She heard a gasp, Luella again. She didn't faint this time, merely gasped once. Carla saw the feet and legs at the same time and she looked up to see a male citizen. He was very tall and thick, and was dressed in the blue and white clothing of a Doctor of Law. He moved into the sunlight and there was a glitter from gold at his wrists, and his neck, and the gleam of a smooth polished head. He turned past the dais and his eyes met Carla's. She felt herself go light-headed and hurriedly she ducked her head and clenched her hands. She thought he was standing still, looking at her, and she could feel her heart thumping hard. Her relief arrived then and she crossed the room as fast as she could without appearing indecorous.

Carla wrote: "Why did he scare me so much? Why have I never seen a Male before? Why does everyone else wear colors while the girls and the Teachers wear black and gray?"

She drew a wavering line-figure of a man, and stared at it, and then Xed it out. Then she looked at the sheet of paper with dismay. Now she had four ruined sheets of paper to dispose of.

Had she angered him by staring? Nervously she tapped on the paper and tried to remember what his face had been like. Had he been frowning? She couldn't remember. Why couldn't she think of anything to write for Madam Trudeau? She bit the end of the pen and then wrote slowly, very carefully: *Society may dispose of its property as it chooses, following discussion with at least three members, and following permission which is not to be arbitrarily denied.*

Had Madam Westfall ever said that? She didn't know, but she had to write something, and that was the sort of thing that Madam Westfall had quoted at great length. She threw herself down on the cot and stared at the ceiling. For three days she had kept hearing the Madam's dead voice, but now when she needed to hear her again, nothing.

Sitting in the straight chair, alert for any change in the position of the ancient one, watchful, afraid of the old Teacher. Cramped, tired and sleepy. Half listening to mutterings, murmurings of exhaled and inhaled breaths that sounded like words that made no sense. . . . *Mama said hide child, hide don't move and Stevie wanted a razor for his birthday and Mama said you're too young, you're only nine and he said no Mama I'm thirteen don't you remember and Mama said hide child hide don't move at all and they came in hating pretty faces* . . .

Carla sat up and picked up the pen again, then stopped. When she heard the words, they were so clear in her head, but as soon as they ended, they faded away. She wrote: "hating pretty faces. . . . hide child. . . . only nine." She stared at the words and drew a line through them.

Pretty faces. Madam Westfall had called her pretty, pretty.

The chimes for social hour were repeated three times and finally Carla opened the door of her cubicle and took a step into the anteroom where the other proteges already had gathered. There were five. Carla didn't know any of them, but she had seen all of them from time to time in and around the school grounds. Madam Trudeau was sitting on a high-backed chair that was covered with black. She blended into it, so that only her hands and her face seemed apart from the chair, dead white hands and face. Carla bowed to her and stood uncertainly at her own door.

"Come in, Carla. It is social hour. Relax. This is Wanda, Louise, Stephanie, Mary, Dorothy." Each girl inclined her head slightly as her name was mentioned. Carla couldn't tell afterward which name went with which girl. Two of them wore the black-striped overskirt that meant they were in the Teacher's Academy. The other three still wore the gray of the lower school, as did Carla, with black bordering the hems.

"Carla doesn't want to be a Teacher," Madam Trudeau said drily. "She prefers the paint box of a Lady." She smiled with her mouth only. One of the academy girls laughed. "Carla, you are not the first to envy the paint box and the bright clothes of the Ladies. I have something to show you. Wanda, the film."

The girl who had laughed touched a button on a small table and on one of the walls a picture was projected. Carla caught her breath. It was a Lady, all gold and white, gold hair, gold eyelids, filmy white gown that ended just above her knees. She turned and smiled, holding out both hands, flashing jeweled fingers, long, gleaming nails that came to points. Then she reached up and took off her hair.

Carla felt that she would faint when the golden hair came off in the Lady's hands, leaving short, straight brown hair. She placed the gold hair

on a ball, and then, one by one, stripped off the long gleaming nails, leaving her hands just hands, bony and ugly. The Lady peeled off her eyelashes and brows, and then patted a brown, thick coating of something on her face, and, with its removal, revealed pale skin with wrinkles about her eyes, with hard, deep lines aside her nose down to her mouth that had also changed, had become small and mean. Carla wanted to shut her eyes, turn away and go back to her cubicle, but she didn't dare move. She could feel Madam Trudeau's stare, and the gaze seemed to burn.

The Lady took off the swirling gown, and under it was a garment Carla never had seen before that covered her from her breasts to her thighs. The stubby fingers worked at fasteners, and finally got the garment off, and there was her stomach, bigger, bulging, with cruel red lines where the garment had pinched and squeezed her. Her breasts drooped almost to her waist. Carla couldn't stop her eyes, couldn't make them not see, couldn't make herself not look at the rest of the repulsive body.

Madam Trudeau stood up and went to her door. "Show Carla the other two films." She looked at Carla then and said, I order you to watch. I shall quiz you on the contents." She left the room.

The other two films showed the same Lady at work. First with a protege, then with a male citizen. When they were over Carla stumbled back to her cubicle and vomited repeatedly until she was exhausted. She had nightmares that night.

How many days, she wondered, have I been here now? She no longer trembled, but became detached almost as soon as she took her place between two of the tall windows. She didn't try to catch a whiff of the fragrance of the Ladies, or try to get a glimpse of the Males. She had chosen one particular spot in the floor on which to concentrate, and she didn't shift her gaze from it.

They were old and full of hate, and they said, let us remake them in our image, and they did.

Madam Trudeau hated her, despised her. Old and full of hate . . .

"Why were you not chosen to become a Woman to bear young?"

"I am not fit, Madam. I am weak and timid."

"Look at your hips, thin, like a Male's hips. And your breasts, small and hard." Madam Trudeau turned away in disgust. "Why were you not chosen to become a Professional, a Doctor, or a Technician?"

"I am not intelligent enough, Madam. I require many hours of study to grasp the mathematics."

"So. Weak, frail, not too bright. Why do you weep?"

"I don't know, Madam. I am sorry."

"Go to your cubicle. You disgust me."

Staring at a flaw in the floor, a place where an indentation distorted the light, creating one very small oval shadow, wondering when the ordeal would end, wondering why she couldn't fill the notebook with the many things that Madam Westfall had said, things that she could remember here, and could not remember when she was in her cubicle with pen poised over the notebook.

Sometimes Carla forgot where she was, found herself in the chamber of Madam Westfall, watching the ancient one struggle to stay alive, forcing breaths in and out, refusing to admit death. Watching the incomprehensible dials and tubes and bottles of fluids with lowering levels, watching needles that vanished into flesh, tubes that disappeared under the bedclothes, that seemed to writhe now and again with a secret life, listening to the mumbling voice, the groans and sighs, the meaningless words.

Three times they rose against the children and three times slew them until there were none left none at all because the contagion had spread and all over ten were infected and carried radios . . .

Radios? A disease? Infected with radios, spreading it among young people?

And Mama said hide child hide and don't move and put this in the cave too and don't touch it.

Carla's relief came and numbly she walked from the Viewing Room. She watched the movement of the black border of her skirt as she walked and it seemed that the blackness crept up her legs, enveloped her middle, climbed her front until it reached her neck, and then it strangled her. She clamped her jaws hard and continued to walk her measured pace.

The girls who had attended Madam Westfall in life were on duty throughout the school ceremonies after the viewing. They were required to stand in a line behind the dais. There were eulogies to the patience and firmness of the first Teacher. Eulogies to her wisdom in setting up the rules of the school. Carla tried to keep her attention on the speakers, but she was so tired and drowsy that she heard only snatches. Then she was jolted into awareness. Madam Trudeau was talking.

". . . a book that will be the guide to all future Teachers, showing them the way through personal tribulations and trials to achieve the serenity that was Madam Westfall's. I am honored by this privilege, in choosing me and my apprentices to accomplish this end . . ."

Carla thought of the gibberish that she had been putting down in her notebook and she blinked back tears of shame. Madam Trudeau should have told them why she wanted the information. She would have to go

back over it all and destroy all the nonsense that she had written down.

Late that afternoon the entourage formed that would accompany Madam Westfall to her final ceremony in Scranton, her native city, where her burial would return her to her family.

Madam Trudeau had an interview with Carla before departure. "You will be in charge of the other girls," she said. "I expect you to maintain order. You will report any disturbance, or any infringement of rules immediately, and if that is not possible, if I am occupied, you will personally impose order in my name."

"Yes, Madam."

"Very well. During the journey the girls will travel together in a compartment of the tube. Talking will be permitted, but no laughter, no childish play. When we arrive at the Scranton home, you will be given rooms with cots. Again you will all comport yourselves with the dignity of the office which you are ordered to fulfill at this time."

Carla felt excitement mount within her as the girls lined up to take their places along the sides of the casket. They went with it to a closed limousine where they sat knee to knee, unspeaking, hot, to be taken over smooth highways for an hour to the tube. Madam Westfall had refused to fly in life, and was granted the same rights in death, so her body was to be transported from Wilmington to Scranton by the rocket tube. As soon as the girls had accompanied the casket to its car, and were directed to their own compartment, their voices raised in a babble. It was the first time any of them had left the schoolgrounds since entering them at the age of five.

Ruthie was going to work in the infants' wards, and she turned faintly pink and soft looking when she talked about it. Luella was a music apprentice already, having shown skill on the piano at an early age. Lorette preened herself slightly and announced that she had been chosen as a Lover by a Gentleman. She would become a Lady one day. Carla stared at her curiously, wondering at her pleased look, wondering if she had not been shown the films yet. Lorette was blue-eyed, with pale hair, much the same build as Carla. Looking at her, Carla could imagine her in soft dresses, with her mouth painted, her hair covered by the other hair that was cloud soft and shiny . . . She looked at the girl's cheeks flushed with excitement at the thought of her future, and she knew that with or without the paint box, Lorette would be a Lady whose skin would be smooth, whose mouth would be soft . . .

"The fuzz is so soft now, the flesh so tender." She remembered the scent, the softness of the Lady's hands, the way her skirt moved about her red-clad thighs.

She bit her lip. But she didn't want to be a Lady. She couldn't ever

think of them again without loathing and disgust. She was chosen to be a Teacher.

They said it is the duty of society to prepare its non-citizens for citizenship but it is recognized that there are those who will not meet the requirements and society itself is not to be blamed for those occasional failures that must accrue.

She took out her notebook and wrote the words in it.

"Did you just remember something else she said?" Lisa asked. She was the youngest of the girls, only ten, and had attended Madam Westfall one time. She seemed to be very tired.

Carla looked over what she had written, and then read it aloud. "It's from the school rules book," she said. "Maybe changed a little, but the same meaning. You'll study it in a year or two."

Lisa nodded. "You know what she said to me? She said I should go hide in the cave, and never lose my birth certificate. She said I should never tell anyone where the radio is." She frowned. "Do you know what a cave is? And a radio?"

"You wrote it down, didn't you? In the notebook?"

Lisa ducked her head. "I forgot again. I remembered it once and then forgot again until now." She searched through her cloth travel bag for her notebook and when she didn't find it, she dumped the contents on the floor to search more carefully. The notebook was not there.

"Lisa, when did you have it last?"

"I don't know. A few days ago. I don't remember."

"When Madam Trudeau talked to you the last time, did you have it then?"

"No. I couldn't find it. She said if I didn't have it the next time I was called for an interview, she'd whip me. But I can't find it!" She broke into tears and threw herself down on her small heap of belongings. She beat her fists on them and sobbed. "She's going to whip me and I can't find it. I can't. It's gone."

Carla stared at her. She shook her head. "Lisa, stop that crying. You couldn't have lost it. Where? There's no place to lose it. You didn't take it from your cubicle, did you?"

The girl sobbed louder. "No. No. No. I don't know where it is."

Carla kneeled by her and pulled the child up from the floor to a squatting position. "Lisa, what did you put in the notebook? Did you play with it?"

Lisa turned chalky white and her eyes became very large, then she closed them, no longer weeping.

"So you used it for other things? Is that it? What sort of things?"

Lisa shook her head. "I don't know. Just things."

"All of it? The whole notebook?"

"I couldn't help it. I didn't know what to write down. Madam Westfall said too much. I couldn't write it all. She wanted to touch me and I was afraid of her and I hid under the chair and she kept calling me, 'Child, come here don't hide, I'm not one of them. Go to the cave and take it with you.' And she kept reaching for me with her hands. I . . . they were like chicken claws. She would have ripped me apart with them. She hated me. She said she hated me. She said I should have been killed with the others, why wasn't I killed with the others."

Carla, her hands hard on the child's shoulders, turned away from the fear and despair she saw on the girl's face. Ruthie pushed past her and hugged the child.

"Hush, hush, Lisa. Don't cry now. Hush. There, there."

Carla stood up and backed away. "Lisa, what sort of things did you put in the notebook?"

"Just things that I like. Snowflakes and flowers and designs."

"All right. Pick up your belongings and sit down. We must be nearly there. It seems like the tube is stopping."

Again they were shown from a closed compartment to a closed limousine and whisked over countryside that remained invisible to them. There was a drizzly rain falling when they stopped and got out of the car.

The Westfall house was a three-storied, pseudo-Victorian wooden building, with balconies and cupolas, and many chimneys. There was scaffolding about it, and one of the three porches had been torn away and was being replaced as restoration of the house, turning it into a national monument, progressed. The girls accompanied the casket to a gloomy, large room where the air was chilly and damp, and scant lighting cast deep shadows. After the casket had been positioned on the dais which also had accompanied it, the girls followed Madam Trudeau through narrow corridors, up narrow steps, to the third floor where two large rooms had been prepared for them, each containing seven cots.

Madam Trudeau showed them the bathroom that would serve their needs, told them good-night, and motioned Carla to follow her. They descended the stairs to a second floor room that had black, massive furniture: a desk, two straight chairs, a bureau with a wavery mirror over it, and a large canopied bed.

Madam Trudeau paced the black floor silently for several minutes without speaking, then she swung around and said, "Carla, I heard every word that silly little girl said this afternoon. She drew pictures in her notebook!

This is the third time the word cave has come up in reports of Madam Westfall's mutterings. Did she speak to you of caves?"

Carla's mind was whirling. How had she heard what they had said? Did maturity also bestow magical abilities? She said, "Yes, Madam, she spoke of hiding in a cave."

"Where is the cave, Carla? Where is it?"

"I don't know, Madam. She didn't say."

Madam Trudeau started to pace once more. Her pale face was drawn in lines of concentration that carved deeply into her flesh, two furrows straight up from the inner brows, other lines at the sides of her nose, straight to her chin, her mouth tight and hard. Suddenly she sat down and leaned back in the chair. "Carla, in the last four or five years Madam Westfall became childishly senile; she was no longer living in the present most of the time, but was reliving incidents in her past. Do you understand what I mean?"

Carla nodded, then said hastily, "Yes, Madam."

"Yes. Well it doesn't matter. You know that I have been commissioned to write the biography of Madam Westfall, to immortalize her writings and her utterances. But there is a gap, Carla. A large gap in our knowledge, and until recently it seemed that the gap never would be filled in. When Madam Westfall was found as a child, wandering in a dazed condition, undernourished, almost dead from exposure, she did not know who she was, where she was from, anything about her past at all. Someone had put an identification bracelet on her arm, a steel bracelet that she could not remove, and that was the only clue there was about her origins. For ten years she received the best medical care and education available, and her intellect sparkled brilliantly, but she never regained her memory."

Madam Trudeau shifted to look at Carla. A trick of the lighting made her eyes glitter like jewels. "You have studied how she started her first school with eight students, and over the next century developed her teaching methods to the point of perfection that we now employ throughout the nation, in the Males' school as well as the Females'. Through her efforts Teachers have become the most respected of all citizens and the schools the most powerful of all institutions." A mirthless smile crossed her face, gone almost as quickly as it formed, leaving the deep shadows, lines, and the glittering eyes. "I honored you more than you yet realize when I chose you for my protege."

The air in the room was too close and dank, smelled of moldering wood and unopened places. Carla continued to watch Madam Trudeau, but she was feeling light-headed and exhausted and the words seemed interminable to her. The glittering eyes held her gaze and she said nothing. The thought

occurred to her that Madam Trudeau would take Madam Westfall's place as head of the school now.

"Encourage the girls to talk, Carla. Let them go on as much as they want about what Madam Westfall said, lead them into it if they stray from the point. Written reports have been sadly deficient." She stopped and looked questioningly at the girl. "Yes? What is it?"

"Then . . . I mean after they talk, are they to write . . . ? Or should I try to remember and write it all down?"

"There will be no need for that," Madam Trudeau said. "Simply let them talk as much as they want."

"Yes, Madam."

"Very well. Here is a schedule for the coming days. Two girls on duty in the Viewing Room at all times from dawn until dark, yard exercise in the enclosed garden behind the building if the weather permits, kitchen duty and so on. Study it, and direct the girls to their duties. On Saturday afternoon everyone will attend the burial, and on Sunday we return to the school. Now go."

Carla bowed, and turned to leave. Madam Trudeau's voice stopped her once more. "Wait, Carla. Come here. You may brush my hair before you leave."

Carla took the brush in numb fingers and walked obediently behind Madam Trudeau who was loosening hair clasps that restrained her heavy black hair. It fell down her back like a dead snake, uncoiling slowly. Carla started to brush it.

"Harder, girl. Are you so weak that you can't brush hair?"

She plied the brush harder until her arm became heavy and then Madam Trudeau said, "Enough. You are a clumsy girl, awkward and stupid. Must I teach you everything, even how to brush one's hair properly?" She yanked the brush from Carla's hand and now there were two spots of color on her cheeks and her eyes were flashing. "Get out. Go! Leave me! On Saturday immediately following the funeral you will administer punishment to Lisa for scribbling in her notebook. Afterward report to me. And now get out of here!"

Carla snatched up the schedule and backed across the room, terrified of the Teacher who seemed demoniacal suddenly. She bumped into the other chair and nearly fell down. Madam Trudeau laughed shortly and cried, "Clumsy, awkward! You would be a Lady! You?"

Carla groped behind her for the doorknob and finally escaped into the hallway, where she leaned against the wall trembling too hard to move on. Something crashed into the door behind her and she stifled a scream and ran. The brush. Madam had thrown the brush against the door.

Madam Westfall's ghost roamed all night, chasing shadows in and out of rooms, making the floors creak with her passage, echoes of her voice drifting in and out of the dorm where Carla tossed restlessly. Twice she sat upright in fear, listening intently, not knowing why. Once Lisa cried out and she went to her and held her hand until the child quieted again. When dawn lighted the room Carla was awake and standing at the windows looking at the ring of mountains that encircled the city. Black shadows against the lesser black of the sky, they darkened, and suddenly caught fire from the sun striking their tips. The fire spread downward, went out and became merely light on the leaves that were turning red and gold. Carla turned from the view, unable to explain the pain that filled her. She awakened the first two girls who were to be on duty with Madam Westfall and after their quiet departure, returned to the window. The sun was all the way up now, but its morning light was soft; there were no hard outlines anywhere. The trees were a blend of colors with no individual boundaries, and rocks and earth melted together and were one. Birds were singing with the desperation of summer's end and winter's approach.

"Carla?" Lisa touched her arm and looked up at her with wide, fearful eyes. "Is she going to whip me?"

"You will be punished after the funeral," Carla said, stiffly. "And I should report you for touching me, you know."

The child drew back, looking down at the black border on Carla's skirt. "I forgot." She hung her head. "I'm . . . I'm so scared."

"It's time for breakfast, and after that we'll have a walk in the gardens. You'll feel better after you get out in the sunshine and fresh air."

"Chrysanthemums, dahlias, marigolds. No, the small ones there, with the brown fringes . . ." Luella pointed out the various flowers to the other girls. Carla walked in the rear, hardly listening, trying to keep her eye on Lisa, who also trailed behind. She was worried about the child. She had not slept well, had eaten no breakfast, and was so pale and wan that she didn't look strong enough to take the short garden walk with them.

Eminent personages came and went in the gloomy old house and huddled together to speak in lowered voices. Carla paid little attention to them. "I can change it after I have some authority," she said to a still inner self who listened and made no reply. "What can I do now? I'm property. I belong to the state, to Madam Trudeau and the school. What good if I disobey and am also whipped? Would that help any? I won't hit her hard." The inner self said nothing, but she thought she could hear a mocking laugh come from the mummy that was being honored.

They had all those empty schools, miles and miles of school halls where no feet walked, desks where no students sat, books that no students scrib-

bled up, and they put the children in them and they could see immediately who couldn't keep up, couldn't learn the new ways and they got rid of them. Smart. Smart of them. They were smart and had the goods and the money and the hatred. My God, they hated. That's who wins, who hates most. And is more afraid. Every time.

Carla forced her arms not to move, her hands to remain locked before her, forced her head to stay bowed. The voice now went on and on and she couldn't get away from it.

. . . rained every day, cold freezing rain and Daddy didn't come back and Mama said, hide child, hide in the cave where it's warm, and don't move no matter what happens, don't move. Let me put it on your arm, don't take it off, never take it off show it to them if they find you show them make them look. . . .

Her relief came and Carla left. In the wide hallway that led to the back steps she was stopped by a rough hand on her arm. "Damme, here's a likely one. Come here, girl. Let's have a look at you." She was spun around and the hand grasped her chin and lifted her head. "Did I say it! I could spot her all the way down the hall, now couldn't I. Can't hide what she's got with long skirts and that skinny hairdo, now can you? Didn't I spot her!" He laughed and turned Carla's head to the side and looked at her in profile, then laughed even louder.

She could see only that he was red faced, with bushy eyebrows and thick gray hair. His hand holding her chin hurt, digging into her jaws at each side of her neck.

"Victor, turn her loose," the cool voice of a female said then. "She's been chosen already. An apprentice Teacher."

He pushed Carla from him, still holding her chin, and he looked down at the skirts with the broad black band at the bottom. He gave her a shove that sent her into the opposite wall. She clutched at it for support.

"Whose pet is she?" he said darkly.

"Trudeau's."

He turned and stamped away, not looking at Carla again. He wore the blue and white of a Doctor of Law. The female was a Lady in pink and black.

"Carla. Go upstairs." Madam Trudeau moved from an open doorway and stood before Carla. She looked up and down the shaking girl. "Now do you understand why I apprenticed you before this trip? For your own protection."

They walked to the cemetery on Saturday, a bright, warm day with golden light and the odor of burning leaves. Speeches were made, Madam Westfall's favorite music was played, and the services ended. Carla dreaded

returning to the dormitory. She kept a close watch on Lisa who seemed but a shadow of herself. Three times during the night she had held the girl until her nightmares subsided, and each time she had stroked her fine hair and soft cheeks and murmured to her quieting words, and she knew it was only her own cowardice that prevented her saying that it was she who would administer the whipping. The first shovelful of earth was thrown on top the casket and everyone turned to leave the place, when suddenly the air was filled with raucous laughter, obscene chants, and wild music. It ended almost as quickly as it started, but the group was frozen until the mountain air became unnaturally still. Not even the birds were making a sound following the maniacal outburst.

Carla had been unable to stop the involuntary look that she cast about her at the woods that circled the cemetery. Who? Who would dare? Only a leaf or two stirred, floating downward on the gentle air effortlessly. Far in the distance a bird began to sing again, as if the evil spirits that had flown past were now gone.

"Madam Trudeau sent this up for you," Luella said nervously, handing Carla the rod. It was plastic, three feet long, thin, flexible. Carla looked at it and turned slowly to Lisa. The girl seemed to be swaying back and forth.

"I am to administer the whipping," Carla said. "You will undress now."

Lisa stared at her in disbelief, and then suddenly she ran across the room and threw herself on Carla, hugging her hard, sobbing. "Thank you, Carla. Thank you so much. I was so afraid, you don't know how afraid. Thank you. How did you make her let you do it? Will you be punished too? I love you so much, Carla." She was incoherent in her relief and she flung off her gown and underwear and turned around.

Her skin was pale and soft, rounded buttocks, dimpled just above the fullness. She had no waist yet, no breasts, no hair on her baby body. Like a baby she had whimpered in the night, clinging tightly to Carla, burying her head in the curve of Carla's breasts.

Carla raised the rod and brought it down, as easily as she could. Anything was too hard. There was a red welt. The girl bowed her head lower, but didn't whimper. She was holding the back of a chair and it jerked when the rod struck.

It would be worse if Madam Trudeau was doing it, Carla thought. She would try to hurt, would draw blood. Why? Why? The rod was hanging limply, and she knew it would be harder on both of them if she didn't finish it quickly. She raised it and again felt the rod bite into flesh, sending the vibration into her arm, through her body.

Again. The girl cried out, and a spot of blood appeared on her back.

Carla stared at it in fascination and despair. She couldn't help it. Her arm wielded the rod too hard, and she couldn't help it. She closed her eyes a moment, raised the rod and struck again. Better. But the vibrations that had begun with the first blow increased, and she felt dizzy, and couldn't keep her eyes off the spot of blood that was trailing down the girl's back. Lisa was weeping now, her body was shaking. Carla felt a responsive tremor start within her.

Eight, nine. The excitement that stirred her was unnameable, unknowable, never before felt like this. Suddenly she thought of the Lady who had chosen her once, and scenes of the film she had been forced to watch flashed through her mind. . . . *remake them in our image.* She looked about in that moment frozen in time, and she saw the excitement on some of the faces, on others fear, disgust and revulsion. Her gaze stopped on Helga, who had her eyes closed, whose body was moving rhythmically. She raised the rod and brought it down as hard as she could, hitting the chair with a noise that brought everyone out of her own kind of trance. A sharp, cracking noise that was a finish.

"Ten!" she cried and threw the rod across the room.

Lisa turned and through brimming eyes, red, swollen, ugly with crying, said, "Thank you, Carla. It wasn't so bad."

Looking at her Carla knew hatred. It burned through her, distorted the image of what she saw. Inside her body the excitement found no outlet, and it flushed her face, made her hands numb, and filled her with hatred. She turned and fled.

Before Madam Trudeau's door, she stopped a moment, took a deep breath, and knocked. After several moments the door opened and Madam Trudeau came out. Her eyes were glittering more than ever, and there were two spots of color on her pasty cheeks.

"It is done? Let me look at you." Her fingers were cold and moist when she lifted Carla's chin. "Yes, I see. I see. I am busy now. Come back in half an hour. You will tell me all about it. Half an hour." Carla never had seen a genuine smile on the Teacher's face before, and now when it came, it was more frightening than her frown was. Carla didn't move, but she felt as if every cell in her body had tried to pull back.

She bowed and turned to leave. Madam Trudeau followed her a step and said in a low vibrant voice, "You felt it, didn't you? You know now, don't you?"

"Madam Trudeau, are you coming back?" The door behind her opened, and one of the Doctors of Law appeared there.

"Yes, of course." She turned and went back to the room.

Carla let herself into the small enclosed area between the second and

third floor, then stopped. She could hear the voices of girls coming down the stairs, going on duty in the kitchen, or outside for evening exercises. She stopped to wait for them to pass, and she leaned against the wall tiredly. This space was two and a half feet square perhaps. It was very dank and hot. From here she could hear every sound made by the girls on the stairs. Probably that was why the second door had been added, to muffle the noise of those going up and down. The girls had stopped on the steps and were discussing the laughter and obscenities they had heard in the cemetery.

Carla knew that it was her duty to confront them, to order them to their duties, to impose proper silence on them in public places, but she closed her eyes and pressed her hand hard on the wood behind her for support and wished they would finish their childish prattle and go on. The wood behind her started to slide.

She jerked away. A sliding door? She felt it and ran her finger along the smooth paneling to the edge where there was now a six-inch opening as high as she could reach down to the floor. She pushed the door again and it slid easily, going between the two walls. When the opening was wide enough she stepped through it. The cave! She knew it was the cave that Madam Westfall had talked about incessantly.

The space was no more than two feet wide, and very dark. She felt the inside door and there was a knob on it, low enough for children to reach. The door slid as smoothly from the inside as it had from the outside. She slid it almost closed and the voices were cut off, but she could hear other voices, from the room on the other side of the passage. They were not clear. She felt her way farther, and almost fell over a box. She held her breath as she realized that she was hearing Madam Trudeau's voice:

". . . be there. Too many independent reports of the old fool's babbling about it for there not to be something to it. Your men are incompetent."

"Trudeau, shut up. You scare the living hell out of the kids, but you don't scare me. Just shut up and accept the report. We've been over every inch of the hills for miles, and there's no cave. It was over a hundred years ago. Maybe there was one that the kids played in, but it's gone now. Probably collapsed."

"We have to be certain, absolutely certain."

"What's so important about it anyway? Maybe if you would give us more to go on we could make more progress."

"The reports state that when the militia came here, they found only Martha Westfall. They executed her on the spot without questioning her first. Fools! When they searched the house, they discovered that it was stripped. No jewels, no silver, diaries, papers. Nothing. Steve Westfall was

dead. Dr. Westfall dead. Martha. No one has ever found the articles that were hidden, and when the child again appeared, she had true amnesia that never yielded to attempts to penetrate it."

"So, a few records, diaries. What are they to you?" There was silence, then he laughed. "The money! He took all his money out of the bank, didn't he."

"Don't be ridiculous. I want records, that's all. There's a complete ham radio, complete. Dr. Westfall was an electronics engineer as well as a teacher. No one could begin to guess how much equipment he hid before he was killed."

Carla ran her hand over the box, felt behind it. More boxes.

"Yeah, yeah. I read the reports, too. All the more reason to keep the search nearby. For a year before the end a close watch was kept on the house. They had to walk to wherever they hid the stuff. And I can just say again that there's no cave around here. It fell in."

"I hope so," Madam Trudeau said.

Someone knocked on the door, and Madam Trudeau called, "Come in."

"Yes, what is it? Speak up, girl."

"It is my duty to report, Madam, that Carla did not administer the full punishment ordered by you."

Carla's fists clenched hard. Helga.

"Explain," Madam Trudeau said sharply.

"She only struck Lisa nine times, Madam. The last time she hit the chair."

"I see. Return to your room."

The man laughed when the girl closed the door once more. "Carla is the golden one, Trudeau? The one who wears a single black band?"

"The one you manhandled earlier, yes."

"Insubordination in the ranks, Trudeau? Tut, tut. And your reports all state that you never have any rebellion. Never."

Very slowly Madam Trudeau said, "I have never had a student who didn't abandon any thoughts of rebellion under my guidance. Carla will be obedient. And one day she will be an excellent Teacher. I know the signs."

Carla stood before the Teacher with her head bowed and her hands clasped together. Madam Trudeau walked around her without touching her, then sat down and said, "You will whip Lisa every day for a week, beginning tomorrow."

Carla didn't reply.

"Don't stand mute before me, Carla. Signify your obedience immediately."

"I . . . I can't, Madam."

"Carla, any day that you do not whip Lisa, I will. And I will also whip you double her allotment. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Madam."

"You will inform Lisa that she is to be whipped every day, by one or the other of us. Immediately."

"Madam, please . . ."

"You speak out of turn, Carla!"

"I, Madam, please don't do this. Don't make me do this. She is too weak . . ."

"She will beg you to do it, won't she, Carla. Beg you with tears flowing to be the one, not me. And you will feel the excitement and the hate and every day you will feel it grow strong. You will want to hurt her, want to see blood spot her bare back. And your hate will grow until you won't be able to look at her without being blinded by your own hatred. You see, I know, Carla. I know all of it."

Carla stared at her in horror. "I won't do it. I won't."

"I will."

They were old and full of hatred for the shiny young faces, the bright hair, the straight backs and strong legs and arms. They said: let us remake them in our image and they did.

Carla repeated Madam Trudeau's words to the girls gathered in the two sleeping rooms on the third floor. Lisa swayed and was supported by Ruthie. Helga smiled.

That evening Ruthie tried to run away and was caught by two of the blue-clad Males. The girls were lined up and watched as Ruthie was stoned. They buried her without a service on the hill where she had been caught.

After dark, lying on the cot open-eyed, tense, Carla heard Lisa's whisper close to her ear. "I don't care if you hit me, Carla. It won't hurt like it does when she hits me."

"Go to bed, Lisa. Go to sleep."

"I can't sleep. I keep seeing Ruthie. I should have gone with her. I wanted to, but she wouldn't let me. She was afraid there would be Males on the hill watching. She said if she didn't get caught, then I should try to follow her at night." The child's voice was flat, as if shock had dulled her sensibilities.

Carla kept seeing Ruthie too. Over and over she repeated to herself: I should have tried it. I'm cleverer than she was. I might have escaped. I should have been the one. She knew it was too late now. They would be watching too closely.

An eternity later she crept from her bed and dressed quietly. Soundlessly

she gathered her own belongings, and then collected the notebooks of the other girls, and the pens, and she left the room. There were dim lights on throughout the house as she made her way silently down stairs and through corridors. She left a pen by one of the outside doors, and very cautiously made her way back to the tiny space between the floors. She slid the door open and deposited everything else she carried inside the cave. She tried to get to the kitchen for food, but stopped when she saw one of the Officers of Law. She returned soundlessly to the attic rooms and tiptoed among the beds to Lisa's cot. She placed one hand over the girl's mouth and shook her awake with the other.

Lisa bolted upright, terrified, her body stiffened convulsively. With her mouth against the girl's ear Carla whispered, "Don't make a sound. Come on." She half-led, half-carried the girl to the doorway, down the stairs and into the cave and closed the door.

"You can't talk here, either," she whispered. "They can hear." She spread out the extra garments she had collected and they lay down together, her arms tight about the girl's shoulders. "Try to sleep," she whispered. "I don't think they'll find us here. And after they leave, we'll creep out and live in the woods. We'll eat nuts and berries . . ."

The first day they were jubilant at their success and they giggled and muffled the noise with their skirts. They could hear all the orders being issued by Madam Trudeau: guards in all the halls, on the stairs, at the door to the dorm to keep other girls from trying to escape also. They could hear all the interrogations, of the girls, the guards who had not seen the escapees. They heard the mocking voice of the Doctor of Law deriding Madam Trudeau's boasts of absolute control.

The second day Carla tried to steal food for them, and, more important, water. There were blue-clad Males everywhere. She returned empty-handed. During the night Lisa whimpered in her sleep and Carla had to stay awake to quiet the child who was slightly feverish.

"You won't let her get me, will you?" she begged over and over.

The third day Lisa became too quiet. She didn't want Carla to move from her side at all. She held Carla's hand in her hot, dry hand and now and then tried to raise it to her face, but she was too weak now. Carla stroked her forehead.

When the child slept Carla wrote in the notebooks, in the dark, not knowing if she wrote over other words, or on blank pages. She wrote her life story, and then made up other things to say. She wrote her name over and over, and wept because she had no last name. She wrote nonsense words and rhymed them with other nonsense words. She wrote of the sav-

ages who had laughed at the funeral and she hoped they wouldn't all die over the winter months. She thought that probably they would. She wrote of the golden light through green-black pine trees and of birds' songs and moss underfoot. She wrote of Lisa lying peacefully now at the far end of the cave amidst riches that neither of them could ever have comprehended. When she could no longer write, she drifted in and out of the golden light in the forest, listening to the birds' songs, hearing the raucous laughter that now sounded so beautiful.

Afterword:

About the story. We are such a godawful preachy nation, always talking about how much we do for the kids, how much we love them, how we spoil them with excessive permissiveness because we can't bear to hurt them or deny them any of life's little joys. We do Orwell proud in our expertise at doubletalk. We live a double standard in so many areas that most of us just don't have the time to listen to our own words and compare them with our actions. I am not interested in imaginary problems in imaginary times; it seems that I am too much involved in this world to create artificial ones where my own ingenuity can put things right. So I see this story as the culmination of a lot of isolated items, some big and documented, some small and private. Chicago was one of them, but only one, and not the most important, just the most publicized. What was most revolting about chicago (it will become a general usage word) was the fact that afterward a majority of over 10 to 1 Americans approved the action taken by the police. Let anyone who disbelieves my story mull over that figure.

Just as in a divorce action the cause given might be the marital equivalent of chicago, but the real reasons are small daily injustices, so the generation gap, I think, has been prodded along with small daily doses of adult irresponsibility, until now there does exist a situation that is explosive.

If you, a well dressed and apparently affluent member of the adult community enter a soda fountain, a hamburger joint, or restaurant, and sit down for service, you'll get it before the group of teen agers who were there first, although you might want only a cup of coffee or a coke and they might order several dollars worth of junk. It is not an economical issue. I've seen a saleslady turn away from a teen aged girl with her purchase in her hand, needing only to be paid for, to wait on a middle aged woman who then took fifteen minutes to make up her mind. I would have been waited on next, if I had allowed it. When I insisted that the girl be helped next, the saleslady became surly and rude. No one can show respect for my advanced age by showering disrespect on another. Okay, so

it's pecking order. If it turned out that there was equality in most other areas, they could put up with this sort of thing, but there isn't.

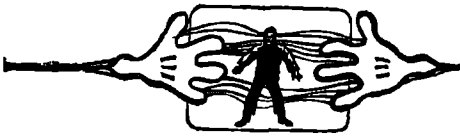
Equality under the law. I joke. I can drive a car with a noisy muffler, and if I am stopped at all, it is only for a reprimand. My son gets a ticket for the same thing—in my car. And in the courts I can have all the legal counsel I can afford, and the state will provide more if I need help, theoretically. A juvenile is at the mercy of a judge who probably is as qualified to understand adolescents as my dear old spinster aunt.

Just as long as the kids accept our standards, we leave them alone, but let them adopt their own standards, different than ours, and there is furor. Haircuts, sandals, mini-skirts (before Jackie and her crowd made them more or less respectable) and so on. Why can't they be like us, is what the school boards are really moaning. Cut their hair, wear decent clothes, drink their gin, smoke their cigarettes, and leave that other stuff alone. We accept teens and booze and beer. There may be a little tiny bit of public outcry about a group of thirteen year olds caught at a beer party, but by the following weekend, it's a dead issue. But if it's pot! My God, call the FBI!

For sale ads feature houses with three or four bedrooms, three baths, two car garages, pools, etc. Ask about the schools: oh, double shift for the present, and the teachers are on strike right now, but we have the best parking lot available for the kids' cars. Is this love?

You see a bunch of businessmen at lunch or dinner, getting louder and louder while an indulgent management smiles. A group of college boys, or high school kids would get thrown out in a minute. The VFW can take over a town, "bomb" citizens from upper floors with bags of god knows what, and the chamber of commerce fights for the privilege of having them again. Kids get the JD treatment for the same sort of provocation.

Sorry, Harlan, I'm going on too much, could go on for pages. But this is the sort of data that sociologists deal with, not writers of fiction. At least not directly. I think this is a demented society, and one of the reasons for the dementia is our everlovin' refusal to see the reality behind our honeyed words. If we were as good as we talk about being, I'd want stock in harps. It's a whole society of Let's Pretenders, and I wish, oh, how much I wish we'd all just stop.



Introduction to HARRY THE HARE:

Easily the most joyous aspect of putting together the *Dangerous Visions* anthologies is the discovering of new talents. Getting a flamethrower from Kate Wilhelm or Ursula Le Guin is to be expected—they're professionals with extra-special talents. But encountering someone new and unpublished, finding a story that might otherwise never have gotten into print (you'd be surprised how many fine stories by unknowns languish for years and eventually go into the trunk as the writer goes into plumbing or CPA-ing), is a special thrill. For one thing, it justifies the existence of the editor. Collecting either already-published stories or assembling new stories on a commissioned basis by "big names," is hardly worthy of applause or citation. But if an editor can bring forward one or two "first" writers, he can be said to have earned his share of the action and performed a noble act.

In the field of speculative fiction, helping out the tyros is a dues-paying activity held in only slightly less esteem than that of making money. I know of no other genre in which the established names—from the Asimovian/Bradburyian/Clarkesque upper echelons all the way down to last year's newcomers—break their asses with such regularity and effusiveness, to assist the fledglings. Show me, if you can, another field of free-lance endeavor in which the fastest guns teach the plowboys how to outdraw them. In sf, the prevailing attitude seems to be: "A man can stay on top only as long as he can beat his own best record." There are hungry trolls clambering up our mountain every day, and inexplicably, but nobly, the Kings of the Glass Hill don't stomp them, they extend a helping hand.

In this anthology you will read quite a few new writers. Some have published in other mediums—from critical essays to poetry—and some are seeing their contributions published here as the initial appearance in print. A few—Ed Bryant, Joan Bernott, Ken McCullough, Richard Hill—have gone on to sell widely elsewhere. But the stories here were their first sales. (No, wait a minute, that's not true for Hill. Damon Knight had already bought Richard's first story for ORBIT when I met him and bought "Moth Race." This was his second sale. I want to be scrupulously honest about it.)

Jim Hemesath is a twenty-seven year old writer I met while doing a two-week Visiting Lecturer stint at the 1969 University of Colorado Writers' Workshop in the Rockies. He was one of two writers I bought for this book, out of an enrollment close to two hundred.

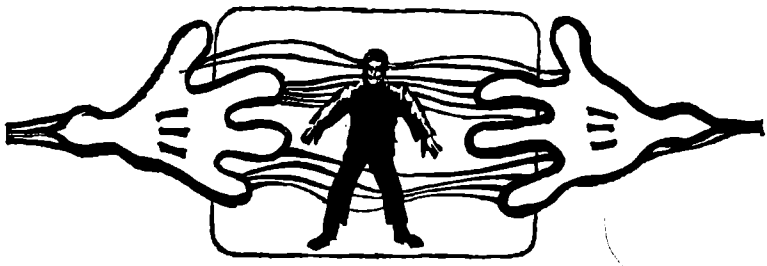
James Bartholomew William Hemesath was born 25 April 1944 in New Hampton, Chickasaw County, Iowa. He is ex-Roman Catholic, ex-married and ex-Marine Corps. He attended college at the Universities of Hawaii and Iowa, obtaining a B.A. in history from the latter in 1969. He is Phi Beta Kappa and won the Harcourt, Brace & World Fellowship to the 1969 U. of Colorado Workshop, as well as a Research Assistantship to the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, 1969–70.

Apart from "Harry the Hare" and "The Box" (published in *Dare*, December 1967) he has made money at the usual mundane jobs writers seek out while waiting for the world to discover them: newspaper boy, soda jerk, food service worker in a boys' dormitory, rental housing inspector for the city of Iowa City, assistant foreman on a thinning crew in the Bitterroot National Forest in Montana; and following in the footsteps of such fine writers as John Steinbeck, Clifford Odets and Jack Williamson, Mr. Hemesath has forayed into the nitty and/or gritty working with his hands as an asphalt paver, concrete paver, on a sewer gang, and with a section gang raising track for the Chicago and Northwestern along the Cedar River.

His first contact with the Muse was during his junior year at the University of Iowa, working under Mary Carter, author of *A Fortune in Dimes* and *The Minutes of the Night*. In her fiction writing course he was required to hand in a three hundred word scene every day, and later, a short story every day, thereby proving there are other teachers of writing besides your editor who feel most theory is bullshit and the only way you can become a writer is to *write*. Mr. Hemesath insists I mention that his three favorite stories are Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" and "A Boy and His Dog" by your editor. He gave me no option in relating this, stating that if I really wanted to note germinal influences on him, those three needed to be entered for posterity. I found no difficulty in meeting his request. Being linked with Poe and Jackson fixes me for the rest of the week. And maybe into next week, as well.

He concludes his biographical notes with the remark that he hopes one day to write a novel that takes place in Iowa.

Of "Harry the Hare" I will only say, it is at once bizarre, funny, alarming and tragic. I suspect it is a story Ray Bradbury might have liked to've written, and one I know he will enjoy. I suspect you will, too.



James B. Hemesath

HARRY THE HARE

Inside the dimly lit movie theater, there was a muffled sound, then one of the swinging doors from the outer lobby opened, and a short, fat man began walking down the aisle toward the stage. It was early in the day, before the show had started. The short, fat man strode the descending length of the aisle, climbed the steps to the stage, and walked up close to the great white rectangle of the movie screen.

"Hello, Bijou . . . I've returned," he said softly, almost reverently. He tentatively poked a finger at the screen, and chuckled. "Nothing but a sheet of perforated plastic? Ridiculous."

"Good afternoon." The voice came from the rear of the theater. "Do you have business here? We're not open yet." The short, fat man had turned at the first words. Now he stared up and back at the rear of the theater. It was too dim back there, but now he could barely see, barely make out, something. A gloved hand rested on the hinged window of the projection booth.

"I want to see Harry." The man hand-shaded his eyes and squinted.

"He's at lunch." The window hinges squeaked. "Should be back for the matinee."

"Good. I'll wait." The man sat cross-legged on the stage. Hand-cupped his chin. Rocked. "The matinee's at one. Isn't it?"

"Why do you want to see Harry?" Two gloved hands rested on the window sill. "Are you a friend?"

"Yes," the man replied. "I've always loved Harry the Hare cartoons." Smiled. "As a child I came every Saturday afternoon. Right here. To the Bijou."

"Really? A test." The gloved hands held a piece of string. "What am I making?"

"A cat's cradle?" The man stumbled to his feet. Squinted. "Yes! That's it. A cat's cradle." Paused. "But that trick belongs to Harry the Hare."

"Most certainly. But now." The string floated to the floor. "Look at my hands. What do you see?"

"Only four fingers!" The man rubbed his eyes. "And gloves. Brown gloves." He jumped from the stage. "So that means—"

"Most certainly. I'm Harry the Hare." The gloved hands waved. "Forgive me for lying." Silence. "You know. About being out to lunch." The gloved hands became two fists. "But I must be careful. They're after me."

"Who are they?"

"My creators. The people who drew me." The gloved hands clenched each other. "The studio stopped making cartoons. I was to be buried—"

"But you escaped." The man's eyes swelled with tears. "Why do they want you back?"

"Because I'm copyrighted." The gloved hands became limp. "They own me."

"But I need you. I love Harry the Hare."

"Many people do. And they come here. Just to see me."

My name is Jack Jackson and I am a lawyer for Blue Wing Films, the former producers of Harry the Hare animated shorts. Two months ago Harry the Hare escaped from the Blue Wing Museum of Motion Picture Classics. The ensuing manhunt ended yesterday during the Saturday Matinee at the Bijou. The theater was crowded with middle-aged people.

Harry the Hare stood on the stage and I shouted, "Blue Wing Films owns Harry the Hare." I sat next to a short, fat man. He started to cry. I handed him my handkerchief. "Harry the Hare must return to the museum."

"I shall never return. The people own me." Harry the Hare shifted his weight from one foot to the other. "The people—"

"But Blue Wing Films holds the copyright. I have called the police."

"The people need Harry the Hare. My cartoons are no longer exhibited. They only have *me*."

"I am sorry, but the law says . . ." Most of the people were crying. The siren on the police car became louder. I sat down.

Harry the Hare smiled and listened. He snapped his fingers and a scissors appeared. Then he said, "The people shall have me." And snipped off his right foot. Followed by his left foot. Both ears. And his left arm below the elbow.

I stood up and shouted, "Blue Wing Films owns Harry the Hare."

Then I sat down. The aisle was packed.

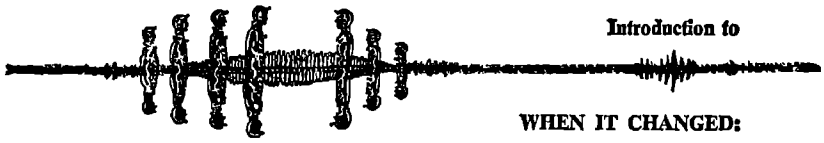
Afterword:

The first half of *Harry the Hare* was written in Iowa City sometime during the winter of 1968. The second half—the Jack Jackson segment—I wrote the following summer at the University of Colorado Writers' Conference. The very first paragraph of *Harry the Hare* belongs to Harlan Ellison. The rest I can say is mine.

The era of the big studio cartoon is past. Within the United States, production of quality theatrical cartoons has virtually ceased.

What killed the cartoon? Rising production costs. Low box office potential. And public apathy.

But I—James B. Hemesath—miss Daffy Duck, Tweety & Sylvester, and the other cartoon characters of the 1950s. They were my friends. Need I say more?



Introduction to WHEN IT CHANGED:

I'm writing this 32,000 feet in the air, on American Airlines flight 194 to Chicago. I'm spending this flight happily broken into segments of writing introductions to stories by people I love, and by reading the advance galleys of Keith Laumer's new Scribner's novel, *Dinosaur Beach.* And with one of those wicked little coincidences that the Universe tosses at me frequently, I find something in Keith's book that sparks me into the prefatory words for Joanna Russ and her story.

The item that strikes the spark is a passage from page 48, in which two agents of a far-future timesweeping force find themselves stranded back in the Jurassic Period. It goes like this:

> "Why haven't they made a pick-up on me?" she said, not really talking to me. Her voice was edging up the scale a little.
>
> "Take it easy, girl," I said, and patted her shoulder; I knew my touching her would chill her down again. Not a nice thing to know, but useful.
>
> "Keep your hands to yourself, Ravel," she snapped, all business again. "If you think this is some little desert island scene, you're very wrong."
>
> "Don't get ahead of yourself," I told her. "When I make a pass at you, that'll be time enough to slap me down. Don't go female on me now. We don't have time for nonsense."

Now Keith is a close friend of mine, and a helluva good writer, and those of you who know he had a debilitating stroke late last year will be delighted to know he's recovering strongly, but if Joanna Russ ever got within smiting distance of Keith, I'm sure she'd belt him one up alongside his pudding-trough for those paragraphs, because they are pure-and-simple male chauvinist pig writing.

I'm not trying to start a fight here, you understand, but like newly-converted Jews or Catholics, like lifetime cigarette smokers who've put down, like alcoholics now on the wagon, those of us who've spent the greater part of our lives as male chauvinists get terribly zealous in pointing out the gentlemen in our midst who are still wrong-thinking offenders.

In case you aren't aware of how insulting those paragraphs can be to a woman, fellas, consider the following:

These agents, male and female alike, are specially trained, ultraeffi-

cient, tougher than hell, get bounced here and there through time battling a formidable enemy, as well as time itself, and yet the woman is portrayed as weak, sniveling, semi-hysterical, Puritanical, illogical, inefficient and silly. The man has to take hold and show her the way. The narrator keeps referring to himself and other males as *men,* but keeps referring to the woman as a *girl.* If Keith were consistent, he'd call himself (as narrator), and the other males in the novel, *boys.* And the most glaring evidence of the author's unconscious male chauvinism is his telling her, when she gets sappy and illogical—which I contend is out-of-character for the character—*don't go female on me.*

Ugh. Kate Millett and Germaine Greer and Mary Reinholz and, I'm sure, Joanna Russ would belt Keith soundly with their picket signs had they but access to him. I urge Keith to stay down there in his Florida sanctuary, while the rest of us, who've been "saved," try to head off the lynch party.

It all ties in so well with Joanna's story, it must be fate. Because Joanna has here written a story that makes some extraordinarily sharp distinctions between the abilities and attitudes of the sexes, while erasing many others we think immutable. It is, in the best and strongest sense of the word, a female liberation story, while never once speaking of, about, or to the subject. And it points out why I think women's lib is one of the three or four most potent and influential movements to spring up in our country during these last decades of social upheaval.

Keith and a few others may pillory me for this, but as far as I'm concerned, the best writers in sf today are the women. Most of them are represented in this volume—Kate Wilhelm, Ursula Le Guin, Josephine Saxton, Lee Hoffman, Joanna—and others were featured in the original *Dangerous Visions*—Sonya Dorman, Carol Emshwiller, Miriam Allen deFord. Others will make their appearances in *The Last Dangerous Visions.* Now when I say I think the ladies are the best of us currently, I'm quick to add I don't even care to make the cop-out reservation that held for so many years. It went like this:

"This Leigh Brackett/C. L. Moore/Katherine Maclean/Margaret St. Clair/E. Mayne Hull (fill in the appropriate name for your own past sins, guys) is a helluva writer. She writes so good you think it's a man. You can't tell the difference."

Well, that was nonsense, too. Another glaring example of what we did to our women writers for so many years. We made them feel—and quite rightly—that their sex would lobby against their receiving serious consideration or their work being judged from the git-go on the same plane as a man's. George Sand and George Eliot were not alone in having to assume male pseudonyms in self-defense. God knows what such charades did to the talents and personal lives of not only Amandine Aurore Lucie Dupin and Mary Ann Evans but all the potential Shirley Jacksons and Dorothy

Parkers against whose sex restrictions *were* placed. For no one knows how many hundreds of years in literature-in-general, and for almost fifty years in speculative fiction, we have denied ourselves perhaps *half* the great writers who might have been. By insisting that women could only write well if they wrote as men, by hardboiling themselves, by subscribing to the masculine world-view, we have disenfranchised and even blotted out an infinitude of views of our world as seen through eyes different and wonderful.

Happily, that situation is disappearing. Not nearly fast enough for me, but happening nonetheless. There is still a great deal of what was commonly referred to as "ladies' writing" going on, mostly in the major slicks intended to be read under hair dryers; but that is no more representative of the lofty level of quality attained by serious women writers than is the adolescent Ruark-muscle-flexing of stories in the "men's adventure magazines" typical of the best of serious writing being done by men. Hopefully both idioms will be recognized for what they are: sheer pandering to the lowest possible common denominators of fiction-need by women and men.

The reasons for my joy at the ever-stronger position being assumed by women writers in our genre, and my feelings that women's lib in general is a godsend not only for literature but for the world as a whole, are one and the same.

Men have had it their way for thousands of years. The *machismo* concept, the dominant male attitude, the picture of women as weak and essentially brainless, the deification of Mars as god of war and male supremacy . . . these have led us to a world of futility, hatred, bigotry, sexual confusion, pollution and despair. Perhaps it is time the women took a turn at bat. They can certainly do no worse. And while I am not unmindful that women can proliferate even these unsavory cultural attitudes (Mothers who send their sons out to battle with the admonition that they return *with* their shields or *on* them, and then pay homage to the ruins returned to them in plastic bags from Viet Nam by the display of tacky gold stars in living room windows, strike me as little better than ghouls), still I see more kindness and rationality in the average woman than in the average man.

Surely I am in the truest tradition of the Utopian by conceiving of a world saved by women, and equally surely I'm laying an unfair responsibility on women to clean up what men have sullied. (I'm reminded of the young college student who, when advised sappily by a gray-haired elder that the salvation of the world rested with her and her "more aware generation," responded with the urging that the nice old gentleman go fuck himself: why is it up to me, she demanded? You had all the time in the world and you screwed it, and now it's up to *me* to clean up your garbage dump. No thanks, dad. Her point was well taken.)

Still, I cannot escape the feeling that if women had but the oneness of purpose of the ladies of *Lysistrata,* they could end war in half a day.

Don't tell me. I know. I'm expecting a nobility of females that men certainly don't possess, and I'm expecting them all to think the same on major issues. I said I was an Utopian, didn't I?

But I can hope.

I can hope that the world, seen through the minds and eyes of women, will come to be a more pleasing and acceptable view than the one we men have proffered all these centuries. And it is this view, wholly new and different, because it comes from a different systemic orientation, that forms the core of the best new writing in sf and outside the field, by our passionate and dedicated women writers.

Not the least of whom is Joanna Russ.

Terry Carr, editor of the Specials at Ace Books, once told me that Joanna's first novel, the excellent *Picnic on Paradise,* was rejected by every major hardcover house before he saw it and snapped it up for publication. I may be wrong about the specifics, but I would be willing to bet that at least one of those hardcover editors, males all, unconsciously put the kibosh on the novel because it came from a woman. I have absolutely no evidence to back up that theory, and I don't even know to what houses the book was submitted, but I've been in this business a couple of minutes and I've encountered ingrained prejudices that are imbedded so cellularly they are wholly unknown to the men from whom they leach so much fairness and rationality.

How sad and silly those editors now seem, having passed up a novel of clearly such eminence. *Picnic on Paradise* was nominated for, and missed winning by a hair, the 1969 Nebula award as best novel of that year. With her first novel, Joanna Russ found herself in the first rank of major sf talents, up against competition like James Blish, Philip K. Dick, Robert Silverberg, R. A. Lafferty, John Brunner and that year's winner, Alexei Panshin.

The promise of *Picnic on Paradise* was kept with her second novel, *And Chaos Died,* in 1970. Stronger even than her first book, it too was nominated for a Nebula, and though once again it missed copping the award (making Joanna's work for the second time a bridesmaid rather than a bride), it was clear only a matter of time separates Joanna Russ from the prizes and the greater glory.

Born in the Bronx in 1937, Joanna Russ spent most of her infanthood being wheeled around the Botanical Gardens. Of her schooling she reports, "I got into Science High School but did not go, due to family insanity, and ended my four years somewhere else by becoming one of the top ten Westinghouse Science Talent Search winners in the country, for growing fungi that looked beautiful but made my mother hysterical because I stored them in the refrigerator. I went to Cornell very conventionally as an English major, but when I got out decided to stop being a good girl, and took a Master of Fine Arts degree in Playwriting at Yale Drama School."

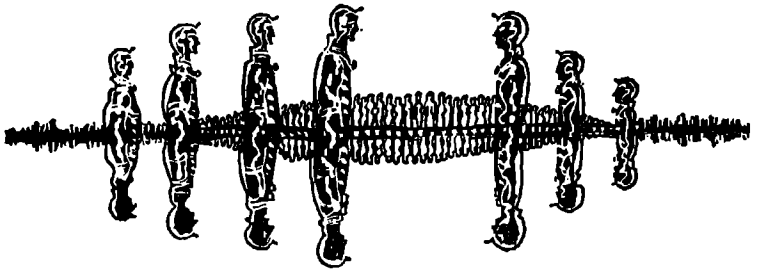
Joanna wrote what she calls "bad plays" for three years and then, in 1959, had her first story published in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*, "Nor Custom Stale." Since that time she has sold several dozen short stories to markets as diverse as *Orbit* and *Manhattan Review*. She has done copy-editing, typing and copywriting for house organs, addressed cards for Office Temporaries, worked as a secretary to an irritable psychiatrist, and finally drifted into teaching. Drifting—mostly out of desperation, Joanna puts it—she taught something she knew nothing about, speech, at a community college in New York City, and knew it was the right thing after one day in the classroom. She has been teaching Creative Writing at Cornell University for the last four years.

Joanna Russ has had four one-act plays produced: three, on one bill, Off-Off-Broadway and one at Princeton, as well as a radio play produced by WBAI, Pacifica's New York station, in 1967. Apparently feeling that there is more to the theater than the writing of "bad plays," Joanna has acted in community theater, Off-Off-Broadway productions, typed programs, run lights, sewed costumes and, one summer, she even made seventy-five pairs of Roman sandals for Joseph Papp's cast of *Julius Caesar*, for the New York Shakespeare Festival.

All of the foregoing, of course, is background to an understanding and appreciation of the woman who wrote the story you are about to read. As such, it is relevant, but hardly important. What Joanna Russ was, or what she set out to be, is not what she is.

What she is, is a fine writer, getting better every year. What she's proving—and "When it Changed" will serve in large measure to further that proof—is that speculative fiction up till now has undisputedly belonged to the men, but squatter's rights to the territory simply aren't good enough any more. Not with talents like Joanna Russ around.

And further, she looks infinitely better in a bikini than any of the editors who rejected her novel.



Joanna Russ

WHEN IT CHANGED

Katy drives like a maniac; we must have been doing over 120 km/hr on those turns. She's good, though, extremely good, and I've seen her take the whole car apart and put it together again in a day. My birthplace on Whileaway was largely given to farm machinery and I refuse to wrestle with a five-gear shift at unholy speeds, not having been brought up to it, but even on those turns in the middle of the night, on a country road as bad as only our district can make them, Katy's driving didn't scare me. The funny thing about my wife, though: she will not handle guns. She has even gone hiking in the forests above the 48th parallel without firearms, for days at a time. And that *does* scare me.

Katy and I have three children between us, one of hers and two of mine. Yuriko, my eldest, was asleep in the back seat, dreaming twelve-year-old dreams of love and war: running away to sea, hunting in the North, dreams of strangely beautiful people in strangely beautiful places, all the wonderful guff you think up when you're turning twelve and the glands start going. Some day soon, like all of them, she will disappear for weeks on end to come back grimy and proud, having knifed her first cougar or shot her first bear, dragging some abominably dangerous dead beastie behind her, which I will never forgive for what it might have done to my daughter. Yuriko says Katy's driving puts her to sleep.

For someone who has fought three duels, I am afraid of far, far too much. I'm getting old. I told this to my wife.

"You're thirty-four," she said. Laconic to the point of silence, that one. She flipped the lights on, on the dash—three km. to go and the road getting worse all the time. Far out in the country. Electric-green trees rushed into our headlights and around the car. I reached down next to me where we bolt the carrier panel to the door and eased my rifle into my lap. Yuriko stirred in the back. My height but Katy's eyes, Katy's face. The car engine is so quiet, Katy says, that you can hear breathing in the back seat. Yuki

had been alone in the car when the message came, enthusiastically decoding her dot-dashes (silly to mount a wide-frequency transceiver near an I.C. engine, but most of Whileaway is on steam). She had thrown herself out of the car, my gangly and gaudy offspring, shouting at the top of her lungs, so of course she had had to come along. We've been intellectually prepared for this ever since the Colony was founded, ever since it was abandoned, but this is different. This is awful.

"Men!" Yuki had screamed, leaping over the car door. "They've come back! Real Earth men!"

We met them in the kitchen of the farmhouse near the place where they had landed; the windows were open, the night air very mild. We had passed all sorts of transportation when we parked outside, steam tractors, trucks, an I.C. flatbed, even a bicycle. Lydia, the district biologist, had come out of her Northern taciturnity long enough to take blood and urine samples and was sitting in a corner of the kitchen shaking her head in astonishment over the results; she even forced herself (very big, very fair, very shy, always painfully blushing) to dig up the old language manuals—though I can talk the old tongues in my sleep. And do. Lydia is uneasy with us; we're Southerners and too flamboyant. I counted twenty people in that kitchen, all the brains of North Continent. Phyllis Spet, I think, had come in by glider. Yuki was the only child there.

Then I saw the four of them.

They are bigger than we are. They are bigger and broader. Two were taller than me, and I am extremely tall, 1m, 8ocm in my bare feet. They are obviously of our species but *off*, indescribably off, and as my eyes could not and still cannot quite comprehend the lines of those alien bodies, I could not, then, bring myself to touch them, though the one who spoke Russian—what voices they have!—wanted to "shake hands," a custom from the past, I imagine. I can only say they were apes with human faces. He seemed to mean well, but I found myself shuddering back almost the length of the kitchen—and then I laughed apologetically—and then to set a good example (*interstellar amity*, I thought) did "shake hands" finally. A hard, hard hand. They are heavy as draft horses. Blurred, deep voices. Yuriko had sneaked in between the adults and was gazing at *the men* with her mouth open.

He turned *his* head—those words have not been in our language for six hundred years—and said, in bad Russian:

"Who's that?"

"My daughter," I said, and added (with that irrational attention to good manners we sometimes employ in moments of insanity), "My daughter,

Yuriko Janetson. We use the patronymic. You would say matronymic."

He laughed, involuntarily. Yuki exclaimed, "I thought they would be *good-looking!*" greatly disappointed at this reception of herself. Phyllis Helgason Spet, whom someday I shall kill, gave me across the room a cold, level, venomous look, as if to say: *Watch what you say. You know what I can do.* It's true that I have little formal status, but Madam President will get herself in serious trouble with both me and her own staff if she continues to consider industrial espionage good clean fun. Wars and rumors of wars, as it says in one of our ancestors' books. I translated Yuki's words into *the man's* dog-Russian, once our *lingua franca,* and *the man* laughed again.

"Where are all your people?" he said conversationally.

I translated again and watched the faces around the room; Lydia embarrassed (as usual), Spet narrowing her eyes with some damned scheme, Katy very pale.

"This is Whileaway," I said.

He continued to look unenlightened.

"Whileaway," I said. "Do you remember? Do you have records? There was a plague on Whileaway."

He looked moderately interested. Heads turned in the back of the room, and I caught a glimpse of the local professions-parliament delegate; by morning every town meeting, every district caucus, would be in full session.

"Plague?" he said. "That's most unfortunate."

"Yes," I said. "Most unfortunate. We lost half our population in one generation."

He looked properly impressed.

"Whileaway was lucky," I said. "We had a big initial gene pool, we had been chosen for extreme intelligence, we had a high technology and a large remaining population in which every adult was two-or-three experts in one. The soil is good. The climate is blessedly easy. There are thirty millions of us now. Things are beginning to snowball in industry—do you understand?—give us seventy years and we'll have more than one real city, more than a few industrial centers, full-time professions, full-time radio operators, full-time machinists, give us seventy years and not everyone will have to spend three quarters of a lifetime on the farm." And I tried to explain how hard it is when artists can practice full-time only in old age, when there are so few, so very few who can be free, like Katy and myself. I tried also to outline our government, the two houses, the one by professions and the geographic one; I told him the district caucuses handled problems too big for the individual towns. And that population control

was not a political issue, not yet, though give us time and it would be. This was a delicate point in our history; give us time. There was no need to sacrifice the quality of life for an insane rush into industrialization. Let us go our own pace. Give us time.

"Where are all the people?" said that monomaniac.

I realized then that he did not mean people, he meant *men*, and he was giving the word the meaning it had not had on Whileaway for six centuries.

"They died," I said. "Thirty generations ago."

I thought we had poleaxed him. He caught his breath. He made as if to get out of the chair he was sitting in; he put his hand to his chest; he looked around at us with the strangest blend of awe and sentimental tenderness. Then he said, solemnly and earnestly:

"A great tragedy."

I waited, not quite understanding.

"Yes," he said, catching his breath again with that queer smile, that adult-to-child smile that tells you something is being hidden and will be presently produced with cries of encouragement and joy, "a great tragedy. But it's over." And again he looked around at all of us with the strangest deference. As if we were invalids.

"You've adapted amazingly," he said.

"To what?" I said. He looked embarrassed. He looked inane. Finally he said, "Where I come from, the women don't dress so plainly."

"Like you?" I said. "Like a bride?" for the men were wearing silver from head to foot. I had never seen anything so gaudy. He made as if to answer and then apparently thought better of it; he laughed at me again. With an odd exhilaration—as if we were something childish and something wonderful, as if he were doing us an enormous favor—he took one shaky breath and said, "Well, we're here."

I looked at Spet, Spet looked at Lydia, Lydia looked at Amalia, who is the head of the local town meeting, Amalia looked at I don't know who. My throat was raw. I cannot stand local beer, which the farmers swill as if their stomachs had iridium linings, but I took it anyway, from Amalia (it was her bicycle we had seen outside as we parked), and swallowed it all. This was going to take a long time. I said, "Yes, here you are," and smiled (feeling like a fool), and wondered seriously if male Earth people's minds worked so very differently from female Earth people's minds, but that couldn't be so or the race would have died out long ago. The radio network had got the news around-planet by now and we had another Russian speaker, flown in from Varna; I decided to cut out when *the man* passed around pictures of his wife, who looked like the priestess of some

arcane cult. He proposed to question Yuki, so I barreled her into a back room in spite of her furious protests, and went out on the front porch. As I left, Lydia was explaining the difference between parthenogenesis (which is so easy that anyone can practice it) and what we do, which is the merging of ova. That is why Katy's baby looks like me. Lydia went on to the Ansky Process and Katy Ansky, our one full-polymath genius and the great-great-I don't know how many times great-grandmother of my own Katharina.

A dot-dash transmitter in one of the outbuildings chattered faintly to itself: operators flirting and passing jokes down the line.

There was a man on the porch. The other tall man. I watched him for a few minutes—I can move very quietly when I want to—and when I allowed him to see me, he stopped talking into the little machine hung around his neck. Then he said calmly, in excellent Russian, "Did you know that sexual equality has been re-established on Earth?"

"You're the real one," I said, "aren't you? The other one's for show." It was a great relief to get things cleared up. He nodded affably.

"As a people, we are not very bright," he said. "There's been too much genetic damage in the last few centuries. Radiation. Drugs. We can use Whileaway's genes, Janet." Strangers do not call strangers by the first name.

"You can have cells enough to drown in," I said. "Breed your own."

He smiled. "That's not the way we want to do it." Behind him I saw Katy come into the square of light that was the screened-in door. He went on, low and urbane, not mocking me, I think, but with the self-confidence of someone who has always had money and strength to spare, who doesn't know what it is to be second-class or provincial. Which is very odd, because the day before, I would have said that was an exact description of me.

"I'm talking to you, Janet," he said, "because I suspect you have more popular influence than anyone else here. You know as well as I do that parthenogenetic culture has all sorts of inherent defects, and we do not—if we can help it—mean to use you for anything of the sort. Pardon me; I should not have said 'use.' But surely you can see that this kind of society is unnatural."

"Humanity is unnatural," said Katy. She had my rifle under her left arm. The top of that silky head does not quite come up to my collar-bone, but she is as tough as steel; he began to move, again with that queer smiling deference (which his fellow had showed to me but he had not) and the gun slid into Katy's grip as if she had shot with it all her life.

"I agree," said the man. "Humanity is unnatural. I should know. I have metal in my teeth and metal pins here." He touched his shoulder. "Seals are harem animals," he added, "and so are men; apes are promiscuous and so are men; doves are monogamous and so are men; there are even celibate men and homosexual men. There are homosexual cows, I believe. But Whileaway is still missing something." He gave a dry chuckle. I will give him the credit of believing that it had something to do with nerves.

"I miss nothing," said Katy, "except that life isn't endless."

"You are—?" said the man, nodding from me to her.

"Wives," said Katy. "We're married." Again the dry chuckle.

"A good economic arrangement," he said, "for working and taking care of the children. And as good an arrangement as any for randomizing heredity, if your reproduction is made to follow the same pattern. But think, Katharina Michaelason, if there isn't something better that you might secure for your daughters. I believe in instincts, even in Man, and I can't think that the two of you—a machinist, are you? and I gather you are some sort of chief of police—don't feel somehow what even you must miss. You know it intellectually, of course. There is only half a species here. Men must come back to Whileaway."

Katy said nothing.

"I should think, Katharina Michaelason," said the man gently, "that you, of all people, would benefit most from such a change," and he walked past Katy's rifle into the square of light coming from the door. I think it was then that he noticed my scar, which really does not show unless the light is from the side: a fine line that runs from temple to chin. Most people don't even know about it.

"Where did you get that?" he said, and I answered with an involuntary grin, "In my last duel." We stood there bristling at each other for several seconds (this is absurd but true) until he went inside and shut the screen door behind him. Katy said in a brittle voice, "You damned fool, don't you know when we've been insulted?" and swung up the rifle to shoot him through the screen, but I got to her before she could fire and knocked the rifle out of aim; it burned a hole through the porch floor. Katy was shaking. She kept whispering over and over, "That's why I never touched it, because I knew I'd kill someone, I knew I'd kill someone." The first man—the one I'd spoken with first—was still talking inside the house, something about the grand movement to re-colonize and re-discover all that Earth had lost. He stressed the advantages to Whileaway: trade, exchange of ideas, education. He too said that sexual equality had been re-established on Earth.

Katy was right, of course; we should have burned them down where they stood. Men are coming to Whileaway. When one culture has the big guns and the other has none, there is a certain predictability about the outcome. Maybe men would have come eventually in any case. I like to think that a hundred years from now my great-grandchildren could have stood them off or fought them to a standstill, but even that's no odds; I will remember all my life those four people I first met who were muscled like bulls and who made me—if only for a moment—feel small. A neurotic reaction, Katy says. I remember everything that happened that night; I remember Yuki's excitement in the car, I remember Katy's sobbing when we got home as if her heart would break, I remember her lovemaking, a little peremptory as always, but wonderfully soothing and comforting. I remember prowling restlessly around the house after Katy fell asleep with one bare arm flung into a patch of light from the hall. The muscles of her forearms are like metal bars from all that driving and testing of her machines. Sometimes I dream about Katy's arms. I remember wandering into the nursery and picking up my wife's baby, dozing for a while with the poignant, amazing warmth of an infant in my lap, and finally returning to the kitchen to find Yuriko fixing herself a late snack. My daughter eats like a Great Dane.

"Yuki," I said, "do you think you could fall in love with a man?" and she whooped derisively. "With a ten-foot toad!" said my tactful child.

But men are coming to Whileaway. Lately I sit up nights and worry about the men who will come to this planet, about my two daughters and Betta Katharinason, about what will happen to Katy, to me, to my life. Our ancestors' journals are one long cry of pain and I suppose I ought to be glad now but one can't throw away six centuries, or even (as I have lately discovered) thirty-four years. Sometimes I laugh at the question those four men hedged about all evening and never quite dared to ask, looking at the lot of us, hicks in overalls, farmers in canvas pants and plain shirts: *Which of you plays the role of the man?* As if we had to produce a carbon copy of their mistakes! I doubt very much that sexual equality has been re-established on Earth. I do not like to think of myself mocked, of Katy deferred to as if she were weak, of Yuki made to feel unimportant or silly, of my other children cheated of their full humanity or turned into strangers. And I'm afraid that my own achievements will dwindle from what they were—or what I thought they were—to the not-very-interesting curiosa of the human race, the oddities you read about in the back of the book, things to laugh at sometimes because they are so exotic, quaint but not impressive, charming but not useful. I find this more painful than I can say. You will agree that for a woman who has fought

three duels, all of them kills, indulging in such fears is ludicrous. But what's around the corner now is a duel so big that I don't think I have the guts for it; in Faust's words: *Verweile doch, du bist so schoen!* Keep it as it is. Don't change.

Sometimes at night I remember the original name of this planet, changed by the first generation of our ancestors, those curious women for whom, I suppose, the real name was too painful a reminder after the men died. I find it amusing, in a grim way, to see it all so completely turned around. This too shall pass. All good things must come to an end.

Take my life but don't take away the meaning of my life.

For-A-While.

Afterword:

I find it hard to say anything about this story. The first few paragraphs were dictated to me in a thoughtful, reasonable, whispering tone I had never heard before; and once the Daemon had vanished—they always do —I had to finish the thing by myself and in a voice not my own.

The premise of the story needs either a book or silence. I'll try to compromise. It seems to me (in the words of the narrator) that sexual equality has not yet been established on Earth and that (in the words of GBS) the only argument that can be made against it is that it has never been tried. I have read SF stories about manless worlds before; they are either full of busty girls in wisps of chiffon who slink about writhing with lust (Keith Laumer wrote a charming, funny one called "The War with the Yukks"), or the women have set up a static, beelike society in imitation of some presumed primitive matriarchy. These stories are written by men. Why women who have been alone for generations should "instinctively" turn their sexual desires toward persons of whom they have only intellectual knowledge, or why female people are presumed to have an innate preference for Byzantine rigidity I don't know. "Progress" is one of the sacred cows of SF so perhaps the latter just goes to show that although women can run a society by themselves, *it isn't a good one.* This is flattering to men, I suppose. Of SF attempts to depict real matriarchies ("He will be my concubine for tonight," said the Empress of Zar coldly) it is better not to speak. I remember one very good post-bomb story by an English writer (another static society, with the Magna Mater literally and supernaturally in existence) but on the whole we had better just tiptoe past the subject.

In my story I have used assumptions that seem to me obviously true. One of them is the idea that almost all the characterological sex differences we take for granted are in fact learned and not innate. I do not see how anyone can walk around with both eyes open and both halves of

his/her brain functioning and not realize this. Still, the mythology persists in SF, as elsewhere, that women are naturally gentler than men, that they are naturally less creative than men, or less intelligent, or shrewder, or more cowardly, or more dependent, or more self-centered, or more self-sacrificing, or more materialistic, or shyer, or God knows what, whatever is most convenient at the moment. True, you can make people into anything. There are matrons of fifty so domesticated that any venture away from home is a continual flutter: where's the No Smoking sign, is it on, how do I fasten my seat belt, oh dear can you see the stewardess, she's serving the men first, they always do, isn't it awful. And what's so fascinating about all this was that the strong, competent "male" to whom such a lady in distress turned for help recently was Carol Emshwiller. Wowie, zowie, Mr. Wizard! This flutteriness is not "femininity" (something men are always so anxious women will lose) but pathology.

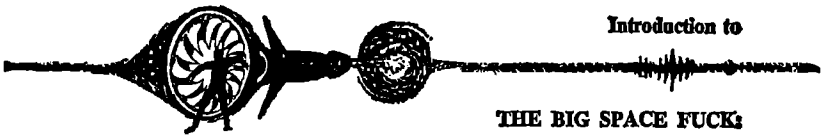
It's men who get rapturous and yeasty about the wonderful mystery of Woman, lovely Woman (this is getting difficult to write as I keep imagining my reader to be the George-Georgina of the old circuses: half-bearded, half-permanentwaved). There are few women who go around actually feeling: Oh, what a fascinating feminine mystery am I. This makes it clear enough, I think, which sex (in general) has the higher prestige, the more freedom, the more education, the more money, in Sartre's sense which is subject and which is object. Every role in life has its advantages and disadvantages, of course; a fiery feminist student here at Cornell recently told an audience that a man who acquires a wife acquires a "life-long slave" (fierce look) while the audience justifiably giggled and I wondered how I'd ever been inveigled into speaking on a program with such a lackwit. I also believe, like the villain of my story, that human beings are born with instincts (though fuzzy ones) and that being physically weaker than men and having babies makes a difference. But it makes less and less of a difference now.

Also, the patriarchal society must have considerable survival value. I suspect that it is actually more stable (and more rigid) than the primeval matriarchal societies hypothesized by some anthropologists. I wish somebody knew. To take only one topic: it seems clear that if there is to be a sexual double standard, it must be the one we know and not the opposite; male potency is too biologically precious to repress. A society that made its well-bred men impotent, as Victorian ladies were made frigid, would rapidly become an unpeopled society. Such things ought to be speculated about.

Meanwhile, my story. It did not come from this lecture, of course, but vice versa. I had read a very fine SF novel, Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, in which all the characters are humanoid hermaphrodites, and was wondering at the obduracy of the English language, in which everybody is "he" or "she" and "it" is reserved for typewriters. But

how can one call a hermaphrodite "he," as Miss Le Guin does? I tried (in my head) changing all the masculine pronouns to feminine ones, and marveled at the difference. And then I wondered why Miss Le Guin's native "hero" is male in *every* important sexual encounter of his life except that with the human man in the book. Weeks later the Daemon suddenly whispered, "Katy drives like a maniac," and I found myself on Whileaway, on a country road at night. I might add (for the benefit of both the bearded and unbearded sides of the reader's cerebrum) that I never write to shock. I consider that as immoral as writing to please. Katharina and Janet are respectable, decent, even conventional people, and if they shock *you,* just think what a copy of *Playboy* or *Cosmopolitan* would do to *them.* Resentment of the opposite sex (*Cosmo* is worse) is something they have yet to learn, thank God.

Which is why I visit Whileaway—although I do not live there because there are no men there. And if you wonder about my sincerity in saying *that,* George-Georgina, I must just give you up as hopeless.



Introduction to

THE BIG SPACE FUCK

If *The New York Times Magazine* of 24 January 1971 is to be believed, this will be the last new piece of fiction you will ever read by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

The article said, in part, "Vonnegut says repeatedly that he is through writing novels; I took it at first as a protective remark, but then began to believe it. . . ."

"After *Slaughterhouse-Five,* Vonnegut began work on a novel called *Breakfast of Champions,* about a world in which everyone but a single man, the narrator, is a robot. He gave it up, however, and it remains unfinished. I asked him why, and he said, 'Because it was a piece of——.'"

I think the word for which the *Times* writer was groping, was shit. That's s-h-i-t, entered in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (Random House, New York, 1966), as follows: *n., v.,* **shit, shit-ting,** *interj. Slang* (*vulgar*). *—n.* 1. feces. 2. an act of defecation. 3. pretense, exaggeration, lies, or nonsense.

Always glad to help the *Times* through these ticklish matters.

Which language discussion points up Mr. Vonnegut's selection of title for this story. It is his own, of course, and retained faithfully from the original ms., on view at the Editor's Literary Museum daily between the hours of 12 noon and five p.m., admission thrupence. As this is the first time (to my knowledge) (I'm sure Andy Offutt or Dick Geis or Brian Kirby will correct me if I'm wrong) the word fuck has been used in a title, it becomes something of a minor literary landmark; and since the number of critics and librarians who are impressed by Names and will be drawn to this anthology because Kurt is herein will be balanced by the numbers of provincial mommies and gunshy librarians who will ban the book from their kiddies' eyes, it should be commented upon. Syntax. Blues.

Sum of comment: nice title.

Onward.

Kurt Vonnegut was born on November 11th, 1922, in Indianapolis. His first novel, *Player Piano,* was published in 1952, and I never cared for it very much, not even in its original paperback incarnation from Bantam, in 1954, as *Utopia 14.* But Kurt forgives me that.

You notice I call him Kurt, not "Mr. Vonnegut" or even the semi-distant "Kurt Vonnegut." Apart from my need of sick ego to name-drop, I am *entitled* to call him by his first name. You see, Kurt and I belong to

the same *karass*. Now, before I *prove* that statement, for those of you just rescued from Mohole shafts and unaware of who Vonnegut is, what he's written, and what it is a *karass*, these quotes—in explanation of the term—from *Cat's Cradle:*

(Vonnegut sets forth the religion known as Bokononism, codified by the calypso singer and philosopher Bokonon, from the Republic of San Lorenzo.)

"We Bokononists believe that humanity is organized into teams, teams that do God's Will without ever discovering what they are doing. Such a team is called a *karass* by Bokonon, and the instrument, the *kan-kan*, that brought me into my own particular *karass* was the book I never finished, the book to be called *The Day the World Ended.*" (Chapter 1)

"'If you find your life tangled up with somebody else's life for no very logical reasons,' writes Bokonon, 'that person may be a member of your *karass*.'

"At another point in *The Books of Bokonon* he tells us, 'Man created the checkerboard; God created the *karass*.' By that he means that a *karass* ignores national, institutional, occupational, familial, and class boundaries.

"It is as free-form as an amoeba." (Chapter 2)

"Nowhere does Bokonon warn against a person's trying to discover the limits of his *karass* and the nature of the work God Almighty has had it do. Bokonon simply observes that such investigations are bound to be incomplete." (Chapter 3)

"Which brings me to the Bokononist concept of a *wampeter*.

"A *wampeter* is the pivot of a *karass*. No *karass* is without a *wampeter*, Bokonon tells us, just as no wheel is without a hub.

"Anything can be a *wampeter:* a tree, a rock, an animal, an idea, a book, a melody, the Holy Grail. Whatever it is, the members of its *karass* revolve about it in the majestic chaos of a spiral nebula. The orbits of a *karass* about their common *wampeter* are spiritual orbits, naturally. . . . At any given time a *karass* actually has two *wampeters*—one waxing in importance, one waning." (Chapter 24)

"—my seatmates were Horlick Minton, the new American Ambassador to the Republic of San Lorenzo, and his wife, Claire. They were white-haired, gentle, and frail. . . .

"They were lovebirds. They entertained each other endlessly with little gifts: sights worth seeing out the plane window, amusing or instructive bits from things they read, random recollections of times gone by. They were, I think, a flawless example of what Bokonon calls a *duprass*, which is a *karass* composed of only two persons.

"'A true *duprass*,' Bokonon tells us, 'can't be invaded, not even by children born of such a union.'" (Chapter 41)

"Crosby asked me what my name was and what my business was. I told

him, and his wife Hazel recognized my name as an Indiana name. She was from Indiana, too.

" 'My God,' she said, 'are you a *Hoosier*?' . . .

"Hazel's obsession with Hoosiers around the world was a textbook example of a false *karass,* of a seeming team that was meaningless in terms of the ways God gets things done, a textbook example of what Bokonon calls a *granfalloon.* Other examples of *granfalloons* are the Communist party, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the General Electric Company, the International Order of Odd Fellows—and any nation, anytime, anywhere." (Chapter 42)

Essentially, that's all you need to know about what a *karass* is; and for those millions of delighted readers on college campuses, in rural ivory towers, in sunny sitting rooms, on streetcars, who've read *Cat's Cradle* and know it for the contemporary classic it has become, who may wonder why I have gone on at such length to explicate the obvious, well, let's say I did it for the three or four poor souls who have not yet found the joys of Vonnegut for themselves. And as a lead-in to a letter I have before me, dated 16 March 1963, sent from Scudder's Lane in West Barnstable, Massachusetts, from Kurt, to me, explaining why it is I presume to call him Kurt. It reads, in part, as follows:

"Dear Harlan:

"Yes, I realized before you did that you were a member of my *karass*—not the one I own, the one I belong to. I don't own or manage one."

It went on with a great deal of personal stuff we had between us, and at that point we'd never met.

How it was I came to know I was in Kurt's *karass* was in 1959, when Knox Burger, then-editor of Gold Medal Books, asked me my opinion of the stories of a certain Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., who had had a few pieces here and there in sf magazines. I had read *The Sirens of Titan,* which Dell had brought out as an original in 1959, and I remembered from 1954 a story in *Galaxy* called "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow" which I thought was the very best Malthusian pastiche I'd ever read. I told Knox Vonnegut was sensational, and wanted to know why he'd asked. He said he was considering putting together a collection of Kurt's short stories, even though *Player Piano* and *The Sirens of Titan* hadn't been such hot sellers. It was a brave thing to do: short story collections are traditionally poison, particularly for paperback houses, and Gold Medal had only done one or two, each time with disastrous results. But Knox was a dynamite editor, and a good friend, and he'd known Kurt since college, where Kurt was a big wheel on the campus newspaper and Knox was a wheel on the humor magazine.

So Knox asked me if I'd help package the book, and I said it would be a joy to do so, and I contacted Leo & Diane Dillon (whose artwork you'll remember from *Dangerous Visions* and the Ace Specials paperback line,

not to mention the cover of almost every book I've ever written) and asked them to do the cover, and I wrote the blurbs, and Knox published it as *Canary in a Cat House* in 1961, following it in 1962 with *Mother Night* (which many hardcover houses had rejected). Why had Knox called me, rather than any one of a thousand other writers and anthologists closer to hand? Had nothing to do with my qualifications and certainly is not stated here to make me out a big *macher*. It was that I was a member of Kurt's *karass* and at that point Knox may well have been our *wampeter*.

I don't remember now where or when it was that Kurt and I finally met, but by September of 1964 we were friendly enough for me to be outraged and dismayed that the voting membership of that year's World SF Convention had awarded the Hugo for best novel to something other than *Cat's Cradle*. I sent him a telegram the essence of which, if I recall correctly, was, "The assholes suffered total brain damage and ignored the finest novel of the past twenty-five years by passing-over *Cat's Cradle*. They do themselves, sf and literature a greater disservice than they will ever know. I am ashamed for them."

His response, via Western Union, was: "Prouder of your telegram than I would be of Hugo. Much love, Kurt."

By 1967, Kurt was supposed to do the introduction to my first hardcover collection of mainstream stories, *Love Ain't Nothing But Sex Misspelled*, but something went wrong, he wasn't sent the galleys till too late, and the intro never was written. As a result—and here's *karass* again, eerily, spookily—Robert Scholes, the academician who came up with the generic title "fabulators" for a group of writers including Barthelme, Vonnegut, Barth and others, reviewed the book and gave it the most killing review I've ever had. Since Scholes is absolutely leech-like ga-ga over Vonnegut, chances are good that had Kurt been in that volume, I'd have gotten a better review. God, Bokonon and Vonnegut must have had a reason. I question not.

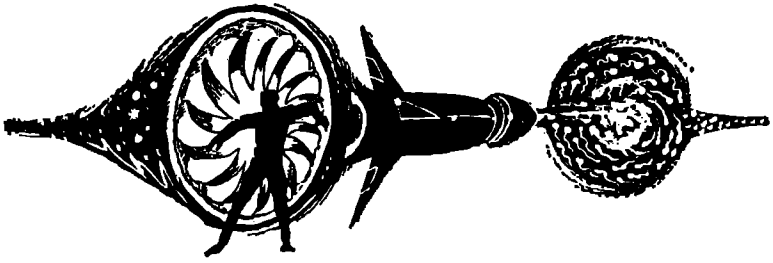
And most recently Kurt and I have had reason to know we're in the same *karass* because: one of my dearest lady friends, for many years, in New York, is Holly Bower. Holly grew to know Kurt from me. But never met him. Kurt moved to New York. He moved into Holly's neighborhood. Holly's friend is Jill Krementz. Holly met Kurt on the street and said hi, I'm a friend of Harlan's. They got talking. Holly introduced Jill to Kurt. Now Jill is Kurt's official photographer (*Saturday Review, Time,* etc.) and constant companion. And so it goes.

Now Kurt is ultrasuperfamous. But he's still Kurt, though shaggier. And so it goes, with our *karass:* it falls to me to publish the final short story of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.—who wrote *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Welcome to the Monkey House* and *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* and the very successful play *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*. It cannot all be merest chance. And perhaps chance will play less of a part in getting Kurt to

write more stories than the *karass* of which he and I are parts. Because a talent as pure and original as Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. doesn't happen too often; to think that even a story as hilarious and incisive and deadly as this one is to be his last, is a sad-making thing.

But, as Bokonon invites us to sing:

"Around and around and around we spin,
"With feet of lead and wings of tin . . ."



Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

THE BIG SPACE FUCK

In 1977 it became possible in the United States of America for a young person to sue his parents for the way he had been raised. He could take them to court and make them pay money and even serve jail terms for serious mistakes they made when he was just a helpless little kid. This was not only an effort to achieve justice but to discourage reproduction, since there wasn't anything much to eat any more. Abortions were free. In fact, any woman who volunteered for one got her choice of a bathroom scale or a table lamp.

In 1979, America staged the Big Space Fuck, which was a serious effort to make sure that human life would continue to exist somewhere in the Universe, since it certainly couldn't continue much longer on Earth. Everything had turned to shit and beer cans and old automobiles and Clorox bottles. An interesting thing happened in the Hawaiian Islands, where they had been throwing trash down extinct volcanoes for years: a couple of the volcanoes all of a sudden spit it all back up. And so on.

This was a period of great permissiveness in matters of language, so even the President was saying shit and fuck and so on, without anybody's feeling threatened or taking offense. It was perfectly OK. He called the

Space Fuck a Space Fuck and so did everybody else. It was a rocket ship with eight-hundred pounds of freeze-dried jizzum in its nose. It was going to be fired at the Andromeda Galaxy, two-million light years away. The ship was named the *Arthur C. Clarke,* in honor of a famous space pioneer.

It was to be fired at midnight on the Fourth of July. At ten o'clock that night, Dwayne Hoobler and his wife Grace were watching the countdown on television in the living room of their modest home in Elk Harbor, Ohio, on the shore of what used to be Lake Erie. Lake Erie was almost solid sewage now. There were man-eating lampreys in there thirty-eight feet long. Dwayne was a guard in the Ohio Adult Correctional Institution, which was two miles away. His hobby was making birdhouses out of Clorox bottles. He went on making them and hanging them around his yard, even though there weren't any birds any more.

Dwayne and Grace marveled at a film demonstration of how jizzum had been freeze-dried for the trip. A small beaker of the stuff, which had been contributed by the head of the Mathematics Department at the University of Chicago, was flash-frozen. Then it was placed under a bell jar, and the air was exhausted from the jar. The air evanesced, leaving a fine white powder. The powder certainly didn't look like much, and Dwayne Hoobler said so—but there were several hundred million sperm cells in there, in suspended animation. The original contribution, an average contribution, had been two cubic centimeters. There was enough powder, Dwayne estimated out loud, to clog the eye of a needle. And eight-hundred pounds of the stuff would soon be on its way to Andromeda.

"Fuck you, Andromeda," said Dwayne, and he wasn't being coarse. He was echoing billboards and stickers all over town. Other signs said, "Andromeda, We Love You," and "Earth has the Hots for Andromeda," and so on.

There was a knock on the door, and an old friend of the family, the County Sheriff, simultaneously let himself in. "How are you, you old motherfucker?" said Dwayne.

"Can't complain, shitface," said the sheriff, and they joshed back and forth like that for a while. Grace chuckled, enjoying their wit. She wouldn't have chuckled so richly, however, if she had been a little more observant. She might have noticed that the sheriff's jocularity was very much on the surface. Underneath, he had something troubling on his mind. She might have noticed, too, that he had legal papers in his hand.

"Sit down, you silly old fart," said Dwayne, "and watch Andromeda get the surprise of her life."

"The way I understand it," the sheriff replied, "I'd have to sit there for

more than two-million years. My old lady might wonder what's become of me." He was a lot smarter than Dwayne. He had jizzum on the *Arthur C. Clarke*, and Dwayne didn't. You had to have an I.Q. of over 115 to have your jizzum accepted. There were certain exceptions to this: if you were a good athlete or could play a musical instrument or paint pictures, but Dwayne didn't qualify in any of those ways, either. He had hoped that birdhouse-makers might be entitled to special consideration, but this turned out not to be the case. The Director of the New York Philharmonic, on the other hand, was entitled to contribute a whole quart, if he wanted to. He was sixty-eight years old. Dwayne was forty-two.

There was an old astronaut on the television now. He was saying that he sure wished he could go where his jizzum was going. But he would sit at home instead, with his memories and a glass of *Tang*. *Tang* used to be the official drink of the astronauts. It was a freeze-dried orangeade.

"Maybe you haven't got two million years," said Dwayne, "but you've got at least five minutes. Sit thee doon."

"What I'm here for—" said the sheriff, and he let his unhappiness show, "is something I customarily do standing up."

Dwayne and Grace were sincerely puzzled. They didn't have the least idea what was coming next. Here is what it was: the sheriff handed each one of them a subpoena, and he said, "It's my sad duty to inform you that your daughter, Wanda June, has accused you of ruining her when she was a child."

Dwayne and Grace were thunderstruck. They knew that Wanda June was twenty-one now, and entitled to sue, but they certainly hadn't expected her to do so. She was in New York City, and when they congratulated her about her birthday on the telephone, in fact, one of the things Grace said was, "Well, you can sue us now, honeybunch, if you want to." Grace was so sure she and Dwayne had been good parents that she could laugh when she went on, "If you want to, you can send your rotten old parents off to jail."

Wanda June was an only child, incidentally. She had come close to having some siblings, but Grace had had them aborted. Grace had taken three table lamps and a bathroom scale instead.

"What does she say we did wrong?" Grace asked the sheriff.

"There's a separate list of charges inside each of your subpoenas," he said. And he couldn't look his wretched old friends in the eye, so he looked at the television instead. A scientist there was explaining why Andromeda had been selected as a target. There were at least eighty-seven chrono-

synclastic infundibulae, time warps, between Earth and the Andromeda Galaxy. If the *Arthur C. Clarke* passed through any one of them, the ship and its load would be multiplied a trillion times, and would appear everywhere throughout space and time.

"If there's any fecundity anywhere in the Universe," the scientist promised, "our seed will find it and bloom."

One of the most depressing things about the space program so far, of course, was that it had demonstrated that fecundity was one hell of a long way off, if anywhere. Dumb people like Dwayne and Grace, and even fairly smart people like the sheriff, had been encouraged to believe that there was hospitality out there, and that Earth was just a piece of shit to use as a launching platform.

Now Earth really was a piece of shit, and it was beginning to dawn on even dumb people that it might be the only inhabitable planet human beings would ever find.

Grace was in tears over being sued by her daughter, and the list of charges she was reading was broken into multiple images by the tears. "Oh God, oh God, oh God—" she said, "she's talking about things I forgot all about, but she never forgot a thing. She's talking about something that happened when she was only four years old."

Dwayne was reading charges against himself, so he didn't ask Grace what awful thing she was supposed to have done when Wanda June was only four, but here it was: Poor little Wanda June drew pretty pictures with a crayon all over the new living-room wallpaper to make her mother happy. Her mother blew up and spanked her instead. Since that day, Wanda June claimed, she had not been able to look at any sort of art materials without trembling like a leaf and breaking out into cold sweats. "Thus was I deprived," Wanda June's lawyer had her say, "of a brilliant and lucrative career in the arts."

Dwayne meanwhile was learning that he had ruined his daughter's opportunities for what her lawyer called an "advantageous marriage and the comfort and love therefrom." Dwayne had done this, supposedly, by being half in the bag whenever a suitor came to call. Also, he was often stripped to the waist when he answered the door, but still had on his cartridge belt and his revolver. She was even able to name a lover her father had lost for her: John L. Newcomb, who had finally married somebody else. He had a very good job now. He was in command of the security force at an arsenal out in South Dakota, where they stockpiled cholera and bubonic plague.

The sheriff had still more bad news to deliver, and he knew he would have an opportunity to deliver it soon enough. Poor Dwayne and Grace were bound to ask him, "What made her *do* this to us?" The answer to that question would be more bad news, which was that Wanda June was in jail, charged with being the head of a shoplifting ring. The only way she could avoid prison was to prove that everything she was and did was her parents' fault.

Meanwhile, Senator Flem Snopes of Mississippi, Chairman of the Senate Space Committee, had appeared on the television screen. He was very happy about the Big Space Fuck, and he said it had been what the American space program had been aiming toward all along. He was proud, he said, that the United States had seen fit to locate the biggest jizzum-freezing plant in his "l'il ol' home town," which was Mayhew.

The word "jizzum" had an interesting history, by the way. It was as old as "fuck" and "shit" and so on, but it continued to be excluded from dictionaries, long after the others were let in. This was because so many people wanted it to remain a truly magic word—the only one left.

And when the United States announced that it was going to do a truly magical thing, was going to fire sperm at the Andromeda Galaxy, the populace corrected its government. Their collective unconscious announced that it was time for the last magic word to come into the open. They insisted that *sperm* was nothing to fire at another galaxy. Only *jizzum* would do. So the Government began using that word, and it did something that had never been done before, either: it had standardized the way the word was spelled.

The man who was interviewing Senator Snopes asked him to stand up so everybody could get a good look at his codpiece, which the Senator did. Codpieces were very much in fashion, and many men were wearing codpieces in the shape of rocket ships, in honor of the Big Space Fuck. These customarily had the letters "U.S.A." embroidered on the shaft. Senator Snopes' shaft, however, bore the Stars and Bars of the Confederacy.

This led the conversation into the area of heraldry in general, and the interviewer reminded the Senator of his campaign to eliminate the bald eagle as the national bird. The Senator explained that he didn't like to have his country represented by a creature that obviously hadn't been able to cut the mustard in modern times.

Asked to name a creature that *had* been able to cut the mustard, the Senator did better than that: he named two—the lamprey and the bloodworm. And, unbeknownst to him or to anybody, lampreys were finding

the Great Lakes too vile and noxious even for *them*. While all the human beings were in their houses, watching the Big Space Fuck, lampreys were squirming out of the ooze and onto land. Some of them were nearly as long and thick as the *Arthur C. Clarke*.

And Grace Hoobler tore her wet eyes from what she had been reading, and she asked the sheriff the question he had been dreading to hear: "What made her *do* this to us?"

The sheriff told her, and then he cried out against cruel Fate, too. "This is the most horrible duty I ever had to carry out—" he said brokenly, "to deliver news this heartbreaking to friends as close as you two are—on a night that's supposed to be the most joyful night in the history of mankind."

He left sobbing, and stumbled right into the mouth of a lamprey. The lamprey ate him immediately, but not before he screamed. Dwayne and Grace Hoobler rushed outside to see what the screaming was about, and the lamprey ate them, too.

It was ironical that their television set continued to report the countdown, even though they weren't around any more to see or hear or care.

"Nine!" said a voice. And then, "Eight!" And then, "Seven!" And so on.

Afterword:

And so it goes.



Coups make an editor feel simply splendid. It was a coup to get a new Vonnegut story for this book. Getting a new Wyman Guin story is another (you'll read it in *The Last Dangerous Visions*). H. L. Gold, when he was editing *Galaxy*, pulled off as grand a coup as any of us: the (then) mysterious Cordwainer Smith's extravagantly memorable "Scanners Live In Vain" had appeared in 1948 in the short-lived *Fantasy Book*, and caused an immediate stir in the genre. Fred Pohl reprinted it in a Permabook paperback original in 1952, *Beyond the End of Time*. But nothing further was heard from "Smith" (a pseudonym for Dr. Paul Linebarger) until the October 1955 issue of *Galaxy* in which Gold couped everyone by presenting "The Game of Rat and Dragon," the first of many new Cordwainer Smith stories. Every other editor in the business went green with envy at Gold. Horace L. was a master at that kind of thing . . . getting great writers who'd vanished to start writing again.

Judy-Lynn Benjamin of *Galaxy* (as it is today) and I have been in competition for three years to get Catherine L. Moore to write her first new work for each of us. Thus far that charming lady has managed to elude both Judy-Lynn and myself.

Thus, following the Vonnegut coup with a Sherred coup is a soul-satisfying experience.

When Tom Sherred's exhaustively-reprinted novelette, "E for Effort," was published in *Astounding* in 1947, readers demanded *more!* But it was not till 1953 that "Cue for Quiet" and "Eye for Iniquity" appeared in *Space Science Fiction* and *Beyond*, respectively. (Both magazines are now, sadly, defunct.) And still readers clamored for more Sherred. There have been one or two others since the early Fifties, but though Ballantine issued Tom's first novel, *Alien Island*, in 1970—which I thought was poor form on Tom's part, diminishing the impact of my coup—the story you are about to read is the first new Sherred in many years, and a nice little stabber it is, too.

Because T. L. Sherred is, at core, a private sort of man, when I wrote asking for biographical material to precede his story, he sent back the following:

"My date of birth, according to my daughter who is as ornery as she is pretty, would be somewhere around 1865.

"The date of my death, according to my son who does not approve of my taste in music, would be somewhere about 1932.

"I am satisfied with the accuracy of both dates."

Oh no you don't, Sherred! When I was in Detroit, I met you and found you a charming and fastidiously young-minded man, not to mention great company in Chinese restaurants on the Canadian side. So I wrote him such shifty deviousness would not suffice, and received the following:

"Shifty deviousness, indeed! A pox on thee, Ariel! I haven't been asked so many questions since I got tossed in the calabozo in several Southern states. So we'll take your questions in the order you typed them and see what comes out.

"What I do for a living? Nothing; I'm unemployed. I got laid off the same week I went to the hospital. I'll draw some disability payments as long as my doctor can legally and medically sign papers, and then I'll have to look for another job. The last one was technical writing and the one before that was engineering analysis; both were military and both jobs faded because of contract expiration. If I had my choice and were twenty years younger I'd be test pilot for a white slave crew.

"Size of my family. A son who is sickeningly brilliant and is in his final year at Michigan State. A girl who is two years older—no, one—and has given me two daughters to spoil.

"I just reread your letter, and missed 'important dates of my life.' After giving the matter due thought, the day of my birth (8-27-15) comes to mind. Christmas of 1968 bears a horrid memory, also; a jolt from the Hong Kong flu came right on top of a stroke and finally convinced me that my days of boozing and alleycatting were over. I can think of no other dates that bear any significance.

"Maybe you can put this together so that I sound like a footprint on the beach of literature. I doubt it. I didn't write very much because I was too busy making a living; I only wrote when I got in a hole and needed cash. When I got the cash, of course, I had pulled out of the hole and didn't write any more and *ad infinitum.*"

The only additional comments that need be entered here—there are volumes of silent comments one might make about humbleness and the way men are forced to spend their lives—are that Tom Sherred is a fine writer and it's a shame he never got in more holes, because we have little enough by his hand; and the following, dated 23 November 1969:

"Last night I was held up and slugged,
if it matters to the reader."

A final comment that will assume greater significance after you've read "Bounty," to which pleasure I now commend you.

ADDENDA:

All of the Sherred-originated material just presented came in sometime in 1968. I sat down to write Tom's introduction in June of 1971. I mailed

it off with other introductions, to Doubleday's indefatigable editorix, Judith Glushanok, at three ayem of a Sunday night, air mail special delivery. Ten days later the package had not arrived in New York. I was able to reproduce most of the "lost" material from my carbons, but Tom's introduction had been made up of original pages by myself, joined with his own comments, which I had not duplicated. Panicked that the book might go to press minus one introduction, I called Tom Sherred in Detroit. I had not talked to him in quite a while, and it was good to hear his voice again. But he seemed a little lonely, and when I said he should write as much as he cared to write for the emergency introduction, to let it go at least the two pages he'd supplied previously or do as much more as he cared to do, to let his typewriter simply run away with itself, he replied, "I'm afraid those days are gone forever." We ended the conversation with Tom's promise to send what he could soonest, and I hung up with a curiously unsettled feeling.

That was on a Wednesday. On Friday Tom's biographical material came in, a revised version of what he had written two years before; and I must confess I have seldom been as touched as I was by the single page he had written. And so this addenda, and Tom's page that follows, are being added to that initial preamble.

In his covering note to me, Tom apologized for not being able to provide the two pages I'd indicated I'd wanted. His last line was, "Hell I don't think there are two pages in *anyone's* life."

As the capsule comments that follow will testify, Tom Sherred's life puts the lie to that belief.

I only hope his penultimate paragraph is dead wrong.

"I understand I was born in 1915, just long enough to teach me that no one under 50 is to be trusted. A National Youth Administration scholarship got me into Wayne University and general economic conditions let me wander through 47 states before Alaska and Hawaii became part of the Union. I ended up in the old Packard Motor toolroom, with a belief that there were easier ways to earn a living. There were lots of ways.

"I tried technical writing (not many writers can run a planer or know what a Keller does). Then I got into the advertising business which is more profitable than anything legal. I finally decided to go straight.

"Along the way I tried science fiction which is generally fun to do and has the added advantage that, to the right editor, nothing and nowhere nohow is *verboten*. Marriage and two children set up an entirely new set of priorities, and it became difficult to think about anything besides a weekly, steady paycheck; no more, or at least very little, fiction.

"Divorce changed things around again, and I came up with *Alien Island*, a novel. It sold to Ballantine and I had the world by the tail, I thought. It took a stroke to change my mind. A mild stroke, true, but still a stroke.

"I don't suppose I will ever write again. Certainly not in the quantities or with the ease I once had, and this annoys me in a sort of abstract way. 'Bounty' is the latest, perhaps the last, I will ever write.

"I am still convinced that it was fun while it lasted."



T. L. Sherred

BOUNTY

In May, the first week there was one death. The second, there were four, the third, nineteen. The fourth week, 39 people were killed.

Most were shot by pistol, rifle, or shotgun. Four were killed with knives, two by meat cleavers, and one by a dinner fork worked methodically through the spinal cord. It was not the dinner fork that aroused comment but the evident fact that someone had finished his or her meal with its duplicate.

The Mayor said, "This has got to stop."

The Governor said, "This has got to stop."

The President, through his Secretary for Health and Welfare, said somewhat the same thing.

The Police Commissioner and Prosecuting Attorney said there would be no stone left unturned and the FBI said, regretfully, that it was a local matter.

No one ever was quite sure who was on or who was behind the Committee but the advertisement—one issue, double-page spread—had been authentic, had paid off in hard cash; within the city limits, ten thousand dollars cash for the death of anyone caught in the process of armed robbery and one hundred thousand to the estate of anyone killed while attempting to halt armed robbery.

Such an advertisement was definitely not in the public interest and

every bristling aspect of the law said so. The suburban booster sheet that had originally printed the ad promised not to do it again.

But this kept on and over the weeks and a few square miles—cities are crowded in their sprawl—over two million dollars had been paid without quibble and sometimes at night secretly, because Internal Revenue considers no income tainted. Things became complex when three policemen in varying parts of the city incautiously let their off-duty holstered guns be spotted by strangers or by fellow customers in a store. Too rapidly for the innocent police to identify themselves, a swirl of action, and three men were dead—all painlessly. Further executions were eliminated by the flaunting of police badges in public, with consequent reduction of vice squad arrests.

By July, pedestrians after dark carried large flashlights and in business districts made no abrupt movements. Vigilante groups at first hired doddering men and women to hobble decoy in certain areas; later, as techniques became perfected, heavily armed and suicidal senior citizens acted as independent Q-ships and frail-looking women waited endlessly at bus stops or lugged expensive-looking packages back and forth across parking lots. Behind grocery store partitions and drycleaner's curtains sat or lazed volunteer part-time, full-time, and nighttime guards.

By September four hundred plus had been killed. Court dockets were clogged with scheduled homicide trials while the incidence of armed and unarmed robberies slid almost to zero. Police are forbidden to accept rewards but cabin cruisers, summer cottages, snomobiles and trips to Hawaii can be bought and paid for by midnight cash. No one dared to resist arrest.

Then the reward system was extended outstate where rates of crime had been increasing. The 11 by 14 advertising was traced to a small shop on Center Street, but the owner had moved to Winnipeg. The first to die—four men, two of them brothers—tried to hold up an outstate bank. Their dress oxfords clashed with their hunting costumes and the bank manager, one teller, and two customers were waiting.

Armed and unarmed robbery died out together with some three hundred probably-guilty persons but the Governor at last appealed for federal aid, pleading his entire legal system was breaking down. Officials of the three bordering states and Canada on the north were equally interested in his plea. Nothing was accomplished at a series of top level conferences.

In sudden succession the three bordering states had their own operating Committees, apparently unconnected with the first. Then other cities some miles away and then other states. A reliable estimate of reward money earned and paid out ran to half a billion dollars before the object was at-

tained, as the reward system spread totally east and totally west of the Mississippi.

In New York City proper, children began to be seen playing in Central Park at dusk and even after.

With all rumors dissected, with duplicate reports discounted, and counting the death-welcoming onslaughts of unarmed applicants for free hundred-thousand-dollar survivor benefits, over the next three years the casualty list was somewhat less than automotive deaths in 1934. The fourth year there was a presidential election.

The winning candidate ran on a Law and Order platform. Two Secret Service men on inauguration day, while mingling with the gay crowd, incautiously let their .44 Magnums be seen and were dismembered quite quickly. After the first session of Congress a Federal ban on portable weapons was passed. This included weapons carried by law enforcement officers. Scotland Yard loaned fourteen quarterstaff specialists to the FBI police school and some seventeen thousand homicide cases were nolle prossed.

Montessori kindergartens expanded curricula to include judo and karate and General Motors phased out its Soapbox Derby and awarded black belts to the most worthy. *Popular Science & Mechanix Illustrated* ran a series on car-spring crossbows. Deer became an everyday sight and somewhat of a nuisance in the streets of Saginaw and Sebewaing.

At present the House Un-American Activities Committee is investigating the sky-rocketing import of Japanese chemical sets for adults.

Afterword:

Bounty could have been a much longer story, written in collaboration with Allan Hayes. Allan, a member of equally good standing in both the SFWA and the Michigan Bar and a surprisingly Puritan soul, couldn't find fast enough an eleven-foot pole not to touch it with. So it came out the way it did.

If Alfred Hitchcock were still mixed up with movies, and had a script by Robert Heinlein to start with, the opening scene might look like this:

A long shot of a woman getting off a bus at a lonely transfer point. You know it is a transfer point because a closeup shows the woman, who is at least an unattractive fifty years old in her housemaid's uniform, looking for another bus in the distance. It isn't in sight. The woman opens her purse, counts her day's wages for probably the fourth time, and looks guiltily around. She should never have exposed all that money. The villain

enters, stage right; he wants the money. He gets it. He may even slap the old lady around a bit, regardless of how she cringes and pleads. Another closeup would show *him* pleading when she pulls out a .38 Banker's Special and carefully empties it into him. Then Hitchcock would show the old charwoman in the phone booth (which has until now been shown as hopelessly, tantalizingly out of reach). She dials the operator.

"Operator," she says. "Get me the police. I want to report a robbery." And she's giggling.



"Still-Life," and its thirty-two-year-old author, "K. M. O'Donnell," represent several very special things for you, me, and *Again, Dangerous Visions.* They represent, for openers, what may well be an extraordinary new kind of fiction: fantasy that becomes reality by inference. And they represent the almost pathological integrity of the typical sf writer.

On the latter matter, let me do a fast *mea culpa.* Due to the length of time it has taken to assemble this book properly—five years in the making, cast of thousands, all-singing, all-dancing, all-talking—a number of writers have suffered some rather substantial inconvenience. Dick Lupoff, whose story appears toward the end of the anthology, has suffered the most, and I'll comment on that in his introduction. But Mr. "O'Donnell" has suffered second most. He sold me this story on 11 August 1969. As I write this preface to the story, it is two full years later, and this book will be published over six months beyond *that* point. Mr. "O'Donnell" subsequently wrote a fine novel titled *Universe Day* (Avon, 1971) which I urge you to locate and purchase and read. He wanted to include "Still-Life" as a portion of that novel. Because the anthology was not yet published, and because every story in this book is an original that has never appeared *anywhere* previously, in any form, I was compelled to turn down Mr. "O'Donnell's" request that the story be included in the novel prior to publication of A,DV. I felt like a monster, but the rationale for my monstrousness was inescapable.

A,DV—like DV before it, and as TLDV will be—is a joint project. Every man and woman involved is responsible to, and benefits from, every other man and woman in the book. There will be many who will buy this book because it has a new Bradbury herein, or a new Vonnegut, or a full-length Le Guin. That clout will help Jim Hemesath and Ken McCullough and Evelyn Lief and all the other kids whose names are *not*—as yet—box office. The name "K. M. O'Donnell" is a name with which to contend. His short story, "Final War," missed winning a Nebula by only six votes, and has become very well known. *Universe Day* will make him many new fans. We needed the clout that could be obtained from a previously-unpublished "O'Donnell" yarn. I *had* to say no. He and I are responsible to forty-two other writers and artists, even as they and I bear that responsibility to him.

It is to his credit, and an example of the high-principled good faith that

is the constant rule among sf writers (though not always the case with their publishers), that Mr. "O'Donnell" understood and revised his plans for the novel so "Still-Life" could appear here first. To our greater glory. This is hardly an unusual case, where a sf writer will suffer loss of money or prestige or convenience, rather than break his word to another member of the sf fraternity. I cannot think of many other lines of work—or other kinds of writing—where such uprightness exists. I can't think of many sf writers who'd cop to the term "gentleman," but if states and governments acted half as well toward one another, this would be a much less twitchy world.

In case you haven't caught on, this is a deep and sincere thankyou to Mr. "O'Donnell."

And so I can stop using them, you may wonder why there are quotation marks around the name "O'Donnell." Well, it's because the name is Malzberg. Barry N. Malzberg. Under his own name he wrote *Screen* and *Oracle of the Thousand Hands* for Olympia Press in 1969, but under "K. M. O'Donnell" he has written *The Empty People* (Lancer, 1969), *Final War and Other Fantasies* (Ace, 1969) and *Dwellers of the Deep* (Ace, 1970). Why he uses the pseudonym, only Barry can say, but had *I* worked as an editor for a certain publisher whom shall go nameless whom, I'd change *my* name, too!

Mr. Malzberg was born and lives in Manhattan, married Joyce Zelnick in 1964, spawned a daughter (Stephanie Jill) in 1966, and has appeared in such prestigious collections as *Best SF: 1968, Best from the Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction: 18th Series, Nova 1* and most of the top periodicals in the field.

Messrs. Malzberg and O'Donnell are presently full-time freelance writers (an occupation rapidly going the way of the auk, the passenger pigeon and the Rational Man); there are a couple of writing fellowships in his background, six months in the Army, somewhat longer than that working in city and state civil services, and stints as editor of a number of magazines.

"Still-Life"—as I noted earlier—seems to me a new kind of fiction. I wish I could invent a term like "neorealistic" or "fabulorooted" the way the *literateurs* do, but frankly I cannot even devise a category. It is one of those stories that you read and find yourself thinking, "Jesus, *I* wondered about that at the time, thought what if Michael Collins up there in the Command Module got pissed off that Armstrong and Aldrin got all the glory walking on the Moon and just said, to hell with you guys, and took off." It's the kind of story that becomes reality even as it's written, that somehow carries all the past, present and future, plus future possibilities and alternate time-tracks of the *now* within itself. It is a strange and oddly unforgettable piece of fiction, and in its own special way it is the most dangerous vision in this book.



K. M. O'Donnell

STILL-LIFE

IN BED, ASLEEP, HIS WIFE

He lies curled in a foetal posture, the joint of his thumb enjambed against a cheek, his mouth open, emitting even curls of breath. In the darkness he thinks that he hears his wife cry and turns toward her, one hand reaching to curve around the fullness of her back, then he finds her flesh under his hands and grips her as if he were holding a panel of wood. "You shouldn't do that," he groans, "you shouldn't do that, you upset me, I don't know what's really going on here any more," and then runs his hands all the way down the length of her body, lingering on her buttocks, moving around the cup of her stomach and against her cunt. "Stop it," she says to him, "what are you doing? you woke me up, I was sleeping, you can't do something like this everytime you want to," but he does not hear; he is eager now, trapped in his own necessities and even though Control warned against activities of this sort during the final days before mission he finds himself quite helpless, quite stricken, as he rises above to mount her. "Oh darling, darling," he cries, "the moon, the moon," and plunges thickly into her and she says again, "what are you doing?" her voice girlish, high, suddenly pleading as if she were being pinned against a fence by a gang of strangers but it is too late, far too late for all of that and he begins to work in her, two or three limpid pulls of the prick and he is finished, the orgasm a seizure rather than a culmination and he falls from her body to his side of the bed. Even though he is still alert, he decides that it would be best for him to feign passing into an immediate sleep and so he does this, regularizing his breathing, hunching slowly into the pillow and the simulation becoming the fact he shortly does fall asleep, leaving his wife lying quietly beside him, one arm sprawled across his stomach in a gesture that might have had more meaning a few moments ago but which, for her, gives her a feeling of mute tenderness and she strokes the planes of his cheek saying "all right, all right baby, it's all right now" but for all the good this does him at the present moment she might as well be on the other side of the moon and he trapped in the damned capsule.

AT BREAKFAST, A HINT OF VIGOR

They gather for breakfast: it is the first time they have done so in several weeks because, during the last stages of the preparation, he has had to be on the grounds before 5 A.M., has, in fact, slept in the dormitory several times but now that the training has been completed and the focus of the preparations has shifted to countdown on the great ship, he is able to breakfast with his family again. He has two children, both boys, ages nine and six; his wife is 37 but does not, she is told by everyone, look it and in certain sweaters, certain postures, she can affect the breastline of a very young woman. The boys are restless and beyond discipline this morning, tossing flakes from the cereal boxes at one another, calling in high, taunting voices; it seems that they are still enmeshed in some dispute of a few days past involving, perhaps, theft. His wife attempts to calm them but he says no, no, it is perfectly all right; he does not want to interfere with routine, only try to get back into it and the younger boy says, "but how can you do *that* dad if you're going to the moon in a week?" He would answer that if he could but then the older boy says quickly, "don't be stupid, he's not going to the moon, he's just going to fly around it, they won't be ready to go to the moon for six months yet! how can you be so stupid?" and slaps the younger violently three or four times across the head. The younger begins to cry and inverts the cereal box on the table, the older starts an anticipatory cry of his own, perhaps feeling that his mother's punishment will be less if he already seems to be in agony and his wife, her face streaked and discontent, lunges from the stove to seize both of them in either hand. It seems for a moment that she is going to do a kind of qualified violence, just as she has competently done so many times when the boys have gotten out of hand, but in a quick shift of light, her face changes, becomes remote, saddens somehow and she says, "you know, I can't really take much more of this: we're supposed to be some kind of American ideal and yet I can't even control these children, I can't control anything any more, not even *you*," and she begins to weep and he rises from the table saying "all right, everyone, look lively now, be snappy because if we have any more of this nonsense I'll sic the moon creatures on you," this has been a very effective line at some times in the past, dissolving tension toward laughter but this time they only look at him, all three, with glazed and numb expressions and feeling more than slightly ineffective, he sits again and then, unable to confront the plate of eggs, those blind eyes winking, he lunges to his feet and seizing his service cap and mumbling something about lack of consideration at the worst time he staggers from the house, reminding himself as he comes onto the street that he will definitely have to

buy his wife some flowers tonight so that they can somehow smooth the damned thing over.

HIS FACE, THAT FINE PAN OF APPERCEPTION AND DOOM

His face is long and brown, slightly inverted at the eyebrows where the crest seems to go in the wrong direction; his mouth a smooth, hard line that will curve easily upward toward laughter but which fails to fold under duress. His nose seems to haunt the mouth, jutting over it at an angle a quarter of an inch short of being parodic and his cheeks are particularly fine, seeming to be etched over that intricate, delicate bone structure which is his most distinguishing characteristic. He sneezes a shade more often than the average but always has a handkerchief at ready. His eyes are deep brown and unusually penetrating. His chin is directly in proportion to his mouth. His ears contain no wax. The first time he kissed his wife, many years ago, she said that in the dimness he reminded her of a God poised to take her but they were, of course, much younger then.

IN THE CENTER, A SECURITY CHECK

Entering the huge gates he is stopped by a guard. "Don't you know what the hell is going on here, baby: let's see your identification," the guard says and then an older guard standing behind says, "you idiot, he's one of the astronauts" and the younger man pales and says "yes sir, yes sir, I'm sorry of course, go right through. I didn't recognize you for a minute; you looked like someone whose picture I saw in the newspapers and who wasn't supposed to be here," and the older guard laughs and he would laugh too but because he didn't know what the joke is (or who it is on) and is very careful not to feign involvement he only walks through with a slightly confused expression, wondering if the day can possibly be as strange in the full as it has been in the beginning.

TECHNOLOGICAL EXTRAPOLATION. EXPOSITORY DETAIL.

He is the third man on this expedition, the one who will stay in the so-called command ship while two others, younger personnel both of them, will conduct the module to within three miles of the satellite. The most recent voyage, enacted by other men, brought the module to within four miles and the next, also scheduled for others, will take it within two; in short, his is the third mission before the lunar landing itself which will probably take place somewhere around Easter Sunday if all goes well. Goes well. At first, when he learned that he would be the man to stay behind he felt vaguely shamed as if his inadequacy—or, at any rate, his lack of facility—was being exposed to the media and by implication the nation

but now he feels somewhat differently: is, in fact, afflicted by fantasies about what might happen to him and the others were he to lift the ship out of orbit at a crucial time, leaving the others stranded. He knows that this falls so far from sanity that he has never discussed it with the psychiatrist nor does he really take this fantasy seriously, knowing that were he to succumb to it, his career would probably be over. Nevertheless, he knows in dreams occasionally what it would be like: an impression of wind in the windless spaces, a sensation of flight in immobility, the cries of the abandoned men like bird shrieks in his headset and as he came back all the way alone he would use the radio to tell all of them in and out of the project exactly what he thought, a performance of one to the largest audience in history. He knows that it would make his name, and there is a small chance, he sometimes admits, that he might actually do it except that he thinks he knows better, were he to attempt anything so irrational he would be cut off by mission control and would have only himself to rave to and the auditor in the silence; a portrait of madness which even a person as phlegmatic as he cannot bear. On the other hand—

HE GREETS THE OTHERS: THEY SAY GOOD MORNING

In the briefing room the two men who will accompany him are already waiting, sitting on a bench, reading newspapers. He nods hello to them and they nod back, then resume their study. He has never been to their homes nor they to his but they were picked, among other reasons, for compatibility and therefore he knows that his feelings of unease with these far younger men come only from anxiety and that once the responsibility of the voyage has settled upon them there will be no problems whatsoever.

WHILE WAITING HE HAS A RECOLLECTION

He joins them silently then: today there are to be some simulated gravity tests and also a long discussion with a board of engineers and officers who will submit to them a series of requests for special duties to be performed in orbit . . . but the schedule affecting their activities has relaxed since the emphasis has shifted toward machinery and he knows that there may very well be a fifteen or twenty minute wait before they are called. In the meantime he folds his hands and finds himself remembering the way that his wife had responded to his announcement to her, three years ago, that he had made the team after all. "What is it going to do?" she had asked, "what is it going to mean; they're going to fill you full of statistics and tell you what to say and make you do their tricks and at the end of it—if you live—they'll give you a medal and a parade and put you into public relations or something like that. It's not as if you're going up there on your

own, they won't even leave you alone for an instant. I know, I know," she said and began to cry; one of her most afflicting characteristics is this tendency (to this very date) for emotional outbursts out of all relation to cause and without any apparent means of pacification; she must cry herself out at her own pace toward her own outcome. Futilely he had held her feeling, as always, clumsy and somehow irrelevant to an inner tragedy so stark and compelling that by comparison nothing which ever affected him had any dimension whatsoever . . . and finally she stopped and said, "well, I guess I'm not being very nice about this; it's a great honor of course and the boys will be very happy. At least when they get a little older and know what it means, they'll be proud of you. But I just don't see how when you come right down to it it's going to make any difference at all because it isn't anything more than them using you to put a body up there," and he had tried to explain to her then that the whole point and purpose of the selection was to arrive at the men best suited for individual initiative and intelligence and projecting a good image—because otherwise why have a selection process at all? why not merely open it to applications, first ones taken? —and that he thought she misunderstood the program. He reminded her of the many previous astronauts who had gotten into trouble in orbit in one way or the other and had had to save themselves through clear thinking and strong wills and that very likely he would have to do the same at one time or another. "Oh no you won't, it isn't anything, the challenge is only manufactured," she had said but she was calming down by then and he had been able to put the pieces of the evening together by pretending for her that he knew what she said had only come out of her fear for and dependency upon him. He had broken the news to her at a restaurant, the boys being babysat by a local college girl and when they came home they awakened them and told the news. "I guess that's good," the older had said while the youngest had stood, his whole being curled around the thumb he was sucking and only the babysitter had responded at last by saying "really? is that what happened? oh that's wonderful, I'll tell everyone, I'll tell my boyfriend," and out of gratitude he had tried to kiss her when he drove her home, feeling her slight, hard body move against his and the curve of her spine as it fit into the palm he sunk toward her back. For a moment he had passed into an illusion of copulation in this very car as being a temporary and total culmination of what had been vested in him earlier but after a moment the girl tensed and spun in his grasp, her face darkened and she said, "I don't want to do it any more: I didn't think that you people were anything like *this*," and then she left him, forcing him to drive back ruminately all the blocks of his voyage and he knew that to the extent that he had gained a space program he had lost a babysitter. (Even now, in

retrospect, they seem to be very much the same thing.) When he came into the house, the youngest was screaming again and his wife was sitting in the center of this, her face perfectly white, looking at nothing, twisting her hands. At that moment he had another of those familiar emotional seizures composed of rage, pain and despair during which he asked for nothing but the strength to get past the next ten minutes after which things would be permitted to go on at whatever cost but he was afraid to look at his wife during this small, desperate prayer because he feared that if he did he would strangle her.

A BRIEF LECTURE

After some time the doors open and the major-general who is nominally their direct supervisor comes in, nods at them and motions them to his office where they sink, three abreast, into a large couch while he sits behind the desk and to indicate that this is an informal discussion, puts up his feet. "I'm going to caution you today," he says, "on the fact that you're a credit to the nation and a spearhead or vanguard of the fight to freedom and so on but what I'm supposed to lead up to is that there is supposed to be no cursing in the capsule during the trip." On the previous expedition, of course, the junior crew member had said *fuck* while describing a landmass and although the seventeen-second transmission lag should have left ample time to kill it, the engineer on the belt somehow let it go through and there was a small flurry in the press as well as a series of larger convulsions at the television networks with a subsequent promise by the agency that such as this would never happen again.

"You do understand," the general says, "that everything you people will say is being monitored: it's being picked up, everything that comes out of that ship becomes part of the public record for alltime and it's important to keep the scatology out. They can hold back transmissions, of course, but it wouldn't do us any good—would it?—to have gaps of time when they can all have the opportunity to wonder what you're saying. Now, you're grown men; all of us here are grown men and maybe we think that's asinine but it's the way it is going to be we cannot, after all, permit something like this to go on as a matter of course. One thing leads to another thing and you know what happens eventually; we'll be in the same goddamned soup that we were three years ago only worse because there are more witnesses all the time. I'm supposed to couch this in soft soap of course and tell you it's taken for granted you wouldn't want to think of cursing but I'm laying it right straight on the line. That's really all I have to say about this," and one of the younger men says "yes, I see what you're saying but how realistic is this? I mean, isn't it kind of not telling the truth, being dis-

honest to the experience, if we can't say it as it is?" and the general leans forward in a kindly posture and says "listen, this program is in big trouble, it's been in trouble from the start and it's only going to get worse because people, somehow, cannot believe that any of this relates to their ordinary lives if you follow what I'm saying and they don't think in terms of abstractions, only of the money so we've got to take a straight line. Cursing is just looking for public opinion trouble," and finally he wants to say something, he says, "but wouldn't that have as much to do with good public opinion as bad public opinion? I mean there must be a lot of people who wouldn't mind hearing the real stuff come over on transmission and besides that the kind of people who don't like cursing are exactly those people who don't want the program in the first place," and the general appears to think about this for a moment and then cocks his head at a different angle and says no, no, he doesn't want to hear about it any more, the point isn't relevant and in any event the word has come down from the high level, the administration itself very possibly, and so there's little that can be done other than to implement it. The astronaut finds that somehow this fills him with depression but it is not, after all, unexpected so he has nothing to say and after some time the general passes into a brief, routine reiteration of the log of the flight and then directs them toward the briefing.

SITTING HE DREAMS: DREAMING HE SITS

Listening to them, the unnecessary voices, he has a vivid apperception—one could almost call it prescience—of what his life will be like 30 or 40 years from now should he live that long; he will be sitting in a place very much like this, a small enclosure with dense walls and the murmur of men in the background and he will give his opinions on a full range of matters which he does not understand and then for a long time will listen to facts that do not interest him, simulate acts that do not involve him; a kind of perpetual dusk of the soul, in short. The fact is that he is sunken so deep into the mechanics of the program as it presently exists that he cannot conceive of a life apart from it, something which he himself does not grasp of course but which will have a large effect upon him as days go by.

WAS IT A SOB?

The day passes quickly enough after a time and he leaves promptly at 1700 hours; at the auxiliary gate this time the young guard knows him and salutes him with a wave but as he walks by he hears a sound; he does not look behind him to see what it is—he is not that kind of man—but as he walks rapidly to his car he is not sure whether the guard was laughing at

him or whether it was merely a vagrant sneeze that overcame the man and forced him into that high, choking sound. He prides himself of course upon not being so reflective or sensitive that such things might bother him but finds, driving home, that he is unable to quite dig this sound out of his consciousness. He does not understand what the guard was trying to express but in some way is convinced that like it or not it all has something to do with him.

QUICK FLASHBACK: MODERN WRITING

Leaving the compound he had said goodbye to his crewmates. "Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye," they all said to one another and to the astronaut it is little more than a prefiguration of what he will hear as the lunar module separates from command and begins its muddy descent into the lip of that satellite. "See you again," he had said but this only after he had long passed the guard who wept.

HE RETURNS HOME: MORE INTIMATIONS

He comes home to find himself in the middle of a serious disruption; his older son is telling his mother "no, no, no" in a loud voice and at least as loudly she is saying "yes, you will!"; before he can ascertain the difficulty, there is the sound of a slap in the hidden kitchen and then shrieks and his wife comes into the room, her face curdled, her features receding slowly in a gelatinous mask of grief and she says, "I simply can't stand him; I can't do a thing with him, he won't ever apologize, he won't ever cooperate" and slightly desperate himself the astronaut strides into the kitchen and seizes the boy (his younger is sitting in a high chair, eating pablum and industriously working again on a thumb) and says "you apologize to your mother or there'll be terrible trouble here, I'll beat the living shit out of you, I mean I'm entitled to a little peace and consideration in my own home," a little ashamed of his language, of course, but then, after all, this is not command post. The boy subsides from sobs to an exhausted contrition which the astronaut finds oddly moving and without a word walks in front of him to the living room, confronts his mother by the television set as some abysmal cartoon continues to squeak away and says "I apologize." "No you don't," she says, "no you don't mean a word of it so don't bother me." "Yes I do!" he says loudly and "no you don't!" she screams at him and "yes I do!" he bellows, beginning to cry and the astronaut would if he could hurl himself through the thick panes of his window for peace but there is none, none at all so he only sits down in a bewilderment of loss, not even sure what the thing is that he knows he will never have and watches the figures whirl on the screen, rockets with eyebrows blinking

their way through the starry night, animals with smiles riding the rockets high into the unperceived dark.

INTO THE SEAT OF MEMORY THEY LUNGE, WATCH THEM STAGGER

Much later, the children are in bed; his wife sits stricken on the couch, palms down and tells him that she cannot possibly think of sex this evening or even the morning for that matter, she is too tired, the tensions are too terrible. "You had it last night," she says, acknowledging that for the first time, "and maybe you forget but I don't and besides that who do you think has the real tensions here, who do you think is really putting up with the strains? not you, baby, not you; it's me." He reaches forward clumsily to touch her, to let her know somehow with his fingers that he understands and that she is still and always the girl he married but when his fingers meet her flesh it has the consistency of sweaty dough and in a vague fit of revulsion he eases her away from him, slowly, however, not to hurt her feelings. "I understand," he says, "I'm too tired myself, they take everything out of you, let me tell you the nonsense we heard today, you want to hear something, they told us that we couldn't even curse in orbit," and goes on to narrate all of that for the first time feeling that passionate and surreal horror that he knows he should have felt hours ago but now too late, too late for his wife's eyes are closing and he knows that before him —an old, cunning habit—she is miming the need for sleep so that she will not have to listen.

"Well," he says, "bed then."

IN DUE COURSE FACTORS GRIND ON TO THEIR ACCUSTOMED CONCLUSION

He watches them in the radar, a dot and a swing, fifty miles below, listening to the communications belt that has now excluded him. One of the men is telling a long, labored joke and mission control is listening with interest, encouraging him from time to time to continue. The joke is aseptic and somehow, to the astronaut, unbearable. He is not sure what he does next. All that he knows is that the module is streaming, streaming, all speed in the darkness, a feeling of tearing and lurching working at him and he imagines in this moment that he can see himself from a great distance, a gnome in a cube speeding at enormous velocity toward the earth. It was how he had always pictured it.

"You son of a bitch," he hears mission control say and then the man at the desk catches his lapse and gasps, "what's wrong? We've lost you. We have you heading earthward. Did you," and the man's voice is a high, heavy squeak against the walls, the dim lights, the three urinary receptacles that move uneasily on the floor, "did you fire the retro-rockets? *Did you?*"

"Yes," he says, "I am coming home." He tries to shut off mission with his left hand but the connections are one-way; they are, as the major warned them, constantly audited and the comptroller says, "what are you doing? What are you *doing?*"

"I'm going home," he says. "I've had it. I won't take it any more. You cannot program the universe you sons of bitches, there are things going on outside of all of this which you cannot envision let alone understand and there must be an end to this banality: do you understand that? It has got to end sometime. The universe is vast, man is small, you fucking sons of bitches."

"Crazy," he hears mission control say and he hears the word respectfully, enjoying its admirable precision, its principle of summation, its relevance to the situation at whole. It is the first relevant thing which mission control has ever said to him. "Oh you sons of bitches there are stars out there you haven't even discovered yet, how did you think you could do this to us? We're human, human do you understand that. Oh you bastards," the astronaut says and even for the degree of excitement invoked his voice is remarkably level, "let me tell you there must be an end to all of this and it better not be equivocal."

Below him, far below him, he can hear the voices of the two men; they are no longer telling jokes, they are no longer describing sites, they are only, in a painful high bleating not unreminiscent of the characters in the children's cartoon, begging the astronaut and mission to tell them what has happened to them. The astronaut flicks on the proper interconnection and says, "I figured I'd take a little jaunt home and then get you on the return trip. Oh you bastards. You bastards."

He will not get them, of course. The module, computer controlled, invariable to the last, will go all the way it has to go and stagger into the Pacific and there will be a recovery crew for him—because he is no less important than he ever was and maybe moreso—but for the moment, the admonition itself is enough. He folds his hands over his stomach, closes his eyes, feels the slow surge of surfaces coming over to him.

"It would all be a good deal if I could get fucked," he says then.

SEEN AS IN DISTANT FRIEZE LIKE BABYLON OR THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Much later than all of this the astronaut has a dream; he dreams that he is a character in a story which I am writing about him and as he opens his eyes to confirm what for him can only be a monumental nightmare he sees me staring at him, infinitely patient, infinitely wise, infinitely hurt, knowing everything that he will never understand and he says, closing his eyes, "but why are you writing all this? It isn't even the present let alone the future; it's the past, it all happened a long, long time ago, it's as far in the

past as Babylon or the Holy Roman Empire; don't think of me, think of Centaurus, think of the moons of Ariel. I'm only a damned anachronism: why bother, why bother?" and I say to him then putting the paper away and leaning back into my own couch of torment, "of course, of course, but don't you see, you're the future too: the future and the past intermingled and there's no understanding one without the other because we are all linked together; you, history, myself, the possibility, the two of us touchng for a moment in that simulation of motion known as narration and what else is there? In the long run everything is history," and the astronaut says "That's too much for me, I don't understand anything you're saying," and falls quickly back to sleep falling, to his muddled perception, into a long, long spiralling tunnel and at one end of this tunnel is the center of the earth and at the other is the moon and somewhere between the two he whirls in orbit endlessly, seeking, the fine tensors of his eyes guiding him unerringly to the other side of the planet.

Afterword:

About half of this story is mine, a fifth of it Harlan Ellison's and the remaining 30% is the property of the National Aeronautics & Space Agency which has taught us so well of the uses of metaphor in the past decade and whose future is apt to be at least as interesting as its past.

The trouble with most modern science fiction for me—make that 90% of it or upwards—is that its writers fail to tangle with the simple implications of their material and the material, due to the rather subterranean origins of the field, is often little more than the exploitation of issues for their easiest outcome. This will be changed, of course; science fiction is now unwillingly being compelled to grow up as our little lunatic asylum is being invaded by a group of attendants who, however clumsily, are taking us toward reality.

I am not really a science fiction writer—of my 20-odd published stories in the field I would say that only two or three are genre pieces and my novel, *The Empty People,* is sheer metaphor—but I know this field and care almost passionately for its possibilities and suspect that to the degree literature has any future as a viable force affecting (or afflicting) the lives of men it will be in the field of science fiction. The literary novel, with occasional brilliant one-shots excepted, is pretty well plumbed-out and category fiction, as we know it, is dying. I hope to stay around for a while to witness all the interesting things that should be happening within the next decade; with the exception of this minor morbid streak and chain-smoking, I have no bad habits.



As with "K. M. O'Donnell," "H. H. Hollis" is a pen-name. I've had dinner with Mr. Hollis and his incredible wife, and I can state without any reservations that he is the single most enthralling dinner conversationalist I've ever encountered. He is also a man for whom one cannot feel anything less than enormous respect. I'd dwell on that, but it's so rare a feeling to get off another human being, I'd probably be talking about something too esoteric for most people to relate to. Suffice it to say, though I know Hollis's real name, substituting me for the Magdeburg hemispheres and pulling me apart by Percherons could not pry from my lips the true identity of this noble creature.

Though he has not as yet written a novel, Hollis's short stories—"The Guerilla Trees," and "Sword Game," both of which were on the final Nebula ballot for 1968, most prominent among them—have drawn to him a perceptive coterie of readers: those anxious to be in on the ground floor, so to speak, of a building talent.

The 5700 worder he here offers is a lovely thing, and quite apart from the innovativeness of its subject matter, or the lucidity with which the basic premise is pursued, I'd like to draw your attention to the writing itself. For my money, Hollis is one of the nicest stylists working in our genre today. His style is a model for those of us who rail at the limitations of linear type, who seek with almost psychopathic ferocity to expand the parameters of communication set by mere words on paper. Some of us savage the language shamefully, some of us desert and go to films or other visual media, some of us become so trickily cute we are ripe candidates for Rod McKuen's little publishing company. And men like Hollis see clearly that writing with what Flaubert called "clean hands and composure" is the answer. His stories are direct while subtle, distinct while complex, painstakingly written while seeming fluidly easy. Like the Great Art of Picasso or Astaire or George C. Scott, it all *looks* idiotically easy: until one tries it and draws grafitti or falls on one's face or makes an ass of oneself in neighborhood theatrics. What I'm submitting here, is that Hollis is (if not already, then potentially) a Great Artist.

His story here will serve as my Exhibit A in contention of that position.

As for the man, what he tells us of himself reads as follows:

"H. H. Hollis is the pseudonym of an admiralty lawyer and professional Texian, with tenuous family connections to Davy Crockett and to Leander

Calvin Cunningham, one of the cutthroat heroes of the Battle of San Jacinto. Born in Dallas in 1921, Hollis variously attended Ben Milam Grammar School, North Dallas High School, Southern Methodist University (B.A. Econ.) and the University of Texas (L.L.B.). Hollis was one of the rebel student leaders who struck the University of Texas for three days in 1944 as part of a series of events leading up to censure of the school by the American Association of University Professors. He is proud of being permanent possessor of a celebrated medal awarded for essays proving the South won the Civil War, of having once been described as 'the most dangerous man in Texas' by a leader of the Neanderthal Democratic Party, and of having been one of the lawyers who tried the first successful suit to desegregate public facilities in Texas. Hollis married the girl of his dreams, and although none of their friends expected the union to last six months, it has continued for twenty-five glorious, fight-filled years. Writing science fiction is Hollis' avocation. He has written, in *The Forum* of the Science Fiction Writers of America, that he writes science fiction for fun. He has been selling professionally since 1965, and had two stories nominated for the Nebula in 1968, neither of which bore away the palm. One of them was selected to be published in the anthology featuring the winners. Hollis is six feet tall, blue eyed, walks with a cane, and has a touch of distinguished gray at the temples. Although not as flamboyant as some practitioners of the craft, H. H. Hollis is basically as eccentric as they come."



H. H. Hollis

STONED COUNSEL

Corky Craven's cheery whistle was cut off in mid-glissando as he turned into the ground floor entrance of the old Harris County Courthouse. A glass door sucked shut at his back, and the used-up air took him by the throat. When the reek of drugs, paroxysmal sweats, and human misery

surrounded him, Craven's first impulse, as always, was to retch. His crisp suit began to deliquesce. His fresh-scrubbed skin itched with grime. The glorious spring morning he had left behind might never have been.

Not for the first time, the lawyer muttered to himself, "There must be an easier way to earn a living." With a grimace, he felt the grief case in his inside jacket pocket, then in an excess of caution pulled it out and flipped it open to be sure it was packed with a full range of hallucinogens. Two weeks before, he had come without scopolamine and had to take a shot from his opponent's case. The memory shuddered in his head. "Bastard had that scop doctored with LSD, I know he did."

Craven stood stock still in the tiny entrance room of the courthouse, and took six deep breaths. It was better to immerse oneself in the atmosphere of the old brick and granite mausoleum at once. Otherwise the tailings of drugs and body products in the air might produce a real nausea, and nothing was more unprofessional than a vomiting lawyer.

In an elbow-width corridor on the second floor, Corky found an old janitor with his head stuck inside a hearing cubicle like Pooh's in the honey jar. He joggled the old man's elbow. "Come on, Peeping Tom, this cube's not posted for a public hearing."

Cackling, the swamper said, "They diden finish that Dingle deevorce yestiddy. Take a peek. That Judy Halfchick, she's dreaming the balls off them two lawyers for Ole Man Dingle."

Jerking the senile delinquent's arm, Craven closed the door, but not before he had a glimpse of the three bodies twitching and shuddering, and a quick sniff of the trial mix. His nose told him they had used sodium pentothal to get under quickly, one of the mushrooms to open up the facts, and . . . something, he sniffed again, professional interest aroused . . . one of the hard drugs to keep them going.

"Hlavcek," he said. "Judith Hlavcek's her name. Counsellor Hlavcek. Clear out of here. Too much air and noise and they'll snap up to consciousness, then the sixth floor will grant a mistrial, and you'll catch hell." Smiling, he went on down the narrow hall. He heard the door behind him open, the quick tap, tap of Judith Hlavcek's heels after him. Still smiling, he thought about the trial. How well he knew what they were doing! With a three-way hookup to the fitting in each left wrist, the mark of the trial lawyer now as wigs were once, they were exchanging enough blood to assure simultaneity and homogeneity in their altered perceptions, while in the triple sensory projector they were working through the differing versions of the same story that each had absorbed from his client's brain.

Corky shook his head at Lawyer Hlavcek's clicking heels behind him. Mistrial, for sure. Lucky if she got off with a reprimand from the Griev-

ance Committee for breaking off the hearing. All the trouble of another interview with the client. Laymen didn't stand up to drugs the way a hardened trial lawyer did, and if a client lost the thread of the story or improved it too much with his emotions, the last resort was direct ingestion of the facts. Clients had been known to refuse to give up those few cortical cells to be centrifuged and cultured and swallowed by the lawyer, and then Rule 212b came into operation. The client who refused physical preparation of the evidence to his lawyer was subject to the punitive orders of the Court all the way up to not being allowed to present his side of the case at all. Craven felt for Counsellor Hlavcek. Nothing was worse than to be wired up with a lawyer who had all the facts grooving in his cortex when you could fight back only with legal technicalities.

Judith Hlavcek's arms enwrapped him from behind. He stopped. Her soft face pressed the back of his jacket. He took a step, and she hooked one leg around his. He glanced over his shoulder, and knew, after one look at her tear-stained face, that he couldn't leave her. To hell (he thought) with the Hazlitt show cause order! He reached a hand to push open the door of a hearing cube and press the stud in the door that would light the Conference in Progress sign on the panel. He felt her hand press his shoulder. "Not that room." The voice was throaty.

Hansl Pahlevsky, his opponent in the Hazlitt case, squeezed his shoulder. Judith Hlavcek vanished, shaking her head, in the dark open door of the cubicle he had activated. Craven swallowed. "That's right. We're up on three today, aren't we? I forgot."

"Well, don't give me that 'forgot' stuff! You haven't forgot your first roach in law school."

Craven laughed. "That's right . . . we did smoke that crazy larkspur when we took legal bibliography. If it weren't for time stretching, do you suppose we could ever have got through that three-dimensional index to Corpus Juris Tertium?"

"Hell no, and I didn't get through it anyway. I got Swede Pi-Ching to drill the whole thing into my head on a packet of those morning glory seeds."

They turned into the hearing cubicle assigned to them for the Hazlitt show cause. "Why did we call him Swede? I never could figure that out."

"He claimed to have ingested the whole course of Real Property I *and* II on a hookah of Irish potato peelings. Ain't that some smoke?"

"Yeah. What ever happened to Swede?"

"He's on our embassy staff in Peking . . . trying to turn on the neo-Maoists with rectified opium. So far no smoke. Well, everybody he's al-

lowed to meet is very conservative. They get their highs on tobacco and tea."

Craven took the grief case from his pocket and opened it on the small table provided for counsel. "Ready?"

Pahlevsky leaned his chair onto its two rear legs. "There must be a better way to work out differences than this."

"Well, we could agree to try it by using live witnesses, the way they did in the dark ages."

Pahlevsky laughed with him. "Sure, sure. Or by combat. I could take you . . . well, with a broadsword."

"Yeah, probably; but how about under demerol?"

"Oh no," Pahlevsky said. "Sleep too soon."

"All right, we've got some facts to be hallucinated. Let's go. What's your poison?"

"Let's let the Court choose."

They punched the little console on the counsel table, and got back a standby judge's rap. Taking care to do it simultaneously, each punched his preference of a trial drug into the box, and at once the binding readout came: LSD 3.

"Damn," said Craven. "That's the second time this week. I'll be psychologically addicted to this dishwater pretty soon. Trade needles, Polly?"

"Hell no," Pahlevsky replied. "Bottles."

Silently they traded vials and each loaded a tiny syringe. They made the injections at the same time, and then busied themselves with the headpiece, in which their dreams would be projected. As the walls of the cube began to swim, each opened the fitting in his left wrist and attached the tube from the blood mixer. With a sigh, Craven lay back on the couch and made himself comfortable.

At once, a parade of voluptuous beauties began to sway through his forebrain. "How can Hansl do it?" he thought. "There must be something more to his life away from the courthouse than these girls. It's always girls." As his mild disapproval turned the colors of the girls muddy, Pahlevsky's reaction made them softer, rounder, more enticing. Craven began to project thin girls at his opponent, and in a moment, Pahlevsky's girls had grown so fat and Craven's so thin that they turned into rows of binary digits. For a moment, the marching 0's and 1's were meaningless. Then Corky realized they were repeating, in Morse, "Queerqueerqueerqueerqueer . . ."

He snorted. That deep muscular contraction was reflected in the fragmentation of the digital figures, and the hemisphere of projection turned

dark. It remained dark for a long time, surging with black on blackness, ignorant and irrelevant.

Craven half-dozed, turning over in the back of his head the industrial matrix of the quarrel. A poisonous effluent from an automatized factory seeped into a stream. The stream was muddy, algae-grown. He contracted his cortex, and the stream became clear and sparkling. Fish leaped over its surface, and it ran faster over the clean stone bottom.

Just as it was fixing on the projector's inner surface, a great billowing cloud of dirty water engulfed him, and with a shock, he realized he was surrounded by Hansl Pahlevsky's projection of the stream. Foul, ruined, dead, the stagnant water oozed as thick as oil into his ears and mouth. Just as it was rising to his nostrils, Craven reached back into his mind for the lovely creek he had dreamed; but it wouldn't come back into being. With a shrug of his cerebrum, he gave up on the idyllic and began to modify the picture in front of him toward reality. At least the sun could be shining. At least the water needn't stink. It supported a few carp and some turtles and, there! yes, a catfish. An older turtle appeared, sunning himself on a rock. All right, not a rock. An oil drum; but that turtle was twenty years old, at least. This wasn't dead water.

A bloated alligator gar floated belly up with agonizing slowness down the stream. Corky speeded up the current, and by a supreme effort of will, simultaneously turned the gar over, sent it swimming off, and supplied a grinning youth in ragged blue jeans who threw rocks at the gar as long as it was visible.

In another instant, the child had become a textbook cretin. His lower jaw vanished. Spittle drooled from his upper lip. He opened his fly and urinated clumsily into the stinking water.

Cravan left the child growing more apelike by the instant, and widened the focus of the dream. As the whole scene appeared, the source of the water's foulness came into the foreground. A leaping, bubbling stream of phenol with a steaming ribbon of spent sulphuric acid flowed out of a drain that plainly projected from a grim concrete box. There was no identification on the front of the building, but just over the drain, a flashing neon sign said, "Fairlawn Chemicals, Inc."

Cravan could feel Pahlevsky twitch physically in objection to that picture. The stones began to flow and the drain became smaller. In a sort of mental judo for which he was fast gaining a reputation in the legal community, Corky let the drain shrink to the size of a garden hose, then multiplied it in the time it took a neurone to discharge. There were ten hoses draining phenol into the creek; then there were twenty. When he had a hundred pipes pouring filth into the desperate water, he blinked his eyes

and spoke to Judith Hlavcek. "Just a minute longer. I've got him on the run now."

Unfortunately, she appeared almost immediately in the foreground of the projector, tossing beer cans and the garbage of a picnic into the stream.

Craven felt himself jerking and sunfishing on his couch. "Damn, damn," he thought, "you can't look off a minute." He half-sat up, felt Judith's cool fingers press him back on the couch, saw her blow a kiss from the projector, and disappear around the corner of the factory, heels twinkling and hair fluttering. He bore down on quick cuts from the stream as it had been, with birds flying and bees buzzing, to the immense drain bubbling with the grape-soda red of phenol and the stream as Pahlevsky's clients had made it, a turgid, ugly, running sore in the land, where the only buzzes were the flies and a few hardy mosquitoes.

Although the picture wavered and shook, it held; held; held. Exultation surged in Craven, and with that momentary relaxing, there suddenly appeared a noxious herd of little people, throwing excrement and garbage into the water. For a moment, he was bemused, then he had to laugh. Catching, with devilish wit, the attitudes and mannerisms of Craven's clients, Pahlevsky had reduced them in size to fit his opinion of their moral stature, and multiplied them into a mad band of gerbils, tearing and tossing newspaper until the pond beside which they were running had been turned into a sodden, pulpy marsh. Upstream, the drain flowed water as clear as gin, sparkling and plopping into the mess Craven's clients had created.

But the picture had the fragility of satire. It wavered and shattered as the two lawyers laughed. Craven's chuckles continued to distort the projection even as he pushed it back to his stated position. He dreamingly laid on the color of the effluent as he solidified Pahlevsky's factory and its fetid drain. For a moment, he enlarged the focus, so a mile or more of the stream could be seen, because he had a subtle feeling of wrongness just out of his vision.

Sure enough, when Craven lengthened the focus, it became apparent that Pahlevsky had been at work on the peripheral aspects of the picture. The stream was not moving, and from the slope of the land, it was clear that it had never been a free flowing creek. The water was stagnant, and the effluent from the works disappeared silently into an already dead stream that hardly moved. Downriver, the really nasty character of the open sewer was reinforced by a row of privies that hung at crazy angles over the water. Craven's chief client, an expression of contentment on his face, was just emerging from an unpainted outhouse, zipping up his pants.

Corky shifted the view up so the grade of the hill showed that the flatness through which Pahlevsky looped the creek was an illusion, that there was really a fall sufficient to make the stream flow gently, and as the brow of the hill appeared, the home of Craven's client came in view. It was a magnificent mansion, in the new concrete castle style so favored by Houston architects, and had obviously cost a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Since this projection was Craven's reprise of a factual news photograph, the house had the grainy, dot-by-dot look of a halftone; but its size and ostentation made the rickety outhouse a transparent fraud, and it vanished, along with its neighbors.

They were replaced by a smudged plumbing diagram. Pahlevsky brought up the engineer's identification number in the lower right-hand corner, and Corky saw they were looking at the actual map of the sewers adjacent to the polluted stream. Arrows of light began to dart in and out of the diagram, pointing leaks, surface traps, inefficient sewage treatment plants, and other points from which flowage of pollutants into the stream occurred.

Despite every effort of will Craven could make, his own map of the same section of the city's sewerage instantly flashed over Pahlevsky's. There was a ninety percent congruence between the two, and the projector screen flashed gold as an overlay of transparent letters from the computer monitoring the trial read out, "Stipulated." It was the first break in the surge of contention and assertion, and from that moment on would be a steady buoy around which the dreams of counsel, swirl how they might, must still flow.

Craven's back arched in a reflex he could not control, as he fought to wrest the projection back to the chemical plant. He rolled onto his side, drew up his knees and wrapped his arms around them, assuming the posture in which, from childhood, he had experienced the most vivid dreams in his real life. Pouring with sweat, he felt his eyeballs flicking back and forth and knew his brain was gathering itself for a powerful move in the legal struggle.

Another minute passed before his rapid eye movement became effective, and then he irresistibly peeled back the stone wall of the plant, accomplishing by imaginative force what he had been denied in pretrial preparation, a view of the actual workings of the inside. The ruling of the ancillary judge before whom the motion had been heard was that the plant contained trade secrets, unpatentable but valuable, which could not be revealed by inspection without working a damage on the chemical company greater than the inconvenience of hampering Craven's trial preparation.

After that motion had been acted upon, Craven had managed to locate a still operator discharged two years before by Pahlevsky's corporation, who disgorged a good deal of information. Since he was not a party to the suit, however, Corky had to take it all in verbally. A witness could not be submitted to the drugs without his consent, and the operator had been a Jehovah's Witness, with all that sect's ineradicable bias against drugs and mind alteration.

Necessarily, then, the projection Craven could achieve of the internal structure of the plant was gray, black in some areas where information was void, distorted, and shot with the wavering light of incompletion. He was still able to zero in on the massive exchanger which completed the essential operation of the plant and flowed off phenol as a by-product. From the point at which this occurred, Corky projected a simple drain without even a trap for tools and solid waste, and with its outflow directly above the surface of the stream. At that point, real information took over, and the knife edge clarity of the projection made Craven feel that he could afford to gamble on sucking new information out of Pahlevsky's mind. Eyes zipping from one side of his closed lids to the other, Craven froze the picture of the emerging drain and made the cortical squeeze that called forth the corresponding picture from Pahlevsky's brain. Even as the golden glow faded, leaving the overprint, "Stipulated," visible, Craven convulsed himself, feeling the net of his whole nervous system contract around the mental suction with which he reached for Pahlevsky's picture of the inside of the plant. With wrenching suddenness, it flowed onto the screen.

The lawyer realized the proportions he had projected were wrong, because his informant had not told him of a great, hulking complex of instrumentation and piping which occupied fully one third of the floor space. He writhed in a sine wave which terminated in a frightening click at the lumbosacral junction of his spine, absorbing the mass of stills and connections to make the pictures congruent, and was rewarded with a flash of gold and the stipulation overprint that meant he could move on to try to extract agreement from Pahlevsky on the nature of the operation.

The mind bruises and strains of making the three congruences caused both the lawyers to lie inert on their couches, flaccid puddles of flesh, while their brains drew on the web of nerves and its meaty envelope for the energy with which to go on. Inside the projector, Pahlevsky appeared, crouched on his knees, eyes covered with his hands. It was the only respite from the drugdreams: refusal to see.

For a little while, the projector flowed with neutral colors, clouds, and undifferentiated flashes from random energy accumulations along the two neuronic nets. In a slow, rhythmic repetition of patterns of energy flashes,

Judith Hlavcek's face took shape, lips in Cupid's bow, eyes full forward and wide, just the way she always looked before a kiss.

Craven felt her hand on his chest, her other hand raising the hood part way. She bent gently close to him. "Polly's on his ass. Leave him snoring for a minute. You need a breather yourself."

She sat on her heels beside his couch, massaging his cheeks. They were suffused with blood, as always when the brain was sucking every resource of the body into the dream struggle. "Listen, I'm moving Sunday, remember? Can you borrow that pickup and be there by seven? I'll give you breakfast."

With the one eye still under the hood, he saw himself sliding from a double bed into a snug bedroom where Judy, diaphanously clad, beckoned in the doorway with a skillet holding two perfectly fried eggs. "All right. I can't talk now. We're right at the major node of this hearing. I'll win it or lose it in the next dream."

Smiling, he slid back under the headset and began modifying the neurone flashes into a Morse "V" . . . "Victory, Victory, Victory," he flashed, and then suddenly brought himself up into view, right hand raised with two fingers in the Peace sign. His reply was a Peter Max colored representation of the chemical plant, somehow wearing Hansl Pahlevsky's face and body attitude. From every orifice of the factory-Pahlevsky incense poured, and the lawyer unzipped his chest to reveal a shining stainless steel precipitation tower and a circle of stainless tanks. It became clear that the tower was integral to the production process and the tanks were storing an effluent which had been made marginally profitable by increasing the volume of operations. A schematic diagram imposed itself, and it was apparent that the water used in the process was mostly recycled. What little waste there was ran off from a small drain which was enlarged so Craven could see the monitoring gauges that tested it. The water was certainly not crystal clear, but neither did it smoke and steam like Saruman's sewer.

Corky produced an overlay, "When?"

Suddenly he heard the music which Pahlevsky was quietly piping in behind this idyllic scene. It was the old prophetic song, "In the Year 2525." Craven's repulsion at this effectively indefinite postponement of antipollution equipment was so total that he actually spoke, and earned a reprimand from the judge upstairs, which slowly silhouetted itself in the projector. "'Shit no!' is not a legal objection. Objections must be projected, not spoken."

He nearly sat up, but another gross breach of courtroom etiquette after the first might prejudice his clients completely out of the case. With an ef-

fort, he lay rigidly outspread on his couch and projected the current year's anthem, "Now! Wow! The Word Is Now!" Corky did not subscribe to the religious attitude embodied in the song, but the lyric fitted his legal position.

He could hear Pahlevsky squirming on the other couch, and there erupted on the projector's curved inner face a mad collage of the great and near-great figures of American Industrial History. Their boots crunched forests, their mouths engulfed rivers, and their nostrils drank the air in storm-sized masses; but on their shoulders and backs rose a dizzying, growing pyramid of consumers, from whose throats burst a paean of praise. Every second a vote was conducted on the life of a valley, the color of a river, or the smell of somebody's air, and production always won. Somehow, though the face of the land changed, the growing hordes following after the industrialists were accommodated. The glow that surrounded all this grew ever brighter, and out in front strode Uncle Sam, his snowy whiskers spread to the breeze, a smile of common sense and compassion illuminating his apple cheeks and twinkling eyes.

Craven contented himself with one comment. In the upper left corner of the picture he brought up Chairman Pao, not quite concealing a smile with his hand as he contemplated America burying itself in its own garbage. By a convulsive contraction of his neural net, Corky cleared the projector and wiped its color to a neutral gray. Carefully, but powerfully, he called up the congruences already of record. He had to admit the public sewer leakage, but it was minimal beside the consequences of the untrapped, unfiltered drain running the effluent from the complex of stills and cracking towers which Craven had pried out of Pahlevsky's brain. Relentlessly, he bore down on that total picture, calling up portions of it to repeat for emphasis, until Pahlevsky resignedly began to overprint, "So? So? So? So?"

Craven left the projector dripping with phenol and began to gather a picture of an undefiled stream, neither poisoned nor heated beyond the tolerance of fish, when he saw Pahlevsky erecting a projection of a plant improved by way of a large settling pond next to it. The effluent was flowing into the sludge pit, and the water which trickled through a small spillway into the natural stream was almost clear. Question marks hovered in a ribbon over the picture.

Brutally, Craven toppled a child into the settling pond. Even as its screams gurgled away, a high plank fence went up, painted so as to make it a work of art. Without hesitation, Corky sent resolute neighborhood children swarming over the fence and into the pool. Some staggered out blinded, some floated mutely on the surface, some were only scarred and

frightened, but none climbed whole back over the fence. With sickening rapidity, the attorney played the record of an actual occurrence the year before, when a child had slid into the water a few meters downstream from the offensive drain. The little girl's accusing face filled the screen, filth streaming from her hair, one eye gleaming white with its destroyed sight.

Pahlevsky failed to overcome that image with the stacks of greenbacks he piled up to indicate the amount the company had paid, for Craven spread the picture in time to show that the money had been ordered to be paid only after a bitter trial . . . and a query to the computer upstairs indicated that the half-blinded child's case was still on appeal.

Now the lawyer gathered himself for a major clash. Deep in his central nervous system, primitive responses came slowly to the boil. On the projector screen, he played a diversion, the last annual meeting of the Sierra Club in Houston, at which a venerable white-haired conservationist talked with affection of that portion of the Big Thicket which had been saved from destruction. At one point in his speech, the old man lowered a screen and turning back to the auditorium, called for, "The first slide, please."

With total concentration, Craven projected on that screen a report he knew existed, but to which he had been denied access. It was a one-page outline of a low-profit marketing plan for the liquid effluent from the plant. The key, he knew, was that a plastics plant ten blocks away could utilize, almost unconverted, what Pahlevsky's people were throwing away. A pipeline would be needed for the most economical transportation of the material, and some filtering would have to be done before the slurry went into the line. The typewritten lines flowed and jumped in half-guessed projection.

Pahlevsky resisted with desperate concentration. Repeatedly a gray cloak blurred the report, skeleton-printing it with the cabalistic words, "Management Decision." Sometimes it read, "Management Responsibility."

Craven understood the point. Adding an automatic takeoff cycle to a production plan doesn't mean that it becomes economically functional. Somebody has to worry about it, somebody has to market the product, somebody has to collect for its sales, and somebody has to explain to stockholders why it doesn't fit the overall graph of their corporation's profits. But the cost of doing something right is never a legal defense to the necessity of doing it, unless the cost is economically destructive . . . and not then, if society wills that it be done. Craven kept the clamp on, and was rewarded at last with the emerging picture of the actual report which he was pulling, molecule by molecule, out of the RNA banks of Pahlevsky's brain.

There was a blinding flash of white, and when Craven could see again, Pahlevsky lay before him, naked, legs spread, scrotum open to a kick. The lawyer reeled; he was facing the classic posture of defenselessness. As the wolf defeated exposes his throat to trigger the act of mercy from a stronger wolf, Pahlevsky was exposing himself to the most punishing blow a man can absorb. He had stripped the last facade of mere objective reality from the trial, and flung on the screen the psychological crux at which the two attorneys had arrived. Craven, as a man, could not deliver the kick . . . not knowingly; but to be a professional means to do things no layman can. Craven blinked his eyes and popped his cerebral hemispheres. When he looked again, instead of Hansl Pahlevsky, Judith Hlavcek lay in the same posture. From her, it did not invite a kick.

Stumbling in the effort to peel off his jockey shorts, Craven flung himself on the woman. He was rewarded with a long scream of agony from Pahlevsky, and a great golden flash which printed on the report in see-through letters, "Defendant will install filters and organize transport, making the best contract it can with Nallard Plastics or other buyer of its effluent. After today, defendant's drain is not to be used for any runoff more polluted than rainwater. Counsel will present appropriate order."

Jerking the hood from his head, Craven sat up. With trembling hands, he unscrewed the blood mixer from his wrist fitting. Still groggy with effort, he stumbled to the toilet and basin in the corner. After relieving himself, he splashed water on his face. As usual, both shoes had been kicked off in the course of the hearing. Every stitch of his clothing was soaked with a sour sweat. The last person he wanted to face was Judith Hlavcek when she came in the door. "Don't, don't," he said, as her arms slid around him. "You don't know." He suddenly remembered the ghastly maneuver at the end of the trial, and stiffened.

"I know. I know. Whatever it is, I know it. Don't worry, funny man." She kissed his ear and slid out the door as Pahlevsky staggered off the couch, hand over mouth.

After throwing up, Pahlevsky accepted a wetted towel from Craven, and said, "*You* won. *You* draw the order." He lurched to his feet and picked up his grief case from the counsel table. "Next week we're in that three-cornered fight with Charley Kroger. Back to back?"

"Damn right. You hold him and I'll hit him."

"We'll tear both his arms off. So long." Pahlevsky dragged his soggy neckcloth into a presentable knot and went out the door of the hearing cube.

The victorious lawyer lingered for a moment, casting his mind back with mingled shame and pleasure to the memory of Judith Hlavcek on the

ground. With a start, he realized that Pahlevsky had projected himself on a bed of oyster shells. Craven shuddered at the thought of the sharp shells digging into Judy's back, put his hat on his head, and went out in the hall. Judith Hlavcek was passing by. Her face gave him a smile that managed to be both inviting and defiant. "Counsellor," he said. "How do. Who you been clawing up?"

"Just a routine bucket of blood today. And you?" She twisted her beads.

"Hansl Pahlevsky and I had it. Real rugged little dreamer, that one."

"You won. I can tell. You always talk sweet about lawyers you've defeated."

He stood stock still. She had observed him closely enough to read factual truth from his verbal smokescreens! "Oh—oh yes. Justice triumphed."

They smiled together at the old chestnut. He grimaced with effort, swallowed, and said, "I like you in that suit."

"Thank you." She looked at him with a level stare. Obviously, she was replying to the idea, rather than the statement, for her costume was just another version of the working clothes she wore every day. Serviceability, rather than looks, is required of trial lawyers' clothes. "Will I see you tomorrow, or do you have a day off?"

"Oh, no rest for the weary. I'll be here . . . see you then."

"See you."

He took the elevator to the clerk's floor to dictate the order in Hazlitt. When Craven left the front door of the old courthouse, passing by the bible open in its glass-topped stele, he saw her at the corner, under the live-oak trees. Prudently, as becomes a counsellor at law, she held a folded newspaper above her head to foil the pigeons who were settling to roost in the branches. In the mellow afternoon light, the skin of her buttocks rolled and tumbled under the glistening column of her back.

With sudden resolve, Corky cried, "Hey Jude! Wait up!" Hat straight on his head, shoes in his left hand, clothes draped over his right arm, he began to run after her.

Afterword:

A story has an independent life of its own, like a statue or a painting. It may "mean" something different, something more or less than its writer intended or expected. That is why I do not explain my stories. If they are ambiguous or polemic, that may or may not be what I had in mind. I keep all the drafts, and if it ever really becomes important (an event I find both amusing and impossible to conceive), someone can squeeze a Ph.D. dis-

scrtation out of the contradictory versions the stories went through on their way to sale. Writing is a craft to me, and craftsmen customarily enjoy what they do. I don't suffer when I write. Producing briefs and pleadings, of which I have written ten billion words, give or take a million, has freed me of inhibitions. I know perfectly well that if an idea exists, it can be expressed.

I am deeply interested in the drug culture: not just marijuana smokers, acid droppers and speed freaks, but what might be called the emancipated middle class, who save up their highs and lows by using meprobomates, bromides, nonnarcotic sleeping tablets, and even aspirin (in sufficient quantities, a pretty good tranquilizer) only to find that they can't recover the euphoria on weekends or on vacations, neither with psychic energizers nor with alcohol. Alcohol was the forbidden goody of my generation, and I have mystical feelings about the stuff. I don't see much evidence that other drugs are any more *finally* liberating than Scotch, Tequila, or Sneaky Pete, a party punch we used to make at the U of T by soaking orange peels and raisins in grain alcohol for two days before the festivities; but nothing can pervade our general culture with fear and longing as drugs do today without having something to teach us. I'm not through writing about either drugs or the law.

MONITORED DREAMS AND STRATEGIC CREMATIONS:

Rules have been broken for Bernard Wolfe, and frankly, screw the rules. Talk about coups! Can you dig that this book contains twenty-four thousand, eight hundred words of brand-new, never-before-published, never-seen-by-the-eyes-of-mortal-men fiction by Bernard Wolfe, one of the incredible legends-in-his-own-time of Our Times? Can you perceive the magic of that? If you can't, cup your hand around your ear and listen to the West, and you'll hear me going hallooooo among the Sequoias.

I wanted Wolfe in *Dangerous Visions* and it just didn't work out. But when I knew there would be a second volume, I assaulted his privacy and badgered and cajoled, and stole these two remarkable stories—"The Bisquit Position" and "The Girl With Rapid Eye-Movements"—away from *Playboy* and other flush periodicals that pay Wolfe three grand per story, and they are here because they were so ordained for publication by a Gracious God who takes time off from being (as Mark Twain called him) "a malign thug" every once in a million years.

Bernard Wolfe edged briefly into the sf field back in 1951 with his *Galaxy* novelette, "Self Portrait," and with rare good sense (like Vonnegut, years later) scampered for dear life and a reputation in "the Mainstream."

Yet despite Bernie's fleetness of foot, the rapid eye-movements of perceptive readers caught the slamming of the door and, having been dazzled by "Self Portrait," they began asking, "Who the hell was *that*?" They found out in 1952 when Bernie's first novel, *Limbo,* was published by Random House; and for the first time insular fans who had had to put up with dilettantes like Herman Wouk sliding into the genre to proffer insipid semi-sf works like *The Lomokome Papers,* had a mainstreamer they could revere. Preceding by almost twenty years "straight writers" like Hersey, Drury, Ira Levin, Fowles, Knebel, Burdick, Henry Sutton, Michael Crichton and a host of others who've found riches in the sf/fantasy idiom, Bernard Wolfe had written a stunning, long novel of a future society in purest sf terms, so filled with original ideas and the wonders of extrapolation that not even the most snobbish sf fan could put it down.

They did not know that six years earlier, in 1946, Bernard Wolfe had done a brilliant "autobiography" with jazz great Mezz Mezzrow, called *Really the Blues.* Nor did they suspect that in the years to come he would write the definitive novel about Broadway after dark, *The Late Risers,* or a stylistically fresh and intellectually demanding novel about the assassina-

tion of Trotsky in Mexico, *The Great Prince Died,* or that he would become one of the finest practitioners of the long short story with his collections *Come On Out, Daddy* and *Move Up, Dress Up, Drink Up, Burn Up.* All they knew was that he had written one novel and one novelette in their little arena, and he was sensational.

In point of fact, the things science fiction fans never knew about Bernard Wolfe would fill several volumes, considerably more interesting than many sf novels. Of all the wild and memorable human beings who've written sf, Bernard Wolfe is surely one of the most incredible. Every writer worth his pencil case can slap on the dust wrapper of a book that he's been "a short order cook, cab driver, tuna fisherman, day laborer, amateur photographer, horse trainer, dynamometer operator" or any one of a thousand other nitwit jobs that indicate the writer couldn't hold a position very long.

But how many writers can boast that they were personal bodyguards for Leon Trotsky prior to his assassination (or prove how good they were *at* the job by the fact that it wasn't till they *left* the position that the killing took place)? How many have been Night City Editor of Paramount Newsreels? How many have been war correspondents for *Popular Science* and Fawcett Publications, specializing in technical and scientific reporting? How many have been editor of *Mechanix Illustrated?* How many have appeared in *The American Mercury, Commentary, Les Temps Modernes* (the French Existentialist journal), *Pageant, True* and, with such alarming regularity, *Playboy?* How many have worked in collaboration with Tony Curtis and Hugh Hefner on a film titled *Playboy* (and finally, after months of hasseling and *tsuriss,* thrown it up as a bad idea, conceived by madmen, programmed to self-destruct, impossible to bring to rational fruition)? How many were actually Billy Rose's ghostwriter for that famous Broadway gossip column? How many writers faced the Depression by learning to write and composing (at one point with an assist from Henry Miller) eleven pornographic novels in eleven months? How many have ever had the *San Francisco Chronicle* hysterically grope for a pigeonhole to their style and finally come up with, ". . . Wolfe writes in a mixture of the styles of Joyce and Runyon . . ."?

What I'm trying to encapsulate with these mere words is the absolute, utter charismatic *hipness* of Bernie Wolfe, a man who knows more about everything there is to know about than any other writer I've ever met. What I'm trying to say is that his presence in this book elevates it x number of notches, even as his presence at a dinner party elevates the scene to the level of a special occasion.

Born in New Haven, Connecticut, Bernard Wolfe graduated from Yale in 1935 with a B.A. in Psychology and after a year in Yale's graduate school with an eye toward becoming a psychoanalyst, cut out and (not

necessarily in this order) acted as liaison man between the Trotsky household and the commission set up by John Dewey and others to investigate the Moscow Trials, spent two years in the Merchant Marine, taught at Bryn Mawr, learned to play a vicious game of tennis, did some time in Cuba where he picked up a taste for thick (he says graceful), nasty-smelling (he says delicious), evil-looking (he says exquisite) cigars, which he can no longer obtain, due to the embargo. (This does not prevent him from constantly impaling his face with substitutes, equally as offensive to onlookers.)

Today he lives and works in the Santa Monica Mountains, overlooking West Hollywood. He lectures at UCLA, writes fiction (his latest project, working-titled *Go to the People,* is a 1700 page novel based on/focused on the Delano grape workers and their heroic *huelga*).

What he has to say for himself he says with uncommon cleverness in the Afterword to these two stories.

And with *two* stories in a book that was conceived to contain no more than *one* offering by any single writer, Wolfe broke the rules, and thereby allowed the rules to be broken for the *other* Wolfe (Gene, that is; sorry Thomas, sorry, Tom) and for James Sallis. But with stories as good as these, damn the rules.

For those purists who will say I've stretched the concept "dangerous visions" to include these Wolfepics, contending they aren't strictly—by the rules—sf . . . well . . .

Damn the rules, here's Bernie Wolfe!



Bernard Wolfe

MONITORED DREAMS AND STRATEGIC CREMATIONS

1: Bisquit Position

Napalm aside, he took to the idea of a month in California: he could rent a house. In a valley the size of Tom Thumb's nostril, east of Coldwater, close to Mulholland, he found a good enough cottage, redwood ceilings, rock-coped pool, sauna, terraced hillside. Place for the nerves to go loose. After a day of interviews and setting up sequences with the camera crew he could swim, take softening steam, get in a terrycloth robe to barbeque an aged T-bone or oversize lamb chops in the patio, on the hibachi. He was in holiday mood. It was a holiday when he could stay clear of restaurants and hotels, and nearby shooting wars.

Then this night he turned into his rippled tarmac lane to find the cul-de-sac overrun. Cars crowded the street on both sides to the turnabout. Attendants in red jackets, the usual college students, flashed up and down, playing musical chairs with the cars, musical cars. Hard-rock guitars jigged the air: the valley's bowl was a loudspeaker. Burble of energized voices.

There was one property of estate grandness around here, a gabled English Country structure seen in patches through stands of white birch, looking over lawns, balustraded walks, tennis courts. This place, no big thing by Beverly Hills standards but notable on an unshowy street, was diagonally across from Blake's; the party going on there was well-attended by somebodies. An indicative number of the cars bumper to bumper along the road were Cads, Lincolns, Rollses, Bentleys.

Taking the steps to his hillside perch, not especially interested in the thought he was entertaining about the fourth estate's dearth of estates, Blake was having nonadhesive feelings about coming home to the buzzing insides of a verdant loudspeaker. He felt invaded. But the invasion was so spilling, so area-wide, it sucked up his own house and head, recruiting him into the commotion, adding him to the guest list.

The sense of simultaneous violation and almost welcome suction got stronger when he reached the porch and found a woman sitting there in one of the wicker chairs. She was in a floor-length velvet gown of royal purple rifted up both sides to the upper thighs. Her face had a tennis pleasantness, her tall body was thin, not bony, so thin in the bone as to require only token fleshing to soften the skeleton's edges. This was his first impression, that she was fine of face, under a fat spiral of red-blond hair, over an elongated body whose memorable dimension was the vertical. The mesh-held thigh exposed in one of the gown's slits looked lank enough to be circled by two unexerting hands but worth a taking hold. Her green eyes were prowlers, dodged to both sides even as they looked with green insistence at and over you. She could not be much past 30.

"Hello, I'm trespassing," she said. Her voice, pitched low, had reverberances which lengthened the words. Was somewhat fogged aside from that.

"Long as you don't lie. I hate a trespasser who says he's a telephone lineman."

"I'll line all your phones, with zebra skin, if you let me stay a minute."

"Two, if you want." He took the other chair. "Don't you like parties?"

"Hate them. Especially ones I give. As hostess I get to feeling more the hostage. Over 200 people across the street drinking our champagne."

"You don't like people."

"I don't know what to do with just two or three. Hundreds make me a sprinter."

"There's a thing you can do with people in any numbers, say goodbye. Or don't invite them in the first place."

"My husband invites them. He's got a bigger supply of hellos than goodbyes. I mean, he's gregarious. Family joke. That's his name, Greg. Another family joke is, I call our place Greg Areas."

She was probably a little drunk, containing it with styled humor.

"Why don't you and your husband have a division of labor? He greets, you send them on their way."

"My trouble is," she said unresponsively, "I'm capable of just so many smiles per day. With a crowd, my quota of smiles gets used up the first 10 minutes, then I'm left with an unfunctional face."

"I'd say your face was functional."

"Oh, keeps teeth from hanging out, provides setting for the eyes, yes. But it's not going to smile any more tonight. Your face is very functional."

"Keeps siroccos out. My ears from merging."

"I see it on the news. You report wars from various places. Vietnam. Chasing Che in Bolivia."

"Yes, we're not short on wars."

"Those are the big parties, crowds invited, nobody sends them on their way. Last time I saw you you were covering, let's see, the Sinai campaign."

"When it wasn't covering me. That's a joke. They have sandstorms in the desert, not all of Jewish origin."

"You covering a war in Los Angeles?"

"The war against war, most of its general staff's out here. Doing a special report, documentary, on anti-Vietnam moves, on campuses especially."

"Some fight war while the rest fight wars. We can use that division of labor. I'd better be getting back to my own wars. Hear the enemy popping more champagne corks. Good documenting, Mr. Arborow. Many thanks for the privileged sanctuary of your porch."

Two days later he saw her again. Low-gearing to his driveway, he discovered her putting something in his mailbox. There was an eerily beautiful dog erupting around her feet, a female Siberian husky with medieval mummer's mask, eyes of glacial blue in the slant of the world's first dynasties, total grin.

"Hello there," the woman said. "I wasn't stealing your mail, I was adding to it." She retrieved her envelope and handed it to Blake. "It's an invitation to come over and drink some booze those people forgot to drink the other day."

The blatantly gorgeous dog kept jumping at her hands as at lovely bones, she kept saying, "Down, Bisk," and bucking the animal away.

"For somebody who doesn't like parties you give a lot," Blake said as he got out of his car.

"This isn't a party, just some people for drinks. When Greg heard who our distinguished neighbor was he said you had to come over and have a snort, down, Bisk. You may not be aware the word snort is still used in some circles, down, Bisk."

"Wives don't altogether approve of their husbands in some circles."

"In some circles wives get the feeling they're not engaged in a marriage but covering a war. When's the last time you approved of a war you covered? Not Vietnam, you never quite kept your lips from curling all the time you reported from there. Bisk, damn you, down, I said."

"Why's the dog named Bisk?"

"Short for b,i,s,q,u,i,t. You want to see something whorish and altogether delightful? Call her by name, then ask if she wants one of those things I spelled."

Blake leaned close to the dog, now sitting as on a throne, smiling as at a circus, and said, "Good girl, Bisk, want a bisquit?"

Bisk went out of her mind. Mouth exploded with sounds of highest

romp. Tail beat a tattoo of paternosters on the tar, the pup form of rosary. Tongue came out to lavish love up the full length of Blake's jaw. Then she whipped over on her back and lay still, front paws bent and held together in the beg position, back legs similarly crooked but spread, face a panorama of flooded happiness. Her Arctic blue eyes were full on Blake as she made deep, prolonged throat vowels of agony and expectancy into his face. Blake rubbed her teat-lined belly, her soft, soft neck, feeling the surge of urgent vowels inside.

"Isn't she the neighborhood tart, isn't she unbelievable," Lady of the Manor said.

Blake thought of the woman this way. The only other designation he could think of was, Master Greg's Mistress, Mum of Greg Areas.

"Is it the neighborhood style?" he said, stroking the fable-faced animal's tumulted chest above the spread legs.

"Oh, it's a mixed neighborhood, Mr. Arborow, some tarts, some cream-puffs. Try to make it on Friday, won't you? The Gibsons will be dry and I can promise the small talk'll be practically microscopic. A war correspondent should be made aware that there are more wars to cover than are dreamed of in his network's philosophy. Come on, Bisk, quit plying your trade, we're going home."

The note said simply, *We're having some people for drinks this Friday at five. Is it possible you can come? We would be delighted. I give you my categorical guarantee that nobody will ask if you've seen any interesting wars lately. Do come.*

Blake was feeling broken into, potently sucked at. Mum of the Manse, Greg's Lady Lean, was named Mari Selander.

It was a manse, all right. Bucking for the apprentice-castle rating. Walls of the roomy vestibule and king-size salon were inundated with hunt and turf prints, engravings honoring marlin on the leap, woodcuts of the better known whaling ships, oils of Nantucket weltering under a nor'easter, antique wooden eagles in emblematic profile, crossed dueling pistols and sabers.

The men talking in corners over vermouthed Bombay gins had the wind-toned faces of sportsmen, the aroma of leather chairs and massages. Their wives, looking worked-over by expensive hands, in clothes built around their specifics, chatted about Acapulco and Mrs. Reagan's decorating tastes.

Greg Selander was doggedly, programmatically, the boy, under a crew-cut of iron filings. His halfback face was essentially what it had been in its

third year at Princeton except for signs of going fluid at the jowls, the drinker's drip of flesh.

Mari Selander, again in velvet, cinched this time to a miraculous gaunting at the waist and falling inches short of the knee, again seemed somewhat vagued. Blake took the measure of those yearling legs that seemed to go on forever. He considered how they might be in full, urging use.

Greg Selander immediately had Blake in a gaming alcove, explaining that in spite of his appearance of the varsity athlete he'd played no football at Princeton, preferring squash and for a time shot-putting. He might have gone out for lacrosse but it took too much time, besides, lacrosse players had collisions and bad spills.

"Secret's out," Mari Selander came close to say. "You've let Mr. Arborow know he's in a den of nonconformists."

"I don't care what you look like, your looks can't dictate your action and direction," Greg Selander said. "That's the blight today, outer direction, government taking over your breathing and chewing."

Blake considered what a big man going in for football might have to do with excessive government, went back to Mari Selander's legs.

"Greg reads Reisman after his Dow and before his Jones," Mari Selander said. "Whatever takes dim view of the outside, he's for. Ask him why he takes a dim view of everything on the far side of his skin."

"Dark out there," Greg Selander said. "Dim's the one view you can take."

"That's where the masses are, out there somewhere," Mari Selander said. "They sense how many of your dark looks are meant for them. They don't elect dim viewers to office, as Barry found out."

"I was explaining why I never went in for body-contact sports, Mari," Greg Selander said. "Goldwater's a different subject."

"What's your objection to contact sports?" Blake said, looking at the wife's legs.

"Taking the dimmest view of the human race, you'd want as little contact with its units as possible," Mari Selander said. "That's why the right-of-rights play so much squash, put so many shots."

"Mari talks lefty to shake me up," Greg Selander said. "Likes to play devil's advocate."

"God and Barry have all the high-priced attorneys they need," Mari Selander said. "The devil could use a few more legal minds."

"It wasn't God incited the riots out to UCLA today," Greg Selander said. "Goldwater wasn't anywhere on the scene."

"It's because God wasn't on the scene, just the recruiter for Taybott Chemicals trying to recruit students to make napalm, that's why they had

the riot," Mari Selander said. "The recruiter might as well have been Barry, Barry's a friend of napalm. Were you at UCLA this afternoon, Mr. Arborow?"

"Yes, with our cameramen," Blake said.

"What did you think of those kids chasing the Taybott man up on the roof and throwing stinkbombs at him?" Greg Selander said.

"My job's not to assess facts so much as get them."

"But you must have had some thoughts. Impressions, let's say."

"Well, I thought the students' running was good and their aim fair, though spotty. I got the impression they're not opposed to body-contact games. If they'd gotten their hands on the man they might have welcomed the contact, and tried to widen it."

"I approve of you, I'd like to widen the contact, Mr. Arborow," Mari Selander said, linking her arm with Blake's. "How would it be if we sat?"

They took places with the other guests in the conversational arc before the vaulting fireplace. A fire big enough to roast a family of pigs whole was blooming in the baronial pit. When Greg Selander positioned himself to the left, Mari Selander made for the right, to balance on an ottoman no distance at all from Blake's knees. Greg Selander's reaction to his wife's scrupulous avoidance, as to her earlier baiting, seemed to be, as nearly as Blake could give it a name, scrupulous nonreaction.

Blake looked for a conversational move toward the husband which would be, by implication, away from the wife.

"Your theory that football players are Democrats to New Lefts," he said. "I wonder if a Harris or Gallup Poll would back you up."

"You'll remember the Kennedy gang played a lot of touch football," Mari Selander said.

"Touch isn't tackle," Blake said.

"Barry people are least of all touching," Mari Selander said. "Of course, Kennedy people can be all over you."

"I didn't put that forth as a thesis," Greg Selander said. "I was saying, because you've got the football build, and people expect you to play football, is no reason to do the thing, it's just a personal feeling of mine."

He helped himself to another Martini offered on a tray by a maid mostly starch. He had to be aware that the others had stopped their localized talk and were listening.

"If you don't like being manipulated, you don't let yourself be manipulated by eyes, either," he added as he sipped from his new drink and made a quick survey of the visiting eyes turned manipulative.

"Leaving aside the question of whether you can be handled, which is

what manipulated means, by eyes," Mari Selander said, "can you in all honesty claim you were never the least bit manipulated by Barry's eyes, Greg?"

"By his ideas, policies, Mari. Which are against manipulation. By agencies, bureaus, eyes, all the outside structures. Well. War correspondent. You have one of the more interesting jobs, Mr. Arborow."

"Some people in my business say, see one war, you've seen them all," Blake said.

"Don't get that feeling from Hemingway," Greg Selander said. "He went to wars as though they were different."

"His last was different," Blake said. "Himself and himself the combatants. Toss-up as to who won."

"Lonely crowdsmanship," Mari Selander said. "Lonely crowdsmen read Hemingway for the drama of their plight, Reisman for the ideology. When not giving parties."

Blake felt his knees touching his hostess's with no initiative from his side. He moved them, crossed his legs.

"I spent an afternoon with Hemingway arguing this point," he said. "I said wars are so alike they get monotonous, so if you write a lot of books about war they can get monotonous. He said people die differently in different times and places, it was my thought they die more or less the same, from rocks, or arrows, or napalm."

"Or boredom," Mari Selander said. Her words were becoming runny, her green eyes, diffused.

"Hemingway died like his father," Blake said. "Tradition meant something to him."

"That's the point I can't buy," Greg Selander said, scrupulously to Blake. "Our boys in Vietnam don't die like Communists, it's for something positive and what's more, they know it."

"It's hard to tell from the body counts," Blake said. "Maybe I've been to too many."

"I've been in Vietnam myself," Greg Selander said. "I was there just last August, for the Defense Department, saw them in the hospitals, some dying. I can speak to a certain extent firsthand here."

"Eyes will handle before anybody speaks with a hand of any number," Mari Selander said. "Allowing for the deaf who use sign language. Many deaf and dumb speak firsthand."

"What were you doing in Vietnam?" Blake said.

"I'm in defense production, Mr. Arborow," Greg Selander said. "A-V-A Components, the letters are short for Aviation, we subcontract parts for planes and choppers, mostly military right now. I went over to help assess

how the choppers are carrying out their missions. Naturally, I looked around."

"Greg reports the choppers are chopping fine," Mari Selander said. "Chopping some and burning some, with the help of napalm. Naturally, VC's burn differently from freedom fighters. Burn up, our fellows burn down."

"There are better things to joke about than napalm, Mari," Greg Selander said, with the air of pointing out a detail that might otherwise be overlooked.

Mari Selander looked lengthily at her husband. Her lips thinned, followed by her eyes. She pulled in a long, careful breath.

"Napalm's so unjocular," she said. "I was out at UCLA myself this afternoon. Probably in half the footage Mr. Arborow got. Hope they shot my good profile. I was one of the people chased the Taybott man up to the roof of Kerkhoff. Didn't throw stinkbombs but that was mainly because I didn't have any."

The guests were carefully listening, though not surprised. Expecting rough games, they got rough games. It remained to be seen which passes would be completed, who would come out first in yards gained.

"You were going to the Balenciaga showing at I. Magnin's," Greg Selander said.

"Nobody throws stinkbombs at Magnin's," Mari Selander said.

"I won't go into the politics of it, Mari. Let's leave politics out. Let's just say, it's inconsistent to demonstrate against napalm in Paris and Rome clothes paid for by the manufacture of helicopters that deliver napalm."

"I could stop yelling my head off against napalm, you're right, Greg. Or you could stop being involved one way or another with napalm."

"I could. But you're fond of Rome and Paris clothes, if I didn't make the money to buy them you wouldn't like it. You don't approve of napalm but you're dressed with, in, and by, napalm." By way of footnotes, to record the minutiae that can get overlooked.

"And it burns," Mari Selander said.

"And it's self-applied, you dress yourself in the morning," Greg Selander said, still in the spirit of marginalia. "Mr. Arborow, wouldn't you say napalm in Vietnam's about the same situation as the bomb with Hiroshima? Saves more lives than it takes?"

"I'm told that," Blake said.

"I didn't ask what others tell you."

"It's tricky. I see the lives it takes and cripples, I don't see the ones it's said to save."

"But you allow for the possibility?"

"I listen to information officers' releases, and official briefings, and report what I hear. Along with what I see. Even when there's a gap between what's audible and what's visible. If you go along with McLuhan, the sights in our world are winning out over the sounds. That could mean we're being manipulated by eyes, our own."

"Not answering my question, Mr. Arborow."

"No, and I don't think I said it was."

"You could pass things along without necessarily believing or allowing for them yourself."

"I was more or less implying that."

"Mr. Arborow, are we using napalm to win a just war with the least human cost, or aren't we? You're a guest in my house and I'm trying to nail you down, for that I apologize, but with some matters we can drop amenities."

"As quick as we drop napalm," Mari Selander said.

"As quick as some throw stinkbombs," Greg Selander said.

The guests were absorbed. You can't know in advance what plays will be tried and what the final score will be. It could be speculated that collision games were nothing new in this apprentice castle, and did not always concern politics.

"I'm a reporter," Blake said. "That means my best trained parts are my eyes. I'm paid not for the opinions in my head but the pictures on my trained, 20-20 eyes. I've got a surplus. Many pictures piled up on my trained eyes my employers don't want. An assortment of my firsthand sights they don't care to see, and have other people see. Very manipulative sights."

Blake was just now collecting another sight. The outrageously beautiful Bisk had wandered in and taken a seat alongside her mistress, all dripping grin under the hard-edged, archaic mask, ready to pull sleds for any who cared to travel out of gin disharmonies through whatever snowdrifts of rough games. Lady Lean had bent to whisper something in her ear Blake had heard, "Girl, sweet thing, want a bisquit?" The animal had collapsed insanely on the carpet, front paws urging, back paws validating, mouth at maximum curl to announce that anything offered was all right because catering love was the wide world's one stuff. Mari Selander was now leaning low over the dog, moving her incredibly elongated fingers up and down Bisk's two lines of nipples, whispering, "Oh, you tart, spread for all comers." Blake was trying not to see those furred legs abandoned to the air, Mari Selander's stalky legs exposed to the lap and flamboyantly parted too.

"You're still hinting rather than saying, Mr. Arborow," Greg Selander said.

"I'm saying, in stages. Five correspondents ducked this napalm assignment before the network brought me back from Sinai. I wanted to duck it, too. We all know we've stored up more sights than the network cares to distribute. Not opinions about napalm, sights of napalm. In action. Carrying out its missions. On bodies. Bodies shouting and running. Eighty-year-olds and two-year-olds shout and run the same. Napalm is the answer to the generation gap. I've been in helicopters 100 feet from the burning, shouting bodies. Helicopters you probably made parts for. You make good parts, bring a man with trained eyes to within 100 feet of the napalmed, after dropping the napalm. I feel how jellied petroleum works on bodies, how they crisp up, speeding back and forth, their sound effects, is a vital part of the napalm story, which my eyes are equipped to tell, no opinions, just pictures. I was on the phone for an hour after I got back from UCLA this afternoon, telling my home office I have to go back to Vietnam to get close-up footage on the burning, running, loud bodies. They don't see it. They think that to show these diminishing, toasting bodies right now would be playing into the hands of the enemy, as footage of the 70,000 bodies in Hiroshima would have in 1945. You asked for my opinion. My opinion is, I've got informative information on the subject of napalm on my eyes, and it burns, and I want to shout, and I'm being ordered to withhold this information, which is against my training. My first opinion is that this information all over my eyeballs isn't my private property. Your opinion and my opinion as to the privacy of some types of property may differ."

Bisk was still stretched out in total invitation, Mari Selander was still stroking her military columns of nipples.

"That's clear enough," Greg Selander said. "You claim you're a mindless transmitting belt, want to transmit everything unselectively. Meaning, you're with the rioters, ready to make things harder still for our boys dying overseas."

"You're a transmitting belt, you transmit helicopter parts mindlessly, unselectively."

"To save our boys, not kill them."

"You transmit slogans like a mindless belt, too."

"That's not slogan, that's fact."

"Not fact, press release. Look, if you defend your right to be an automaton, don't take a dim view of other automatons trying to do their job."

"Covers are off, Mr. Arborow. What's in sight is a man wants to give aid and comfort to his country's enemies."

Blake stood, feeling his drinks.

"Try stripping yourself," he said. "You know what might come in sight, to eyes trained by two minutes of history? One of the country's worst enemies, maybe. What aids and abets enemies like you is keeping back our rich footage on strategic cremating."

At this, Mari Selander did something peculiar. She'd been lost to the conversation, patting the dog as she went through two more Martinis. Now she jumped up to all her leggy, fragile height, long feet spread in challenge of everything and all.

"No more lies!" she said fever fast. "All automatons! So be it! Out from under the Balenciaga napalms! Everybody! I'll start!" She reached inside her dress with both hands, fumbled, brought the hands out again, each holding a rubber cup. "Cards on the table! All varieties of falsies! Strip, everybody! Out from under the covers! Automatons, right! All à la mode lies on the transmitting belt!" She tossed the rubber cups high in the air, a flower girl strewing modern formfast flowers. They were well aimed, they fell into the fireplace, into the fire big enough for pigs, and instantly were sprouting consequential blue flames. "Not a minute too soon! See! Blobs of lies on everybody! About to burn! Now who else's going to peel off his napalm!"

Greg Selander walked to her and said, "What are you suffering from, Mari? For once, can you say?"

Mari Selander said, "Body contact. From those I view dimly. Burns."

Blake set his glass down.

"You were right about one thing," he said to Greg Selander. "Not all wars are the same. Bodies can burn and run in ways I haven't seen. After this, attack your attackers, not strangers. And don't dress it up with politics. Thanks for the drinks and slogans."

The last picture on his eyes, breaking into him, pulling at him, was of Mistress Meager standing in the middle of the room, hands cradling sham-shorn breasts, legs planted wide in taunt more than invitation, and Bisk still on her back, legs still lax, staggered that when her dear one finally threw something it would not be tasty things to her.

Far from sleepy, Blake took a long drive, to Malibu and then on to Trancas. Twice he stopped at waterfront places for a drink, a third time to eat a hamburger. When he got back home it was well after midnight.

The light in the living room showed him objects on the floor that didn't belong there. A pair of flowered, belled slacks, woman's. Jacket, woman's. A blouse. A bra. Panties.

He heard a sound in the bedroom, more assault, beckoning.

He went there and flicked on the light to find Mari Selander stretched out on his bed, naked. No, not precisely stretched out, though precisely naked. When the light cracked on her hands elevated floppily to touch in the air over small, valiant breasts, legs bent as knees separated to the pelvis' limit of give. She waggled asking hands, stretched her mouth to make a dog's chugging sound.

"How's this for a body count."

"More casualties around here than meet the eye."

"Let's have a meeting of more than eyes, Mr. Arborow."

"Mine are meeting each other. You're an unexpected eagle in my bed."

"Know a better spread for it?"

"Spread any more and there'll be two of you."

"Animal kingdom's all botched. How come dogs are the ones to spread-eagle."

"How do other men's wives come to be doing it on my bed?"

"Easy, you've got a window in the back not nailed down."

It was a body not to be believed. Such a long, satiny stretch, no massy bulges but, oh, yes, slimmed shadowings, subtler concavities, the potential of a greyhound speediness, the promise of twine in the never-ending legs. Such a gangly want and over-readiness.

"You've got a husband across the street not nailed down."

"Don't you worry about husbands. Don't you worry. Nights I go for drives, Greg goes to bed. I parked the car two streets over and sneaked back on foot over the firebreak. Know something? There's a firebreak ends in your backyard. I take that to mean we can bring our bodies together for as long as we want and not worry about danger of brush fires. Fires we don't make by our own brushing. You come here and give me all the best bisquits. I've been long without."

"What gave you the idea of breaking in here?"

"I was looking at Greg after the people went home, which was fast. When he's boiling he doesn't say anything, just sits with a red face. I was looking at that fat football face and a thought came, I wanted somebody inside me but not him, never him, you, decidedly you. Not because politics makes bedfellows. Because fucking makes bedfellows. Come inside me, you."

"I don't think this will get Greg Selander out of the helicopter business. I think, further, you don't give a shit what business he's in."

"Who wants your opinions? You're no opinion man. You're the reporter. Report to your brain what's craving all over your eyes from all over your bed. Be my lavish bisquit man."

"Your war I haven't been to before. All in it casualties and all casualties wearing the same dogtag."

"Don't analyze it, you correspondent, cover it."

Which, feeling somewhat tampered with, somewhat hauled, he did. Those endless legs closed, on him, all urge, going like the legs of the napalmed.

She left he didn't know when. He thought for one minute about her climbing back up the firebreak, sleek legs, product of some strong generational taffy pull, cracking the dead spines of chaparral, then he was in the sleep of the drugged. When he opened his eyes it was after ten and he was in trouble. He shaved-showered fast, dressed without the morning swim, skipped breakfast except for a can of Snap-E-Tom Bloody Mary Mix for the tang of the tomato.

Backing down his drive, he heard sounds of running and barking. In a moment Mari developed from the crowded birches across the way, Bisk all over her heels. She made a comic hitchhiker's sign, he pulled over.

"Sleep all right?" she said.

"You'll have to ask somebody who was there."

"See how good I am for you? I slept, too, oh, did I. Like a sack of sawdust. That's better than a log. Logs sleep better when they're pulverized. Oh, how you pulverized me—"

"I can't discuss insomnia and the lumber industry, I'm late—"

"Where you going, Blake?"

"Mojave, up past Palmdale. They're putting on a napalm show."

"Take me with you, Blake? Please?"

"You'd throw stinkbombs."

"Won't, honest, Blake. Please. I get migraines when I'm alone all day and Greg's gone to Vandenburg Base for three days. To talk with the brass about chopper parts. The man of helicopter parts. Let me come, Blake. One more in your crew won't be noticed."

"There'll be some Taybott men."

"They won't know me or I them. Greg's kept me away from Taybott people for fear I'd break out picket signs. Take me and I'll tell you all about your non-helicopter parts."

"You won't get on a soapbox?"

"Or my high horse, or a low horse, or even Bisk. Bisk? Where are you girl?"

Bisk came prancing back from the driveway. She'd retrieved Blake's morning paper and was carrying it proudly in her grin. Mari accepted the paper from her.

"Can Bisk come, Blake? Please? She gets migraines when I leave her alone all day."

He waved them in.

They talked not at all on the San Diego Freeway cutting across San Fernando Valley. At moments Mari even read the paper. This was all right with Blake. He didn't want to hear about what was, or wasn't, between this woman and her husband. As for what might or might not be between her and himself, he didn't want to get into that, either, it would be a tiny pendant from what was, or wasn't, with the husband. As his brushes with women generally were.

On the run you ran into married women who were attracted to the image of man with itinerary, man just passing through, then felt martyred by the first signs of travel preparations.

As they cornered east out of Newhall, for Antelope Valley, Mari said from her paper, "VC's out to win with least human cost, too. Here's an item about their finishing off a village called Dakson, with flamethrowers."

"Cost accounting can't be the monopoly of one side."

"Double entry bookkeeping's the game on both sides. Listen. *The simple Montagnards of Dakson had only recently learned how to use matches, and flamethrowers were beyond their imagination. Then, in one horrifying hour, flame throwers wielded by Communist troops wreaked death and destruction . . . 'They threw fire at us' was how survivors described the attack . . . 60 thatched-roof houses razed . . . Ashes blew across carcasses of water buffalo . . . Rows of bodies of women and children . . . Tiny brother and sister, still clinging to each other . . . 63 bodies dragged from bunkers—*"

"You save lives any way you can. Don't read any more."

They were well into the desert when Mari left off scratching Bisk's unreservedly available neck to say thoughtfully, "They're not going to let you tell it like it is, not a chance."

"The Vietnam footage, you mean?"

"They won't let you put those shots in, will they, Blake?"

"How many close-ups of the skin and bone aftermath of Hiroshima have you seen, 23 years after?"

"If they hold you back, what'll you do?"

"Tell it as it isn't, or is only in propagandistically safe part, the bloodless, faceless, skinless part."

"That good enough?"

"No."

"Isn't there an alternative?"

"No."

"There's got to be."

"There's one, get a staff job on Hanoi Radio. I'd run into the same problems there, maybe worse. There's no place where they want the whole footage."

"Don't you want to hit somebody?"

"You did it for me. Your husband. More ways than one. I'm not sure he's the one to hit, but as long as you enjoy it."

"He's the one enjoys it, Blake. A good wife doesn't deprive her mate of his intensest pleasures."

"I thought you were enjoying yourself somewhat."

"In your bed I was."

"Long before."

"Don't make a big thing of how I took off after Greg, Blake, I was drunk, that's all."

"Think about this, drunk comes in four parts, jocose, morose, bellicose, comatose. You start on bellicose and end on bellicose. You're fixated on fight even when much less than drunk. Your private war is peculiar, each shooting the other to make him happy."

"Public wars may involve some of that altruism, too. Was I bellicose with you?"

"You're a smart enough strategist not to start offensives on two fronts at once. Remember Hitler."

"Tomorrow the world. Today there's you."

"Today there's the Taybott people, don't try to make them happy, all right?"

This was a proving ground for some types of field and air ordnance. Deep in the desert a Mekong Delta jungle hamlet had been reproduced, a cluster of huts, camouflaged underground hideouts, ammunition dumps, snipers' perches under thatched roofs and in trees. Taybott technicians and Marine Corps officers, Air Cavalry men, were on hand to explain how the insurgents' installations had to be got at, to cut their deadly fire, when our troops moved into such hostile areas.

Technicians and officers explained that no hostile personnel would be indicated here, not by mannequins, not by dummies, not by cutouts. The reason for this was, today's mission was to show things being destroyed, not, primarily, people, so our troops could move in without bitter casualties. The emphasis, for purposes of this demonstration, was on things, not people. The implications, though, had much to do with people, ours. If things designated as military targets could be knocked out, caves, dumps, perches, many American lives would be saved, Asian ones, too, in the

longer view. The point was that traditional weapons were of little use against the guerrilla refuges, since they couldn't be seen and located. Therefore the invention and use of napalm. Today's show would point up how vital to our overall goal of saving lives the new anti-guerrilla weapon, napalm, was. The technicians and officers hoped Blake, as anchorman of this news team, would see the logic in this emphasis on things, with the overtone of vastly lowered casualty lists, meaning, people.

Blake said he saw the logic. He wondered, all the same, if such a show was entirely realistic without a hint, through the use of dummies, or cut-outs, that a hamlet of this type was inhabited by people, noncombatants who might be in the line of fire.

The officer in charge, Colonel Halbors, said there were no villagers shown precisely because the targets of napalm missions were things, along, of course, with whatever hostile troops might be manning the things, and to show villagers would shift the emphasis from things to people. He hoped Blake appreciated the logic behind featuring the military mission and not dwelling on incidental casualties among civilians, which had been wildly exaggerated, especially by the enemy and those naive about military exigencies. This being, it should be kept in mind, war.

Blake said he appreciated it, yes. He just felt that as a reporter he ought always to be looking for the whole picture.

As he spoke he was watching Mari, who stood to one side holding Bisk tight by the leash. She was chewing on her lips, her eyes were fixed, but she kept her mouth shut.

The cameramen left for shielded blinds from which they could shoot at a variety of angles. Blake, Mari, and the rest of the crew were led to the concrete bunker a distance from the mock-up village, a structure mostly underground but with a viewing slot some two-feet wide, protected by a wide concrete overhang. Colonel Halbors came with them, to explain the operation step by step. There was the rouping of unseen helicopters from some part of the sky.

After some minutes Colonel Halbors signaled through an intercom that stage one, the approach, could start. At the same time he pressed a button on his control panel. Instantly large glare-orange arrow markers swung into sight in and around the village, pointing to the hidden installations which were the targets in this mission, rather than people.

Certain things, not people, had to be sought out and destroyed, Colonel Halbors said. Artillery and air-to-ground missiles could not do the job. The idea was to watch how napalm got in there and did the job, to save lives, as well as rout the enemy and deal him a costly blow.

The thrum from the sky had been getting louder, now three helicopters

came into sight, approaching from the black, broken-spined mountains. Mari was still biting on her lips. Suddenly, she stood.

"Colonel," she said, "did you happen to read the paper today?"

"Yes, yes, I did," Colonel Halbors said, surprised. "Why do you ask?"

"Did you happen to read the item about VC's knocking out the whole village of Daksun with flamethrowers, people along with things?"

Blake was waving to her to sit down, she remained standing.

"I did. What is your point?"

"My point is, the VC doesn't attack mock-up villages, it attacks real villages, as we do. In these attacks they don't pretend to separate people from things, they say people are things, that's what war is, and that's how we act in war too, when we go into villages not mock-up but inhabited. The VC's honest, at least, they say there are no people in war, can't be, there're only things, except a lot of them walk around on two legs—"

Colonel Halbors' face was hard. He said, "Are you trying to say we annihilate whole local populations as the enemy does, purely and simply for the sake—"

"Colonel, when you drop napalm on a whole village, and the village is full of people, not mannequins, not mock-ups—"

"Hold it right there, Miss," Colonel Halbors said in command voice. The helicopters were now circling over the village. He spoke into the intercom, saying the drop could begin, as Mari fought off Blake's efforts to get her back in her seat. "Now. Did I hear you right? You were actually saying—"

"Colonel, the survivors at Daksun said, they threw fire at us. Colonel, in the real hamlets, not pretend ones, we throw fire at them. Can you tell me how from their point of view one thrown fire is different from—"

The words were still coming from her mouth when a small, energetic body, a jackrabbit, went arcing fast across the desert on the near side of the village. Heading for the village, with mathematical, measured bounces.

At this moment Mari stopped talking and screamed. Screamed again. Shrilled, "My God! Here! Bisk! Back, Bisk!"

There was Bisk on the desert, going fast toward the village. The rabbit was streaking across the sands, Bisk was streaking after it.

Blake saw what had happened. In her outburst, Mari had been gesturing strongly at Colonel Halbors, with her hold on the leash relaxed. Bisk, seeing the rabbit, had simply pulled the loop off her fingers and dived out through the viewing slot. The leash was trailing after Bisk as she flashed along, the happy hunter.

"Happened so fast!" Mari bubbled. "She goes crazy when something on four legs moves fast! Bisk! Please! Bisk, girl!"

"Colonel," Blake said fast, "can you possibly, is there any chance—"

"Started," Colonel Halbors said, pointing. "Can't call back what's dropping."

He was right, objects were descending from all three helicopters.

The rabbit, Bisk hot after him, was tearing around the bamboo huts, Mari, face come apart, was halfway through the bunker opening, trying to climb out. Blake took her by the hips, slender, boyish roundings, well remembered, pulled her back.

"Nothing to do," he said, holding her down on the bench. "Easy now. You'd get yourself killed and that's all."

Mari was shaking, looking around wild-eyed.

"You couldn't give up your war," Blake said, holding her. "If there's a casualty, it'll at least have a different dogtag."

Black objects from the helicopters were dropping on things, not people. One by one, things belched up, and out, in flame.

An ammunition dump gushed flame. A sniper's platform in a tree spewed orange. A machine-gunner's blind, hidden with piled brush, erupted in an all-directional lick. Huts kept popping flashes of flame, here, there, everywhere. Bisk kept dogging the rabbit between the igniting huts, full speed.

"Bisk—you—come—back—here!" Mari screamed from the deeps of her lungs.

The rabbit shot into view around the corner of a hut, Bisk inches from his heels. At this moment the hut metamorphosed, as by the push of a button, from structure to flame, and at that moment, Bisk metamorphosed. One second, running dog, next, standing flame.

She'd skidded to a halt, frozen as in a stop-action movie. Through his binoculars Blake saw how she stood still, puzzled, how she turned to bite the attacker all over her body to find her jaws closing on flame.

She looked everywhere overhead, as at sneaky birds, as she burned. She found no explanations, the big birds in the sky only burred, in a language that to her was only loudness. Burning, she turned her eyes at last toward the bunker, to the one source of all correctives, to all impedings and harassments, Mari.

Mari moaned, pushed again toward the opening. Blake pressed hard on her shoulders.

"Don't look," he said, forcing his body in front of her to block her vision.

Bisk stood motionless, looking to Mari, a fire with four legs. Now she did the only thing she knew to do, when the ultimately wanted was not forthcoming, flopped over on her back in the bisquit position. Paws

flabbed over chest, barely in touch, were burning, paws stretched wide were burning.

She begged, she burned, mouth totally open for the ultimate bisquit, a cessation of heat, of being eaten by enemy with no bulk or outlines. Eyes still looking to Mari.

"Put your mind on something else," Blake said mechanically, blocking Mari's eyes.

The choppers rattled away. It was two or three minutes before Colonel Halbors judged it safe for Blake to go out, provided he was careful. The other members of Blake's crew took Mari's arms to hold her back.

When Blake got to Bisk, the colonel right behind, the dog was still alive, still burning in places, still on her back in position of ask, still asking.

Flames flicked from her belly, forehead, one foreleg. Black smoke came from these points, as from other points where the flames had subsided. Bisk was diminished. In places, instead of fur, dark smoking patches. In others, no flesh, bone bared within the charring.

All fur and flesh were gone from the soft, soft neck. Lower jaw gone, except for the armature of surprisingly frail bones.

Left eye gone. What had been eye was black hole, smoking. Above this hole, where the fuzzed brow had been, small flames fighting to live.

Bisk's right eye, intact, looked straight to Blake, with all its uncomprehending blue. Asking all the questions.

The asking front paws were charred, bones showing, flames eating vaguely, afterthoughts, about the remnants of paws. An end to heat, this haphazardly cremated animal from a vanished dynasty of the icecaps, displaced monarch of remote snowlands, was saying, as the cremation continued.

Remnant of mouth, ringed with small flames, leftover mouth was in total crazed grin to total crazed environment, which must in the end relent and produce the bisquit of bisquits, a taking back of cannibal heat. The inch by inch cremation continued.

"Need a gun," Blake said. "One around?"

Colonel Halbors shook his head. Much napalm here, no guns. "Terrible thing to happen. You'll turn this footage over, I assume."

"Network decision, I don't make policy. There's got to be a gun somewhere."

Colonel Halbors shook his head. "Would you rather I confiscated all your reels?"

"What're you afraid of?" Blake was looking everywhere. "Shots of one dog burning'll give you another Dien Bien Phu?"

"You can't leave this area with that footage, Mr. Arborow."

"All right, you get it."

The nearest hut had just caved in, its understructure was creeping with spent flame and smoking. The supports on which the hut had rested were four-by-fours, good. Blake ran over and pulled a charred beam free, a four-foot length. He ran back, holding the beam by one end.

"Couldn't even save the film. Be cool again," he said to the dog, and brought the beam down as hard as he could, on the head.

Bisk jerked, her head shook, then her good eye settled on Blake again, asking. Manipulating him full force with the eye.

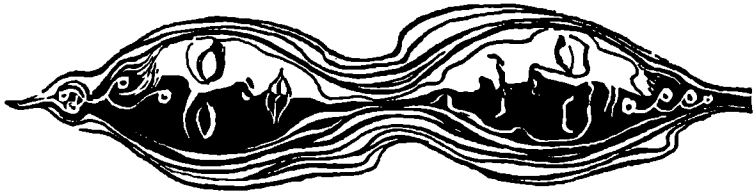
"Go home to snow, Bisk. What's so worth seeing out here. You've got the whole picture."

He swung again, with all his strength.

Bisk's body shook, the eye rolled away, came back, gelled again, held steady on Blake, asking.

"Leave us to our leashes, Bisk," Blake said, and swung again.

The magnificently blue eye quivered, began to take the dim view, then dimmer, then closed altogether, and Bisk was cool again, as finally, Blake thought, with luck, with luck, we'll all, the invaded and the sucked, all bisquit wanters, be free from burning.



2: The Girl With Rapid Eye Movements

On the night of April 22, when I got back from lecturing to FANNUS (For A New Novel Undergraduate Society) on Hemingway ("A Psycho-Statistical Survey of the Broken Bones in Papa"), my answering service gave me a cryptic message. From Kid Nemesis, pronounced Quentin. Call no matter what the hour. There was no way to call at any hour, the number he left was wrong. The harpie at the other end said in Placidyl tones that she didn't know any Quentin, and if she did she'd turn him in for what, considering he was a friend of mine, must be his main activity, child molesting. I said she had no grounds for assuming I was in a child molest-

ing ring since the people I molested on the phone sounded 300 years old, and senile. She said she wasn't too senile to know that molestation professionals will practice on anybody when there's no child around, to keep their hand in, in what she wouldn't say, being a lady. I said if she was a lady any one of the Gabor sisters was Miss Twinkletoes, and asked if anything she kept her hand in was mentionable, a question I hinted was in order about any member of her sex, lady or not, who went to sleep before nine. She said if she could get within reaching distance of me she'd show me what she'd dearly love to put her hand in, my mouth, and rip out my filthy degenerate's tongue to use for a pincushion.

Enough of this conversation. I reproduce its high points mainly to show how frayed nerves everywhere are getting, maybe due to Vietnam. What made me boil was not the old hellhag's tone but Quentin's typical sloppiness in leaving a wrong number, urgently.

I didn't call him the next morning. I gave him until noon to feel urgent enough to call me. When my curiosity peaked and threatened to zenith, I dialed his home number. The phone rang a dozen times before he answered; his voice seemed to have its origins at the bottom of a barrel, out of a mouth brimming with molasses. More simply put, out of a mouth in a molasses barrel.

"Gordon, zow, I'm desperate for sleep. Can I ask what this is in reference to?"

"Your call last night. Its reference."

Time went by.

"You're crazy. I didn't call you."

"You mean my answering service is hallucinating?"

"They probably make up calls so you won't feel nobody cares. No kidding, they really said I called?"

"And gave the impression lives were at stake. And left a number to call back. A wrong number, as a result of which I was treated to a long string of insults from somebody I don't even know."

More time passed.

"That nibbles, Gordon. Dhzz. I remember calling Cedars of Lebanon, zhmm, yes, and the L.A. Times Information Desk, right. But you, uh, uh."

"Reconstruct the circumstances. Where were you?"

"Some friends' house off Laurel Canyon, I've told you about them, The Omen. May be pertinent that we were stoned to a tilt, the third time down, and I have the impression I still am. We were really stretched out on this grass."

"I take it you're not talking about a lawn."

"Maybe Forest Lawn. Where I believe I still am, hear embalmers coming, hypo needles jingle. Gordon, I'd be greatly in your debt, which I'd be willing to settle for money, a sizable amount, if you'd stop cross-examining me and let me get back to sleep. You get so goddamn cross when you examine."

I don't let people go back to sleep after it's established that in the course of a social evening they've placed calls to Cedars and Times Information. Especially when I learn that in their thinking I was on a par with a great hospital and a foremost metropolitan daily.

"I'll see you're stoned, Quentin, out of town, if you don't clear this up. Why did you call the hospital and the paper?"

"See, now. Oh. There you go. It was about cracking knuckles."

"Sure."

"See, we were sitting around, listening to records, and we got to cracking our knuckles, first I did, then everybody. First in time with the music, then not. Then somebody said, what makes a knuckle crack. We got to discussing it. That's a scary thing to discuss, Gordon. The more we got into it, the more we realized we're not so brainy. Your knuckles are more a part of you than Jean-Paul Sartre, say. We know all there is to know about Sartre, not the first thing about our own knuckles that we've been hearing all our lives. If I don't get some sleep my teeth'll fall out. What makes knuckles crack, Gordon?"

"Bending your fingers backward is the usual cause, Quentin."

"I know what you *do* to bring it about, what I'm asking is the *why*. See, we got into it, and we were absolutely in the dark as to the mechanisms. We started to get panicky. It's like first hearing your heart without any prior warning you've got such a loud organ. You feel you've been invaded by enemy aliens. That was when somebody said, call Cedars, get some staff doctor who could give the professional view. Nobody there would talk, and that's supposed to be a hospital serving the public. If an institution looks out for the public, wouldn't you think it would have some interest in preventing panic? You know what runaway panic can lead to in these times, once it spreads."

"So you tried Times Information."

"Gordon, it's the right of the public to be informed, and the duty of a newspaper to give information. The Times people got very wiseass. Said sleep it off and when we woke we wouldn't be stampeding about knuckles or any joints. That kind of sneery talk is a cover for ignorance."

"So then you called me."

"Did I?"

"You'd better remember before I make liverwurst out of your knuckles."

It occurred to me that I should have said Knucklewurst, but this was no time for anatomical niceties. "Think, now."

"Let's see. Hnng. Don't threaten my knuckles, Gordon, I resent it. About that time there *was* something else. See, now. Fmmp, it's coming, I was scared stiff, I was sweating. Somebody said, *Gnothi seauton.* I said, that's Greek. Somebody said, yes, Greek for, Know thyself. Somebody said, the essence of the Greek philosophers' wisdom was, Know thyself, and if you don't even know what makes the sounds in your knuckles how much can you claim to know about thyself. Somebody said, well, if doctors and newspapermen can't help, and if philosophers try to study thyselves, call some philosopher. Somebody said, Sartre's a philosopher and he's never written a line with any insights about knuckles. Somebody said, Sartre's no test, existentialists study alienation, so naturally he'd be more interested in fractures than in joints. Somebody said, they don't list philosophers in the Yellow Pages, even under Thyselfhelp. Sure, course, that's how it went. Ah, right. I said, I know a philosopher, older man thinks about everything and has looked into all human phases quite deep. Somebody said, well, Christ, give him a call, and I guess that's when I called, Gordon. It's not so important now. It can wait, now that I look it over. What's important is that you stop shaking your fist at my knuckles and I get back to sleep before I have a heart attack, Gordon."

"Not just yet. The answer, in case you're interested, is, synovial fluid."

"What, Gordon? Synovia? The flamenco guitarist? He flew what?"

"That's Segovia, not Synovia, besides, we're discussing fluids, not musicians. The cracking has to do with synovial fluid."

"I'm not going to sit here and have an hour discussion about fluids, Gordon, laying the groundwork for a coronary, my God. I don't care how gorgeous a philosopher you are, when I bring up bones, don't change the subject to fluids, Jesus. I'm begging, Gordon, I've got to get me some sleep before I turn blue."

"You were in a panic last night. The panic could come back, you'd better know about this. Synovial fluid is a colorless, viscid lubricating juice. It has in it a mucinlike substance. It's secreted by the synovial membranes of articulations, bursae, and tendon sheaths. Its purpose is to prevent a lot of scraping in the sockets when you move their parts. This fluid is found in knuckles, as well as knees, elbows, hips, and so on—"

"Gordon, what, for Christ's sake, would this or any fluid have to do with the cracking sound I've been referring to?"

"I wouldn't know about that, Quentin."

"Ah. Znnk. Huh?"

"I haven't looked into that end of the thing yet, I've had other matters

on my mind. I'm just saying that if you're really serious about Gnothi seauton, you have to know about the synovial fluid in thyself, your most intimate greases, that's a starting point—"

"You dirty, rotten, miserable, miasma-jawed, thumbsucking—"

All things considered, including the evenness of the score, plus my dazzling outburst on the workings of the skeletal hinges, which told me I didn't Gnothi much about my own seauton because I never guessed I had such information in my head—all things considered, this seemed the logical time to hang up.

I'd known Quentin Seckley for what is usually called the better part of a year, but I won't call it that. The part of a year in which you know Quentin, whatever number of months it embraces, is not the better part.

Beware of wellwishers. Often they are people wishing themselves wells, oil or gas, to be obtained through your good offices, in extreme cases over your dead body, so they can flash a lot of money in your face. It was wellwishers of this type, I think, who suggested that after 20 years of writing I should have the profit of teaching writing to the youths. Everybody thought I should be put in touch with the electric new generation. Nobody stopped to look into the matter of my insulation.

I listened. When I was offered a lectureship in creative writing at Santana State, close by Los Angeles, I took it. My subject, it turned out, was recreative rather than creative writing. Some students took the course for refreshment, as they'd take gymnastics or folk dancing, or a butterscotch float. Others were hard at work composing meticulous recreations of Joyce, Hemingway, Kafka, J. P. Donleavy, Dylan Thomas, not to mention, though I'm obliged to, O. Henry and Albert Payson Terhune.

Quentin, a New Yorker who'd arrived at Santana after being expelled from four eastern universities, sometimes for unplanned pregnancies, sometimes for plans to synthesize STP in undergraduate chemistry laboratories, was the exception. He had no interest in writing for diversion, he was concerned with one thing only, writing for money. Neither was he moved to write imitations of well-known prose, he didn't care to write prose at all. What he began to inundate me with were rock-and-roll lyrics.

An intimate of psychedelic musicians, Quentin was composing lyrics for one of their groups, for, if it worked out, money. Two of his songs had already been recorded, with results closer to a thud than a splash. He was taking my course, he explained, to learn how to write better rock lyrics. He accused me of deliberately perpetuating the generation gap when I pointed out that, even if "better rock lyrics" was not a contradiction in

terms, lyricism of any order, very definitely of this electronic order, was not within my expertise. Quentin had concluded that I was a philosopher of cosmic scope, an authority on you name it, and as such the best guide for rock-lyricism. Lyrics are made of words, aren't they? I was a word expert, wasn't I? Well, then? Why, except out of orneriness, plain and simple withholding, wouldn't I instruct him in bettering his lyrics so he could better his income?

To show the magnitude of the problem he posed to me and to literature, not to mention the English language, I will give here one of his efforts. Its title was, *After You Get Your Troubles Packed, Don't Send Dat Old Kit Bag to Me.* It went this way:

Fire come down the mountaing
Burn up all yo house an goods
Fire come adown the mountaing
Burn away yo house an goods
Yeh, dat fire roll down fom de high country
Smoke up all yo tangible assets
But you kin give us a smile, a smile, a smile
Iffn ye'll curl up yo lips t'other way

After you git all yo troubles awrapped in dat
ole kit bag
What's the idee mailin em to me?
Wouldn't send dat greasy load to Care Packages, naw
Whaffo you parcelpost dat mess to me? Huh?

Connin man took all yo money
Meddlin man took off yo wife
Connin man abscond wid yo money
Meddlin man hep hissef to yo missus
O fasttalk man walk away wid yo savings
Meddlesome man partake of yo better half
Now you kin give us a grin, a grin, a grin
Jess culr up yo mouf t'other way

"See some way I can improve it?" Quentin said the night he showed me this work.

"Yes, burn it in the first fire that comes down the mountaing. If the fire doesn't come down, go up after it."

"Come on, I'm really finding my own voice here."

"Losing, I'd say. Mountaings. I take that to be your best rendering of Ozark hillbilly. The deses, doses, and dems could be Old South Uncle Remus, or Brooklynese, I'm not sure which."

"Little of both."

"A little of either would go a long way, Quentin. Kentucky mountaineer, Dekalb Avenue, blackface patois, backed with sitars, that's not a voice, that's glossolalia. They call this the gift of tongues but with you it's a curse. Many of your tongues should be tied."

"Jesus, these are sounds I maybe didn't hear around my family's dining table in the Silkstocking District, but I've heard them on records, and records are part of my environment, and my environment's part of me. Am I supposed to be a snob and assume only my Junior League and stockbroker family talks right?"

"Quentin, right now you're talking more like a Silkstocking than a combination stevedore-cottonpicker-moonshiner. Silkstockings should have some place in the linguistic sun along with Leatherstockings."

"Mr. Rengs, think about this, when I'm talking to just one person I don't have to sound like more than one person. In song lyrics you're talking to a whole lot of different people so the trick is to be democratic and sound like all of them."

"All who never went beyond third grade? Why not address a few college graduates, too? Or does your kind of democracy ban the literates?"

"Look, there's a theory behind this. Most things never melted like they were supposed to in this alleged melting pot. It's time we at least let the different languages and styles of talk melt down a little."

"Melt is one thing, fracture's another."

"I know, things liquefy when they melt, have to be hard to fracture. You're confusing fluids and bones, I wish you'd stop that, Mr. Rengs."

"If you don't stop pestering me with schizoid lyrics, Quentin, you'll see some real confusing of fluids and bones, this minestrone will be confused with your skull."

We were at that point sitting in the House of Gnocchi, a ghastly Italian gag-and-vomit on Santa Monica Boulevard in Hollywood. It was so far from being a restaurant, or any food dispensary for humans, the gnocchi should have been used to plug leaky faucets and the linguini served in a trough. Quentin had insisted on taking me to his favorite eating place to discuss his writing problems, which he felt were inadequately covered in class.

"Mr. Rengs, you're pretending to be above this language mix that's happening today. That's hiding behind the generation gap."

"You're not mixing words, Quentin, you're dismembering them. Let's

examine your last statement. How can anybody hide behind a gap? That's like saying, he camouflaged himself in a vacuum, or, he took refuge in a quantity of nothing."

"Quantity of nothing. You just made my point. What's a gap, by definition, but a ditch, and what's a ditch but something with nothing in it, no things, no people? If there aren't any people around in the ditch, well, there's nobody to see you, so you can hide damn efficiently."

"Logic, Quentin. No people around, no reason to hide."

"What I mean is, there aren't any people *in* the ditch, they're lined up on both sides."

"In that case, the ditch would have to be very wide, say 10 miles, before it could be used for hiding purposes."

"Well, the way you're digging at this particular ditch, it'll be 10 miles wide in no time."

"Whatever the dimensions of a gap, Quentin, you can't hide *behind* it, the best you can do is hide *in* it."

"I can't buy that, Mr. Rengs. If a tree falls in the forest and there's nobody there to hear it, is there a sound? That's philosophy, now don't deny it. By the self-same logic, if you're using a ditch for hiding purposes, and it works, that means there's nobody close enough to see you, so who knows if you're in the ditch, or behind it, or under it?"

"Whenever I'm within 10 miles of you, Quentin, I'm in the soup, not behind it or under it, and I'm not referring to this minestrone, which isn't soup, it's sheepdip."

Over a zabaglione that tasted like detergent Quentin made a sudden announcement. He said, "The omen are interested in the Mah Own Tang lyric." I said I was not aware that he had also written a song saluting his own body odor. He said he still had reference to the kit-bag lyric in which there was mention of the article Sir Edmund Hillary was always going up. I said, "When the subject is one omen the verb must be is, watch those singulars and plurals." He informed me that The Omen were very singular but happened to be several people, they were a raga-rock recording group, some folk-hard material, too, but mostly raga, featuring sitars and tablas.

I was just becoming aware of the trend among recording groups to use common nouns in the singular as appellations for a collectivity. It was a source of concern to me that in time this might lead to a new vocabulary of aggregate nouns: a jefferson airplane of draft dodgers, a grateful dead of tambourinists, a loving spoonful of schizophrenes, a vanilla fudge of juvies, a holding company of dropouts. Now, it seemed, we had to allow for a new and still more worrisome formulation, an omen of hecklers.

"One thing you're overlooking," Quentin went on, "this song is a takeoff, and as such a howl."

"A titter, maybe. To those who know the old song you're taking off."

"You know it."

"No, I don't."

"Don't give me that, you just mentioned it."

"It was my race unconscious talking."

"Your race prejudice, you mean, against the race of everybody under 30. All right, let's see how prejudiced you get against some lyrics not in the language mix. Here."

He handed me a page with scribblings on it at all angles. I could decipher only two bits:

suppose on the day of days
when comes the savior
to lead us way upstairs to best behavior
his name is mao
will we gao?

And:

if hell is hot
what's the temperature of heaven
seven?

"I can't go into these political and theological questions on a sick stomach, Quentin," I said. "The zabaglione is giving me ptomaine, I think."

"Ptomaine," Quentin said, quickened. "There's a great word to work with. Gives me an idea for a takeoff number about the trots tourists get when they go someplace like Spain. This is inspired. *Ptomaine in Spain Falls Rainly in the—*"

Everything considered, including the sharp pains in my stomach, that seemed a good time to go to the men's room.

Not long after this takeoff of a dinner, the kind that will make you take off for even the worst ptomaine zones of Spain, Quentin asked if he could stay with my class in the second quarter. I categorically refused, on grounds that, though he was up to many possibly stunning activities with words, none could be related to writing or the English language, my two areas of competence. Quentin didn't fight. He simply said that maybe I ought to let him into some of my areas of incompetence and maybe they'd shrink. My answer was, my areas of incompetence had been too hard come

by, I couldn't give them up. To match that, he decided there was something he couldn't give up. Me. When class ended for the quarter, Quentin went right on. Deprived of me on campus, he showed up almost daily on my doorstep, with batches of lyrics. Once I ventured the thought that his lyrics were for the birds, for example, goonies. He informed me that The Byrds wrote their own lyrics, his efforts were mainly for The Omen. I came to see that an omen custom-made for me had been installed centrally in my life. In the person of Quentin Seckley, relentlessly, ominously, filled with song.

Days after the conversation about knuckles and their sound effects, my phone rang. A girl at the other end said, "Hello, Mr. Rengs? Would Ivar by any chance happen to be there?"

This voice sounded blurrily, adrenalizingly, familiar. It immediately made my tongue ache at the root.

"Ivar?"

"This is Mr. Gordon Rengs, isn't it?"

"Yes, and there's nobody named Ivar here. I don't know anybody named Ivar. Take that as boasting if you want."

I was nipping at the tip of my tongue with my fingers, as though to pull it out. This was annoying on several counts: I pride myself on having no tics, I had no reason to pull my tongue out, this interfered with my talking. The girl's voice held bad echoes. That pulled at my tongue through my fingers.

"There's some mixup, Mr. Rengs. You're the Mr. Rengs teaches at Santana, aren't you? You're a good friend of this fellow I'm trying to locate, his collaborator."

"I am? On what?"

"Lyrics, of course. You write those great lyrics with him. You know."

"Lyrics? What type?"

"Hard, folk, country, jazz, raga, any rock lyrics they need."

"I see. You're looking for Quentin Seckley."

A pause.

"Quentin what'd you say? Huh? I don't know any Quentin."

Simultaneously I bit my tongue viciously and remembered this voice, the bite in it when vicious.

"Miss, I have no dealings with an Ivar. I don't do business with Quentin Seckley, either, but from time to time, when he holds a gun on me, I point out the shakier lines in his songs, the Parkinsonian ones."

Another pause.

"Mr. Rengs, could I trouble you to describe this Quentin?"

"Yes. Sandy hair down to the eyes. Looks like shredded Naugahyde.

Decided stoop, slight list. About five-ten. Mole on right cheekbone. Sneaky air. Writes his lyrics for The Omen. Also—"

"That's Ivar. Well I'll be."

"I'll join you, if there's room. What do you want Quentin for?"

"Well, he was supposed to sleep with me, it was made very clear it had to be promptly at three, and he hasn't shown up, and they're all asking questions."

"All. How many are there?"

"Well, all the regulars, six, at least. They've been waiting for an hour for us to get started, they don't like to just sit around."

"Who does? I'm curious as to where you got my name."

"Well, Ivar, Quentin talks about you and what a help you are in his writing. I knew you teach at Santana, and right now I'm out here at UCLA, of course, so I called UCLA Administration and they had a Santana faculty directory—"

"You're at UCLA? That's where Quentin was supposed to, ah, join you?" I thought about synovial fluid. Flamenco guitar in the background. No sitar.

"Sure, that's where we always do it. It wouldn't work out anyplace else, this is where they've got all the apparatus. So, in short, you don't have any idea where he might be, Mr. Rengs?"

"None. Unless he's found some other place where they have the apparatus."

"Not likely, Mr. Rengs, you don't find machinery like this any old place. Well, case you hear from him, would you tell him call in right away to the Sleep Project? It's very important, he's throwing our whole schedule off."

"Sleep Project. Certainly. I'm sorry about your schedule."

Yet another silence, potently pulsed.

"Mr. Rengs, I know this sounds crazy, but would you do something for me?"

"Miss, of course you'd want to get back on schedule, it's only natural, but I have a very complicated lecture to prepare for tomorrow, it deals with the quantity and quality of broken bones in the collected works of Hemingway, did you know that in his first 49 stories alone there were 28 cases of physical mangling, 15 involving legs, 5 hands, 4 groins—"

"No, what I want to ask is, would you say some words for me? I'm beginning to remember something about the name Quentin. Would you do me a big favor and just say the words, Hello, is Quentin there?"

"First say some things for me. Child molester. Filthy degenerate. Rip your tongue out. Pincushion."

The longest pause yet. Calibrated with emotional exhalations.

"Well I'll be triple flogged. You're the man called me the other night."

"You're the 300-year-old lady."

"When I'm woken up from a deep sleep I sound about 600. See, knocking myself out like I do on class assignments and all the hours at the Project in addition, by dinner I'm beat, so some nights I just take a pill after dinner and crawl into bed. Wow, I'm sorry I spoke that rough way to you, Mr. Rengs. I had no idea who it was, you can appreciate that. Also, I'd never heard of any Quentin, I knew the fellow in question as Ivar Nalyd. Oh, oh. Wait a minute. How'd you happen to get my number that night? What gave you the idea of calling me to locate him under any name?"

"I had a message to call him. The number he left was yours."

"Now that's real funny, Mr. Rengs. First, he's never been to my place, second, I never gave him my number, though God knows he's asked over and over, why I hardly know this guy, just see him at the Project and sometimes talk about rock lyrics and that's all. My number's not listed and my friends don't give it out, they know how I insist on my privacy. This is in the category of weird."

"Yes. Tell me, could you in any way be linked in Quentin's mind with the idea of cracking knuckles, Miss—I'm afraid I don't know your name."

"Victoria Paylow, Mr. Rengs. Vicki. What's this about knuckles?"

"Could Quentin connect you in any way with the matter of cracking knuckles, Vicki? That was the subject on his mind the night he left your number."

"Knuckles. Boy. This is insanity of the top echelons. Wearing a derby. I never got into knuckles with him, not in any deep way, that's the truth. I never discuss much of anything with him, about all we do when we're together is sleep. But awhile back I did have some kind of a dream about cracking knuckles. More than one, maybe. It's mostly gone but I remember the loud sounds like pistols and how they scared me close to bald. But where'd Ivar, Quentin, get any thoughts about knuckles? Not from my dreams, that's for sure, we're under strict rules not to talk about our dreams. Well. Would you have any idea why he has two names, Mr. Rengs?"

"No, but the question might be refined. Why does he go to school at Santana under one name and sleep, participate in sleep projects at UCLA, under another?"

"It does seem fastidiously demented, Mr. Rengs. You have any theories about it?"

"Hard to say, Vicki. It could have something to do with keeping fluids and bones separate, he has strong feelings about—"

"No. This has got to stop. This is blue-ribbon lunacy. Somebody's ransacking my brains."

"Did I say something to upset you, Vicki?"

"Fluids and bones, I'll be triple napalmed. That's a theme that crops up time after time in my dreams. Offhand I don't remember any particular dream but it keeps turning up. It's against all rules to tell the contents of our dreams so where's he get off slinging around my dream language? If there's stuff like that in my memory banks, how come he can crack them? I swear—"

"If I find out anything I'll certainly let you know, Vicki, I have your number—"

The following day, after lunch, Quentin rang my bell. He had another ream of lyrics with him. I threatened to send all his lyrics to the CIA if he didn't give me a full explanation of the name Ivar Nalyd. The explanation was not what I would call simple, nor, in the last analysis, or any analysis, very explanatory.

Ivar was nothing but Ravi spelled backward, in honor of Ravi Shankar. Nalyd was a reversal of Dylan, in honor of Bob D., not D. Thomas. Quentin wrote all his songs under this name. He was afraid that if his family got wind of his income-producing activities, his father would cut off his allowance. Quentin held the view that any family as loaded as his should make allowances for a son busy in the arts, so any income the son produced would be gravy rather than bread and butter. Buttered bread is enhanced by gravy.

How, I wanted to know, was he safeguarding his allowance by passing himself off as Ivar Nalyd with such as Victoria Paylow?

He gave several starts. He tabulated his fingernails. He hummed for a time, in sitar glides.

"Victoria Paylow, I believe you said."

"That is correct."

"What would you be knowing about this young person, Gordon?"

"That she knows you as Ivar, and sleeps with you at UCLA with six people looking on. There's a fair amount of apparatus involved, I gather."

"Where'd you come across Vicki, Gordon?"

"She called here yesterday. Looking for you. You've got to learn finesse in dealing with the opposite sex, Quentin. When you make a date to sleep with them and don't show up, they worry. So do all the people standing around."

"Damn it, I called in and left word with the Project secretary that I couldn't make it, she must have forgotten to tell them. The Omen were re-

hearsing for a record date and I had to be there in case they needed some lyric changes. Listen, how come Vicki was calling *you* to track me down?"

"Would it occur to her that you might be at home, when you write lyrics around the clock with your collaborator?"

"Collaborator?"

"She has the distinct impression that that's my function in your life, Quentin."

"I never used that word, Gordon, I swear it, all I said was, you're kind of editor with my stuff. I'm searingly sorry she bothered you, Gordon."

"She has to be set straight, Quentin. She must be made to understand that I'm not your collaborator, you're my contaminator. Now. Two more things need clearing up. First, why you leave this girl's number for me to reach Quentin at, when she knows you as Ivar. Second, regarding this Sleep Project, what, exactly—"

"Who left Vicki's number for anything, Gordon? Are you completely crazed?"

"I direct your attention to the night of the cracking knuckles, Quentin. You left a number for me to call. It was Vicki's number. Vicki said she'd never heard of a Quentin, which was true. What would lead you to do such a rabid—"

"Syllogism serenade sweatshirt. This is a bummer. I was stoned, that was the thing. I must of plain forgot she knew me as Ivar. Oh, so no wonder you thought it was the wrong number. I get it now. Bllb. It was a slip on my part, from being stoned. Leaving that number altogether was a slip, if I did it. Grrz. I had the thought in the back of my head of going over to her place, that much I know. I was cracking my knuckles and getting tensed up and the urge was on me to drop over to Vicki's, I don't know why. The thing with the knuckles just naturally made me think of going to Vicki's. I guess, being stoned, I just translated going there as being there, mixed up the wish and the result, so I left her number without realizing what I was doing. I really meant to drive over there but instead I passed out—"

"How did you know her address and phone number? She tells me she wouldn't give them to you and she's not listed—"

"Not in the phone book, no. But she is in the personnel files at the Project. I've had the idea of paying her a visit for some time, Gordon. I've had my eye on her at the Project, been building up some major urges about her. I'll confess something. The urges got so major, I hung around the Project office one day until the secretary got called out, then I sneaked a look in the filing cabinet, located Vicki's personnel record and memorized

the salient facts. Look, it's complicated. I'd have to reconstruct the whole situation for you. Where it begins is with the Sleep Project—"

"I'd better know about that, too. Just try to spare me the details, such as why they need a secretary."

"You don't know about the Project, Gordon? Ah, then. None of this can make any sense to you, that's obvious. That's where I met Vicki, at the Project. They found out we sleep well together, for some reason, so they schedule us to do it together, for reasons they won't explain. I use the name Ivar Nalyd over there for the same reason I use it on my songs—"

"Let me see if I'm following. You get paid for your activities at the Project?"

"Sure, Gordon, why else would I be putting in all that time? Sure, I get good hourly rates, so does Vicki. So, see, because I make money there, I figured, better do it under the alias, so my old man won't hear about it and stop the allowance. Listen, I've got to take off now. Due at the Project. How about coming out with me and see the setup for yourself, it's wild? Dr. Wolands likes visitors. Gordon, this is a whole new approach to a crucial human function. Look at it this way, here's a thing you do every day of your life, yet you're a blank about it. It's like your knuckles cracking, the most intimate thing and you don't know what's going on. They're studying every aspect at the Project, they go into it real deep, it'll open your eyes . . ."

I had to go, of course. There were witless laminations between Quentin and Vicki, not as many as he would like, more than she warmed to. They made a leaky sandwich which had insinuated itself into my life, leaking from all sides. I felt a need to trace it to the bughouse short-order kitchen in which it had been put together, called, for some reason, the Sleep Project. To get this picture straight, I would have climbed any Mah Own Tang Quentin led me up. Followed him into any unhinged heaven, even if the temperature was seven. Had his name been Mao, I'd still gao.

As we drove along, Quentin told me something about Victoria Paylow. Graduate student at UCLA in history. Doing master's thesis on the sadomasochistic aspects of late medieval sorcery, demonology, witchcraft, black masses, and alchemy. Played good guitar. Carried guitar around to play and sing Omen numbers to herself at odd moments. Adored Omen songs, particularly their lyrics, particularly those lyrics written by him, Quentin, Ivar. Her enthusiasm for said lyrics so intense as to suggest she had a big yen for him which she was trying to cover up by refusing to give him her phone number. Very vital presence to have sleeping next to you. Increasingly, the focal point of the increasingly agitated dreams Quentin

was having at the Project. More spectacularly stacked than the Queen Mary.

"Quentin," I said cautiously, "about the night of the knuckles. If I recall, you said you started the cracking, then the others joined in?"

"That's the way it went, yes."

"Do you remember why you started it? What train of thought you were in when you began bending your fingers?"

"Oh, I was thinking about Vicki, I guess. These days a major part of my thinking is about Vicki."

"Can you recall what you were thinking about her, exactly?"

"Mmp, well, I guess I was thinking about her skirt. She wears this miniskirt to the Project, see, actually it's more micro than mini, a figleaf stretched just enough to wrap around is what it amounts to. I devote a lot of thought to that flyspeck of a skirt, that iota of a skirt, what you might call that soupcon of a cover, just this side of bareass. I was thinking about that little-as-the-law-allows garment, then about reaching for some scissors, then beginning to snip at the skirt with the scissors. Yep, that's about the sequence. I was cutting away, and humming. And thinking, get this, about the La Brea Tar Pits, thinking they should be called the La Brea Arm Pits, though they're between the legs, and laughing to myself. Then there was this voice. Her voice. I was imagining it, of course, remember I was some miles from my skull from this rich grass. The voice was loud, deep, and aggressive. Deeper than a bass. It said, you keep that up and I'll give your hands a whack that'll turn your knuckles to mush. Those are the exact words. The liquid threat first, then it said, fool around like that and I'll crack your knuckles in half, plus each and every other bone in your body. The fracture threat. At that, you can bet, I dropped the imaginary skirt and then the imaginary scissors. All because of this imaginary voice, full of melts and breakages, which rattled my ears. That was when, sure, I began to crack my knuckles. Say, I'm glad you asked this question. It clears some things up. No wonder I got scared from the cracking. Actually I was already scared from the voice's threats against my knuckles."

"So you'd say the nervous cracking stemmed from some prior thoughts, imaginings, about Vicki."

"Gordon, I not only would, I just did."

We rode a while longer.

"Have you ever noticed, Quentin, how often references to fluids and bones come into your conversation?"

"I don't know. Plenty of people talk about fluids and bones, they figure in everybody's life."

"In yours more than in some, I'd say. You like to keep your fluids in

one category, your bones in another, and it annoys you when people get the categories mixed. I mention it because just now, when you remembered about this voice, you quoted it as threatening to hammer your knuckles to mush. The concept of reducing your osseous materials to liquid form would seem to disturb you, I think that's a reasonable conclusion. Do you link this concept in any way with Vicki?"

"That's a big batch of silliness, Gordon. True, the threat was in Vicki's voice, but I was hallucinating, the voice was in my head, not coming from the outside."

"True, but it was your head that, after originating the words, put them in Vicki's mouth. You were the author, but it seemed important to put quotes around the words and attribute them to Vicki."

"Gordon, I don't know where you're trying to get with this line of questioning. What's the whole question of solids and liquids got to do with Vicki, anyway?"

"I don't know, Quentin. But I have to ask you to stop cracking your knuckles and put your hands back on the steering wheel before you kill us both."

Scientism is not for me. What are called the laws of Nature I take as gossip. They tell us a balloon filled with hot air rises because of Boyle's Law, specific gravities, etc. I know different. I know that the balloon goes up because the sun sucks it up. How do I come by this information? By empathy, because my own head is often subject to the sun's powerful suction, is heliotropic, so much so that my neck and shoulder muscles are pulled tight a good deal of the time, to keep my head in place. Medical men tell me this is neurotic tension but I know it for a healthy attempt to keep the organism in one piece. The migraine sometimes produced by this muscle strain is healthy, too, the head's reassuring signal, in the only language it has, that it's very much with me against all cosmic sabotage. Again, think about the peculiar behavior of water when the temperature drops below 32° Fahrenheit. This has always struck me as a highly emotional, and sick, reaction to unpleasantness, like the rigidification you see in certain advanced cases of schizophrenia. Well, science puts the stress on matter, art, on manner. This is probably not news to you.

The point is that I understood no part of the laboratory Quentin led me into. The large main room was laced with wires and cables leading to wall panels on which dials jigged and styluses twitched across revolving drums. Off this central room was a row of cubicles visible through wide walls of glass. Each contained a bed, plus a desk with a typewriter on it. In several of the beds people, men and women, were fast asleep. Electrodes

were taped to assorted parts of the sleepers' bodies, including their skulls. Technicians in white smocks sat in the main room, following the electronic messages being sent out by the sleeping parties. In one cubicle a man in pajamas, apparently just come awake, sat at the desk, typing energetically.

This, Quentin informed me, was the Sleep Center, where that crucial human activity, sleep, was being investigated from every angle, probed to the bottom. It was only in their waking hours, Quentin let me know, that men allowed themselves to be separated by the artificial barriers of color, ethnics, politics, ideology, hunger, territorial imperatives. In their repose all men were one because all slept, and slept alike. Sleep, you might almost say, was humanity's least common denominator, because most common, indeed, universal. Sun makes men aliens to each other and, thus, themselves. Night unites. Mankind could open itself to, and assert, its true physiological community only with eyes closed. The Sleep Project, by ferreting out the true race-wide nature of sleep, was going to show all men their mutuality. The way to a lasting One World was to be revealed to us by that least likely leader, Morpheus, plus his right-hand men, his buddies, Somnus and Hypnos. In Thanatopsis our eyes would for the first time be opened. We would in the end cast off our false gods and pay full respect to His Worship Nod, the Sandman with his ingratiating sands. Something like that. He was very likely going to write a song about it. I couldn't follow the argumentation because I was getting sleepy.

The chief psychologist had joined us during this impromptu lecture. He nodded his approval of the explication by Quentin, now Ivar Nalyd, who, he said, was this lab's champion sleeper, though sometimes carried away in his poeticized claims about the lab's work. Quentin introduced us. The man in the starched smock, truncated, coaly-haired, crisply managerial in manner if pudgy in matter, was Dr. Jerome Wolands. Dr. Wolands greeted my name with the precise opposite of somnolence. He took in so much air so rapidly, I expected all the Pentel pens in his breast pocket to pop.

"Gordon Rengs!" he said. "No! You can't be!"

"I wish they'd told me sooner," I said.

"Gordon Rengs! This is an occasion!"

"For me to leave immediately, unless you calm down."

"No! Fantastic! I've read every word you ever wrote!"

Quentin, Ivar, took this as an occasion, not to leave, not to fall asleep like a champion, simply to put in something obnoxious. He said, "Doc, if those are the only words you've ever read, you're in trouble."

"I'm serious, Mr. Rengs," Wolands said. "In fact, it was a book of yours, *Messages, Hints,* that led me to study psychology."

I was not pleased with the undercurrent that he might have been led to psychology to figure out why he read me. Quentin had another interpretation: "I get your meaning, Doc. That book kept putting you to sleep, so you went into the psychology of sleep, to stay awake."

"No, this man's work kept me awake nights," Wolands said. "He raises so many questions about how and why men claw at each other, up to the level of shooting wars, I turned to psychology to find some answers, and get my sleep again. Well. We're certainly honored a man like you should take an interest in our investigations, Mr. Rengs. Believe it or not, through our studies of sleep we're learning a considerable amount about how and why people provoke each other."

"It's a provocative approach," I said. "What's the basic idea, that if you make people sleep a lot you'll cut down on wars?"

"It's not the sleepers who make wars," Wolands reminded me.

"Not while they're sleeping, anyway."

"Mr. Rengs, well-rested people don't hit each other, asleep or awake. If we can get the insomniacs dozing off again, and improve the repose of the tossers and turners, you see how that ushers in a new epoch. The next great slogan may be, Sleepers of the world, unite! Conceivably that's the only way men can ever forge the true communitas, in sleep. If we can just get them to sleeping soundly again, and that's not a reference to snoring—"

This loonily utopian dissertation on the politics of sleep was interrupted by the arrival of a bouncy, bubbly, extravagantly larded girl, the lab's runner-up sleeper, the one contender to Ivar's title. Victoria Paylow, of course. Carrying her guitar. She stretched outsize blue eyes at me in the very act of winking broadly. I was disturbed by this capacity of hers to enlarge her optic diameters in the process of a signifying contraction. How she managed to convey openness, readiness, a lusty receptivity, with a very literal narrowness of outlook, I don't know. It seemed a trick, in a totally unexpected area, for blending fluids and bones.

She was, in fact, wearing a miniskirt that had the proportions of an iota, even a soupcon. It did, in fact, invite thoughts of scissoring. Ivar was, in fact, studying it in a scissory silence.

"Hi, Mr. Rengs," she said, her two-way-stretch voice as elastic as her eyes. I considered the emotional gamut of a female who could make dock-walloper threats to rip out tongues one minute, utter a chirpy Future Farmers hi the next. "You come down here to see some world-champ sleeping?"

"I like to observe people who are outstanding in any field," I said.

"We don't do it standing," she said. "Doing it on your feet is for amateurs."

"If you keep on standing around, Mr. Rengs will question your professional standing," Wolands said. "Hop to it, kids."

Quentin and Victoria waved to me and slipped out a door. Very soon they reappeared in two of the vacant cubicles, adjoining ones, now dressed in pajamas. In a businesslike, practiced way they arranged themselves in their respective beds and lay still while lab assistants attached wires to all parts of their bodies, including their heads. They seemed unaware of each other and us. Wolands explained that they were in audio-visual isolation: blank wall between them, the windows we looked through were one-way glass. Soon they were alone, eyes closed. Soon after, they were asleep, as Wolands thought he proved by calling my attention to the movements of dials, gauges, meters, and recording styluses.

"You're going to see some very special sleeping here today," Wolands said. "Ivar and Vicki have real gifts for this. More than they know. Interlocking gifts."

I recalled that Quentin had a good deal of Irish blood in him. Vicki had a colleen sauciness about her. I refrained from saying that this might be the lock of the Irish.

"Do you appreciate the full significance of what's going on here, Mr. Rengs?"

"Something that'll wreck the music world? Ivar writes lyrics, you know. I can't believe he writes what he does in a waking state. I assume he creates them when he's asleep."

"It goes far beyond lyrics. Have you heard talk about our recent discovery, REM sleep?"

"You've discovered a new kind of sleep?"

"No, brought to light a very, very old type. REM means Rapid Eye Movement, Mr. Rengs. Every 90 minutes or so our subjects show signs of intense neural-cortical activity. Their alpha brainwaves energize and their eyes begin to move fast, as though watching something. They are watching something. A dream, which accounts for the sudden jump in cerebral energies. The typical sleep pattern is to dream every 90 minutes, Mr. Rengs, in other words, to show high alpha-wave and REM activity every 90 minutes. Part of our job here is to wake certain subjects after each REM episode and get them to write down as much of their dream as they remember. We're learning revolutionary things about dreams. That they take place several times a night. That they release clamoring unused energies in the

brain which, unless drained off during the alpha-REM phases, would in short order make us psychotic."

"I don't follow this. If Ivar's a champion sleeper, that means he has a lot of REM episodes a night. If these are supposed to drain off potentially psychotic energies, why does he go on writing psychotic lyrics?"

"He may write fewer of them than you think, than he thinks. Can you keep a secret, Mr. Rengs?"

"As well as I can keep a distance. I'm a champion distance keeper. My one failure is with Ivar."

"It's absolutely essential that Ivar and Vicki have no inkling of this. You mustn't breathe a word of it, it could destroy the stupendous thing that goes on between them. Stupendous in the sense that it comes out of their torpid states, stupendous also in that it leaves us scientists stupefied. Mouths hanging open. Come with me, please."

He led me to an office off the main room, whose door he unlocked with three different keys. He proceeded to some filing cabinets which had to be opened with multiple keys, too. He brought out two thick dossiers, one with Ivar's name on it, the other with Vicki's. He showed me the contents of both dossiers, stacks of papers on which the dreams of both subjects were typed, each item dated. Each dream record had stapled to it the related alpha-wave, pulse, respiratory, skin-electricity, and other readings.

"I can best make my point by asking you to match a few of these records, Mr. Rengs. Take Ivar's dream sheet for any given day and compare it with Vicki's for the same day. Compare, first of all, the times recorded for the REM episodes."

I took the top sheet from each collection, dated two days before. Vicki's first dream was timed as beginning at 3:47. Quentin's first one got under way at 3:49. Vickie's second one started at 5:31, Quentin's at 5:32. I glanced at some other sheets from both piles. The correspondences seemed to be of the same order.

"They dream together?" I said.

"Not quite," Wolands said, eyes in a high glint. "You will note that there's always a gap of two, three, or four minutes between the starting times. They're close, but not neck and neck, especially at the beginning."

"Vicki always starts before Ivar?"

"Now we're getting somewhere, Mr. Rengs! Yes, the sequence is invariable, Vicki takes the lead, Ivar very soon falls in! The sensational point is that, each and every time, day in and day out, Vicki's alpha-REM burst *triggers* Ivar's! Isn't it enough to make your head swim!"

The swimming in that portion of my anatomy was more localized than

that. Each of my own eyes was trying to do the Australian crawl away from the other.

"Then their alpha-REM patterns are related as to chronological form. Is there any indication that there's a give-and-take in content, too?"

"Spoken like a true scientist, Mr. Rengs! I'm proud of you! Yes, indeed, that's the hammerblow question! And as for the answer, it's a piledriver! I mean, yes, absolutely, quite so, staggeringly so, in each and every case Vicki's dream sets off Ivar's, then colors and seeps through all its content! The psychic traffic so far has been all one-way, from Vicki to Ivar, never the reverse! It's her unconscious dictating to his all the way, much as he tries to fight it off! In this give-and-take Vicki gives and Ivar takes, takes, takes! Just read a few of the dreams for the same time slots and see for yourself!"

I picked a page from Vicki's pile at random. It was dated sometime in March:

> Mound of human bones, melting, making puddles. Some rock musicians on it, rehearsing. Sitar player resembles Ivar, hair like overcooked linguini. I say fingers too stiff, you need more liquid sound. He says, show me how. I pull sounding board off sitar. Sit, put hollow sitar between legs. Open 13th Century illuminated book, manual on witches' concoctions. Read recipe for brew to dissolve bones: to contents of whale's small intestine add 7 owls' beaks, 5 hyenas' tear ducts, 13 bats' eyes, pinch of pulverized tarantula legs, sprinkle of finely ground rhino spleen, etc. Mix in ingredients, stirring slowly. Drone proper incantation: if Hell's a boil, a boil, a boil, what's the temperature of the Shiny One's Rotunda, I wunda, zero or unda? Brew begins to steam. Sitarist says, I make hard-rock sound for the people, you're putting me on. I say, no, I'm going to put you in. To show him how it works, I take human shinbone from pile, drop it in brew, bone dissolves with a hiss. I say, that's the sound you should make, very soft rock. He hides his hands, screaming, get out, you don't make soup out of my knuckles, bitch of the Styxian kennels. I say, if you know where I live, why're you always trying to get my address and phone number? I add, what could you do if you came calling anyway, you with your already mostly soft bones? He says, never mind the insults, sticks and stones may break, but. I say, drop around to my place, buddy, I dare you, the Styx that runs through my house'll break all your bones, soften them up, anyway. I grab his arm and shove it into the brew, up to the armpit. It dissolves with a hiss. He stands there with one arm gone,

socket still steaming, says, now how do you expect me to play that sitar? I say, try your toes, if they're still hard enough, but why make hard sounds when soft becomes you more . . .

I located Quentin's corresponding dream. It had started to register less than two minutes after Vicki's got under way:

House of Gnocchi. Having dinner with Vicki. Steaming bowl of stracciatella (spinach and egg drops) in front of her. She asks if I wouldn't like her to dip my knuckles in her soup to make them soft like the rest of my bones. I tell her to stop talking crazy. She says if I don't want her to fix my knuckles up why take her to a place like House of Gnocchi, which means knuckles, gnocchi as a matter of fact are soft farinaceous knuckles. She stirs her steaming soup with a spoon. This makes me hide my hands behind my back. She says my bones are brittle from trying to be so hard and would feel better with some lubrication, get soft, their natural state. I ask why when subject of bones comes up she always puts in something about fluids. She says my bones have tendency to go watery by themselves, don't need her help. She says she'll illustrate. She drops a breadstick in her steaming stracciatella, it goes soggy and begins to shred. I yell at her, breadsticks and breadstones can't break my bones, and she can keep her goddamned address and phone number. As I'm about to rap her with my knuckles, idea for a lyric jumps into my head. Along these lines: If hell's hot, what's the temperature of heaven, seven? She says, how long you think you'd last at my house, anyway? I say, there's nothing so threatening in a kennel but fleas. She says, how about in a House of Nyooki, Nyooki, Nyooki? I quick shove my hands behind my back again . . .

I put my own hands behind my back. Their palms were sweating in the manner certain novelists call profuse. My thoughts spiraled down to a crucial date, April 22. I was not sure I wanted to, but I began to search through the records for the dreams of that day. I found them:

Vicki:

Cauldron between legs. I'm enormous, cauldron's enormous. Mixing a black, viscous brew, enormous bones swimming in it. Fumes smell like tar. Singing usual incantation in basso pro-

fundo: Fire roll down from the mountaing, the mountaing, the mountaing, cook up my good brew, burn up his house, burn up his goods, soften up his bones, cook up my melting brew. Ivar appears. He's tiny. Looks up, says, why you sing about mountaings? I say, because I'm a Kentucky hillwoman, cooking up my home remedies. He says, don't you know any other songs, I don't like that song. I sing something else from my repertoire: If on Deliverance Day, when comes the Saver, to bring us Up There where They got the High Flavor, his name's Ho Chi Minh, will we dig in? He says, what you cooking there? I say, stuff to keep your knuckles from cracking. He says, does this remedy have a name? I say, sure, we call it La Brea Arm Pits. He says, that stuff won't melt any bones, look at all those bones in there. I pull some out, mastodon thighs, saber-tooth tiger fangs. I say, you a mastodon or saber-tooth, that your bones won't melt down? He says, I got your address and phone number from another source, you witch. I say, don't you call or come around, with your easy melted bones. He says, that won't work, keeping that big mess of black threatening remedy between your legs, it won't remedy me. I begin to sing another song: one'll con off all your money, another'll meddle away any wife you got, cause where you should be ossicle you are or will be all lappy treacle. To show him his problem, I crack my knuckles, they sound like pistol shots, frighten me. He begs me to stop. I crack harder. He gives a terrible cry and dives head first into the steaming tar . . .

Day and date with this, Quentin:

Going up steps to Vicki's place. Not invited, she's refused me the address, but I wheedled it out of our sitar player who sells her pots and pans and is operative for CIA. Pick the lock, go in. She's cooking in the kitchen. I ask what she's making. She says, Shrimps Remedie, old Alsatian delicacy. I ask why so many bones in this stew if it's a shrimp dish. She says those are just Master Don's knuckles for flavor, because she likes high flavor, that's the saver, only she pronounces it saber, and says it's toothsome. I say, Don who? She says, Don Juan, that's spelled, W, A, N, Don Wan. She says maybe you haven't heard but Don Wan always sucked his knuckles. Rest is very vague. Recall just bits and pieces. She sings a lot. One song has the line, Ho, G-Men. Another is some kind of folk number with the repeated stanza, Mah

> Own Tang. She beats out time on her knuckles and asks if I wouldn't like to have my shrimp remedied. I say, sure, and to get away from that terrible drumming from her knuckles I jump into the big bowl of delicious-smelling steamy chocolate between her legs with the crisped nuts floating in it. Going down for third time I hear her singing, Ah-men, Ah-men, I try to yell to her that we're known as Omen, but it's too late, only make bubbles in this chocolate that smells and tastes like tar. I feel my right arm coming off. I tell myself, I'm drowning in Mah Own Armpit and tar is Mah Own Tang . . .

I put the typewritten sheets down. I had to, they were getting soaked through in my hand. I said, "I see. It's some kind of devilish ESP."

"We're not prepared to give it a name," Dr. Wolands said, "but we give it our fullest attention."

"Her unconscious seeps, you said? Steamrollers. Rips to shreds."

"All we know is, when they're lying in adjoining rooms, fast asleep, there's some terrifying traffic through that wall."

"Missile launchers and 105's. You were saying they don't provoke when they're asleep?"

"Not in a way that breaks bones, Mr. Rengs."

"Bones don't get broken, no. But melted, all over the place."

"They harden again, by the time they're needed. As they don't in, say, Vietnam—"

Wild sounds from the central room. Quentin's voice bellowing something. Vicki screeching a counterpoint. A crash, a splintering, more yells. Someone shouting for Dr. Wolands, Dr. Wolands.

Wolands looked disoriented. Loud noises were not the order of the day in this citadel of sleep. Again, the bellows, the shrillings. Wolands hurried out, with me close behind.

The commotion was coming from Vicki's sleep chamber. It had an amplified, metallic quality because it was reaching us in the main room through the lab's sound system.

Quentin had gone amok. He had apparently broken out of his own cubicle and into Vicki's. He had smashed Vicki's guitar over Vicki's head, it was resting now on her shoulders with her head poking up from the ruins of the soundbox. He had two clumps of her long reddish hair in his hands and was pulling demonically at them, twisting her head from side to side. His eyes were bugged out in a mammoth raging. His gaped mouth appeared to be on the verge of producing foam.

He thundered, "Liar, am I! A liar, huh! I'll show you, you bitch!"

She was trying to push him away, yelling back, "Cut that out! Quit it, now, you ultimate maniac!"

There were several lab assistants in the cubicle, trying to take hold of Quentin. He kept kicking and shouldering them away, with the strength of ten, of demons.

"Show who writes my words, you scabby she-hound!" Quentin boomed terribly, in day-of-reckoning tones. "Going to write the whole oration for your funeral, right now, on your scummy skull, in my own handwriting, every word, you refugee from the verminest kennels! Had just about all I'm going to take from you, understand! Insults and more insults till I'm up to here! They're gonna break your bones, not mine, reject of the garbage hounds!"

She screeched, clawed at his hands. He kicked more attendants away.

"What is it, what's this insanity?" Wolands spat at the nurse hovering over the electroencephalograph drums.

"I don't know! It was like an explosion!" the nurse sputtered, palms tight to her cheeks. "They both had REM episodes, close together as usual! We woke them when the energy levels went down, as usual! They went to their desks, as they always do, they began to type, then Ivar began making faces, he seemed to be getting angrier and angrier as he got more awake, then all of a sudden he jumped up shouting vile words, and rushed into the corridor, and broke into Vicki's room carrying her guitar, he must have picked it up in the dressing room, and before anybody could stop him—terrible, horrible!"

Wolands looked grim. "I half saw it coming," he said. "I sensed it, to a degree. I just didn't know it would be this soon, and preferred to believe—"

"Make wisecracks about knuckles crack!" Quentin roared. "Go ahead! Here's more crack for you, you apprentice bitch!" He whacked his hand, knuckles leading, across her left cheek, then her right, at the same time scattering more attendants.

"You're a great big shipment of stenchy suet and that's why you've got to go hitting your betters!" Vicki ground out at him, shutting her eyes tight against the slaps, struggling to pull free.

"Here's some suet'll knock your teeth out!" Quentin blasted, cracking her in the mouth. "Want to see how your teeth crack? Listen!" Crack, he went. "Want some teeth melted down? How's this for melt!" Crack, again.

"We can't just stand here, it's not right!" the nurse groaned.

"No, you prepare a hypo, strongest tranquilizer, strongest dose," Wolands said. "Get it ready and stand by. We'll stop this one way or another."

He rushed into the corridor, me close behind. We eased our way into Vicki's crowded cubicle. Quentin was practically pulling poor Vicki off the floor by those ropes of hair, those two red asps, trumpeting, "Where're your shitty magic brews now, huh! Put some on your scalp that'll keep it from peeling off, that's an invitation, you great boiler of bones!"

"All your stiff's in your fingers, that's why the knuckles crack, let's see you do something with a girl with something besides the big noise fingers!" Vicki splatted back at him.

Wolands signaled to the assistants to close in on Quentin again, with us reinforcing their flanks. They made a concerted grab for him, as Wolands and I tore his hands away from Vicki and pinned them to his sides. He writhed, he did the exercises of the serpent. We had to stay well behind him to avoid his snapping teeth.

"Now, Ivar, you're getting worked up over nothing," Wolands said at his most syrupy. "You've simply misinterpreted, lad."

"Easy, friend," I said into Quentin's ear. "You said the hourly rates are good here, keep them happy."

"You don't know the extent of their diabolism, Gordon," Quentin panted. "They're giving me the worst kind of injections, in the head, while I sleep."

"We'll give you the best injection, lad, you'll sleep the sleep of the righteous," Wolands said, helping to steer Quentin out to the corridor and back into his own cubicle.

We got the squirmy boy down on the bed and held him down. The nurse was immediately there, giving him the hypo while we all cooperated in keeping his arm still.

"Now I know what's going on here," Quentin puffed into my face. "They're trying to see how many pieces they can break me into, that's the project. Somnial suggestion, Gordon, I've read about it. The minute I'm asleep they start piping that she-devil's voice into my ear, with all kinds of cackling witch suggestions, to make me dream their programmed dreams, and study how far they can go programming my dreams before I break down into a howling maniac entirely, somnial input, I had inklings of it before but I closed it out of my head but today it exploded in my head and I got their number, I already had her number, didn't have to wait for her to give it, got it elsewhere, would of gone there and showed how much stiff but passed out, today got theirs, whole scheming bunch . . ."

His voice was trailing off. Whatever the nurse had pumped into him, it was powerful.

"They couldn't pipe her voice or anybody's in your ear," I said into his ear. "Feel around, there's just no apparatus for it under the pillow or any-

where. Besides, I was watching when you went to sleep, I didn't see any signs of any such piping."

"No sense looking for apparatus," Quentin said sleepily. "Got it hidden well. Inside tubes of bedstead behind walls somewhere. Pipe her hellcat's poisons up through pillow into my head so I dream against myself and they wait to see how long before I fall apart start raving. Put stop to this once for all. Gordon. Enough's enough."

His voice faded altogether and he was asleep. He began to snore immediately in soundest sleep.

"What's got into him?" I said to Wolands. "Too much Vicki? He got too big a dose of her infiltrations and began to sense a plot?"

Wolands' face was serious. He pulled the sheet of paper from Quentin's typewriter and studied it, frowning.

"I've got an idea what happened, got to go to Vicki's room and check it out," he said. "Would you mind waiting for me in the file office, Mr. Rengs? I left the door open. Wait there, I'll bring along the evidence in a moment."

In a matter of minutes Wolands joined me, carrying the dream records typed by the tandem sleepers. He placed them on the desk, side by side, for me to examine.

"Before you read the texts," he said, "look at the starting times registered on both alpha-REM graphs. The clue is there."

I did as he suggested. Vicki's dream, if the styluses were right, had started at precisely 3:47.91, Quentin's at precisely 3:47.91.

"No gap at all," I said. "This time they did start neck and neck."

"The evidence is indisputable. I've wondered many times if this would happen, and if so, when, but I never dreamed, if you'll forgive the word in this context, it would be so soon, and the results so violent. As a matter of fact, I've even had a careful study of the time differentials made, to ascertain if they indicated any trend. There certainly was a trend. It wasn't straightline, there were waverings and backslidings, but we found an undeniable overall curve. Downward. When they began sleeping together, their dream initiation times were as much as five and six minutes apart. Slowly, and jerkily, the gap came down to four minutes, then three, then two. It was a mathematical certainty that in the end the gap would close, they would be identical starters, but we couldn't say when. Today, as you've seen, the gap was closed. With a bang, and a variety of whimpers."

"What does this tell you about his going berserk?"

"You've read samples of their earlier dreams, Mr. Rengs. You know his were never just mirror images of hers, he was resisting, fighting off her imposed content, distorting her symbols, cloaking, reshaping. But the re-

sistance was going steadily down. In the last days his dreams have echoed hers much more strongly and nakedly. This explains why the gap was narrowing between their starting times. Because his unconscious was fighting hers off less and less, his dreams were triggered more and more rapidly by hers. As he became more and more her slave in point of time, so he did in the dream content."

"And today the gap is wiped out altogether. Meaning his resistance is wiped out?"

"I see no way to avoid that interpretation."

"If that's so, wouldn't his dream be an exact duplicate of hers, with no distortions, colorings, reshapings?"

For answer, Wolands slid the two typewritten sheets closer to me. Not wanting to, I read.

Vicki:

> A classroom. Subject, musicology. Various instruments on display on pedestals. Students in kneepants and Eton collars are members of The Omen, plus Ivar. Lecturer is myself in academic robes but wearing tall conical hat with arcane symbols on it, plus an assortment of musical signs. I say, students, today our subject is lyrics. Students begin to take careful notes. I say, lyric derives from the word lyre, name for the old string instrument, the hand-held harp, which was used in olden times to accompany vocalized words. I take down the lyre from its pedestal. I strum its strings. I say, the member of this class who calls himself a lyricist is a lyre, spelled, l-i-a-r, pronounced, liar. Because he claims to write original lyrics and only steals them from his collaborator. I say, I will now introduce the collaborator, who is not a liar but a true lyricist worthy to be accompanied on the lyre. Will our guest lecturer Mr. Gordon Rengs please come in. Mr. Rengs steps in, wearing a leopard-skin loincloth, more a jockstrap. I say, Mr. Rengs will now favor us with a few words on the musical potential of the human knuckles as an accompanying instrument. Mr. Rengs says, friends, music lovers, the melodic and harmonic capacities of the human knuckles are limitless, if they are in good condition and emit rich, resonant soundings, not the unpleasant cracklings of the over-dry and hence brittle, those who at their hardest may crack and shatter. Allow me to demonstrate with one of my own compositions. He begins to sing, Fire come down the mountaing, burn up all you house an goods, striking rich, resonant background chords from his knuckles with some xylo-

phone hammers. He says, there is an individual present in this room who claims he strikes songs like Mah Own Tang from his own richly lyrical knuckles but I can attest that his knuckles only crack, as the too brittle bones crack in Hemingway, and, in short, that I wrote this song, as I write all his songs, and he is an ooze pretending to be a monolith, and only plagiarizes . . .

It went on and on. Vicki had been dreaming lavishly today. I felt I had read quite enough. With some reluctance I turned to the twin sheet.

Quentin:

Lecture hall. Some class in musicology. Lots of instruments standing on pedestals. All The Omen and me present, in short pants and wide starched collars with big bunched ties. Lecturer is Vicki, wearing doctoral robes, high cone-shaped hat with magic and music symbols all over it. She says, today our subject is lyrics. We begin to make notes. She says, lyric derives from the word lyre, name of an old string instrument, the hand-held harp, which they used in ancient times to accompany vocalists. She takes the lyre down from its stand. She runs her fingers across the strings. She says, the member of this class who calls himself a lyricist is a lyre . . .

I felt an ache at the base of my tongue, as though it were being pulled at hard. I said, "Yes, I guess you could call this a breakthrough."

"A break through and down," Wolands said.

"This is what I get out of it. Ivar may have some potency doubts. I suspect this because one night, April 22, he was having heated erotic thoughts about Vicki, and decided to go to her place and establish his virility, but instead smoked a lot of marijuana and passed out, maybe to avoid the challenge. Let's say it's so. All right. Vicki senses this shakiness in him from the beginning. Out of her own malicious needs, she goes after this weakness in him, real or imagined. Her unconscious goes after it. Her dreams zero in on this sore spot, week after week. Today they score the full bullseye, all the fight's gone out of him . . ."

"I would say that's very acute, Mr. Rengs. To the extent that he's an avoider, she's an attacker, their whole sequence of dreams shows that. And this afternoon, when he had no more defenses left, no more energies to ward off her gibes, and her dream crashed into his full force, he felt invaded. He knew such a terrible dream had to come from somewhere. It was out of the question to name himself as the source. So he decided it was

all trickery, we were in an elaborate plot against him, using sleep suggestion, piped-in voices, and so on. He's right to suspect there's some sort of psychic breaking and entering, of course. What he doesn't know, because we haven't been able to tell him, is that the footpadding is exclusively of the mental order, without electronic tricks."

"There's one thing I don't understand. Why has she got me parading through her dream as a lyric writer in a loincloth?"

"The best person to ask about that is Vicki, Mr. Rengs. She's down on the campus waiting for you. She thinks it's important that you two talk."

In parting I said, "You may have to revise your ideas somewhat. The worst wars may originate in dreams."

He countered with, "Come, come, Mr. Rengs, you're not going to argue that Ivar and Vicki are typical dreamers."

"Maybe not. But they're typical, if highly energized, infighters."

"That's precisely why we must study them in depth, Mr. Rengs. Thanks to the rich network of underground channels open between them, they afford us a rare opportunity to get some electroencephalographic and other insights into that most American of phenomena, togetherness. Don't you think they're the ideal mutually tuned couple? Perhaps, if we can learn enough about these two, we'll come to appreciate that togetherness can be one of the weirdest and wildest variants of total war, if not its prime source. . . ."

Her face was covered with bruises, but she was in good spirits. As soon as we found a place on a bench, she said, "I don't blame Ivar for any of this."

I said, "That's broadminded of you. Whom do you blame?"

"Nobody, Mr. Rengs. The setup in the lab guaranteed that it would come to this sooner or later, I see that very clearly now."

"How, exactly?"

"I'm not a fool, Mr. Rengs. I know now that what they're really studying, at least as between Ivar and me, is some kind of ESP, and between Ivar and me there's damn plenty."

"How do you know that?"

"I've got a head to think with. And plenty to think about, after today. I don't have to see Ivar's dream records to know there are correspondences between our dreams, overlaps, echoes back and forth, that just can't be explained by any kind of communication other than the extra-sensory. For example, the songs, incantations, whatever you want to call them, that show up in my dreams. Don't you suppose I recognize how close they come to the lyrics Ivar keeps turning out for The Omen? I sing about what's the

temperature of the Shiny One's Rotunda, zero or unda, only I never breathe a word about this dream to him, yet he comes back with, what's the temperature of heaven, seven. Such reverberations need explaining, don't they?"

"And your explanation is?"

"ESP, Mr. Rengs, there's no two ways about it. It's only a question of which way the ESP traffic goes, him to me or me to him. I'm dead sure of the direction now, it's him to me all the way. And that's the reason you showed up in the dreams today. In mine, and I suppose in Ivar's, though there I'm just guessing."

"You're losing me, Vicki. How would ESP from Ivar to you bring me in?"

"I've got the whole picture now, Mr. Rengs, I assure you. You're his collaborator! He's boasted about it often enough when I've complimented him on his lyrics! He uses the word collaborator so he can claim a creative association with a distinguished writer and teacher like you, but what he's hiding with that puffed-up boast is that you really write those great lyrics and he just steals them and puts his name on them! He's an impotent scribbler but he gets a big creative potency from you, because you're nice enough and generous enough to let him take all the credit! Well, he's got to have a lot of secret guilts about that sleazy lie, which color his dreams, and, in reflex, mine. Today those guilts just shot up and took over his dream. He was making a naked confession as to his plagiarism in his dream, and it spilled right over into mine. Of course, he couldn't acknowledge that the terrible revelation in that dream came from him, and spilled out to me. He had to claim it originated with me and was fed in some tricky way *into* him. And, of course, had to deny it was based on fact. We know the technical word for that, projection, sneaking your own guilts out and into others. So he came roaring after me, to beat me up for his own sleep admissions. But listen, I know I'm right about how the traffic goes. I know because of the inspired lyrics that come out of a clod and a dud like Ivar. They come up in you, a vastly talented man. He takes them over. They get fed into my dreams, even ones he's still working on, ones I haven't heard yet and couldn't possibly know. So what I'm saying is, there's a flow of rich psychic material *through* Ivar, and into me. Coming, if you want to name the source, from *you*. I know the logistics here, Mr. Rengs. Ivar's only a transmitting belt, for marvelous excitements and incitements from you to me. That's what I wanted to say to you. When there's that much wild flow from one human being to another, they ought to face the fact and consider its meanings . . ."

The ache at the root of my tongue had become a nagging pulse. This

was a new situation to me, the Muse accusing the a-mused of plagiarism, or having a ghostwriter.

"I think you're exaggerating the sizes of my emotional exports, Vicki! To begin with, I really contribute very little to Quentin's lyrics, you must believe—"

"Come on, Mr. Rengs. Really. How's a klutz like that going to come up on his own with a shattering thought like, comes the savior, to lead us upstairs to best behavior, and if his name's mao, will we gao? There's a kind of genius in that. I can tell a klutz from a genius."

"You should also be able to tell that this genius of mine does not produce such inspired lines in my own writing. These references to klutzes, Vicki. I'd like to get into that a little more. You seem to feel that Quentin is somewhat deficient in fields other than lyric writing. For example, why do you make so much of his knuckles? Their fragility, and so on?"

"Oh, that started with something simple. Once in the lab, while we were waiting to be called, just to pass the time, because he's not exactly an inspired conversationalist, I said something about Hemingway. That's it, he'd told me you were scheduled to give a lecture to the Santana branch of FANNUS on all the broken bones in Hemingway, and that interested me, so I said, that's right, it's a panorama of fractures, the males in Hemingway were always getting their bones broken, and having severe potency troubles too, so maybe the broken bones were as much symbols as anatomy. I said, Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* can't finally make it with Maria because they shot his leg into splinters at the bridge, but Jake Barnes can't get together with Lady Brett in *The Sun Also Rises* because his tool of the male trade was shot off in the war, and didn't it add up to the same thing finally? That's when I first noticed this funny habit in Ivar, how he began to suck on his knuckles like they were candy, and the color in his cheeks was high. I said to him on that occasion, what are you trying to do, dissolve your knuckles? His color got higher and he said something feebleminded irrelevant, something about, well, on the subject of sucking, you smoke and I don't. He's really a nowhere conversationalist."

"Coming back to today's dream, Vicki. The dream you feel Quentin originated and passed along to you. What's your thought as to why Quentin would bring me on the scene dressed in a loincloth?"

"Nothing to it! You're the creator, he's the copycat and snitcher! The creative one's the potent one, right! The source of all the flow! The male in the loincloth's the walking epitome of potency, whereas the snotnose plagiarist is a kid in kid's sissy clothes who can do nothing with his puny little pencil but sit there while the real man talks and take impotent notes!

It's so plain, no wonder the dumdum had to jump me and give me a working over! On the assumption that this humiliating picture was sent out by me, not you, of course."

"I see."

"Another thing I've been dying to ask you, Mr. Rengs. How come you know so much about synovial fluid?"

I bit my tongue hard, at precisely the point where it was still sore from my biting it some days before.

"Do I?"

"Plenty. See, the other afternoon Ivar and I were chatting for a minute, and when I remarked about his cracking his knuckles so much he said it had something to do with synovial fluid. He said you'd explained the whole thing to him, that it has mucinlike ingredients, it's secreted by the synovial linings of bursae, articulations, and tendon sheaths. Well, I give you my word, that hit me hard. When I was an undergraduate I was set on being a doctor so I took the pre-med course, a lot of classes in physiology and such, so I know all about synovial fluid, but I wondered how a nonscientist would know so much. Where did you pick up all this technical information, Mr. Rengs?"

"Here and there, I guess. Anybody who's a writer browses a lot."

"You might know the name of the fluid, yes. But all that detailed information about bursae and articulations and mucin? It just doesn't figure, bright as a man like you must be."

"Vicki, I once was friendly with the flamenco guitarist Segovia. He was a pre-med student before he gave up science in favor of his first love, the guitar. We spent many evenings together, talking about this and that, he gave me a lot of medical information that's stuck in my mind. Forgive me, it's been stimulating talking to you but I must go now, lecture to prepare—"

"You going to lecture any more on the statistical distribution of broken bones in Hemingway? I'd sure like to hear you talk about that."

"No, I've about covered that, what I'm tackling next is a more fluid subject, the incidence of ptomaine in the 19th-century literature of the Iberian Peninsula."

"Ho. Wowie. Now that's irrevocably wild, Mr. Rengs. I had a dream way back there about ptomaine and Spain, one of my first dreams, if you don't believe me ask Dr. Wolands to look it up in the records. If you needed any more proof about the traffic between you and me and its direction—"

"Yes. Goodbye, Vicki."

"See you around, Mr. Rengs."

"Right. I'll be the one wearing the loincloth."

I'm sorry to be breaking a prime rule of the writing game. Everybody knows about the so-called obligatory scene. If you've been building to a confrontation, laid the groundwork for a showdown, you're obliged, it's said, to carry through. This is known as going from premise to payoff. Now, in this REMMY story I've been telling, so full of rapid eye movements, there are certainly the seeds of one more encounter between Victoria Paylow and myself, a bang-up, all-out, full-bodied encounter in which all foreshadowed can come to, well, pass. The encounter never took place, I'm obliged to report, and that's the extent of my obligation. It makes no difference how rapidly you're eyeing me. This is the point where make-believe and the undoctored particulars part company. On the stage, for example, you have to stick with your premises to the neatly packaged end. In real life, you can vacate any premises any time you want. This is the great advantage of actuality over art, and why many people prefer it. All I'm saying is, being more interested in guarding my hide than weaving a plot, I was under no obligation to come face to face with Victoria Paylow again, and didn't.

There was one more phone call, however. The voltage flow being, I hardly have to note, from Vicki to me. I mean, she was the one who placed the call, and made the major waves, I assume of the alpha order; arousing much REM in me.

"Mr. Rengs, I just wanted to tell you I got a new guitar, the Sleep Project paid for it, I'd love to show it to you."

"Vicki, you're half my age."

"So? Does that make me half your weight? Height? Body heat? Itch?"

"It makes me twice as old as you."

"I'm for all that separates the men from the boys. So I can get to the men without stepping around the boys and wasting valuable time."

"Don't you care about the generation gap?"

"I care about people who know how to hop it. Neither party has to travel the whole distance. I could meet you halfway. Or at any bar you care to name. For that matter, at your apartment. Say in about 15 minutes."

"You're a fluid always ready to call a cab."

"A good ossicle's hard to find. It's worth some road work."

Behind every successful man, we're told, there has to be a woman. Yes, but a miniskirted graduate student of the incantatory arts with a guitar slung over her shoulder? Robert Graves may be right about the fount of all poetry being the primal Mother-Mate-Mistress-Muse, the chesty White Goddess fancied up with asps and corn shucks. But must she be putting all the words, every last one, in our mouths? What are we, then, sending stations, echo chambers?

I had a wobbly picture of Vicki and myself lying side by side, togethered in bliss, her unconscious dictating all my books to my unconscious. I thought about her, in some ESP-oriented future, having legal claim to my royalties. Suing me. For plagiarism.

"Vicki, you may be a fluid, but you're acting like several petrified forests on the move. Which, I'll make no bones about it, petrifies me. Which, I don't have to point out to your sharp mind, is not a good state for your purposes. My calcifications and your liquefactions, I'm afraid, are destined to remain forever unjoined. That's about the hard and the soft of it."

"You're a flinty man, Mr. Rengs. That's what I like about you."

"You're the sort of lymphy girl I vastly admire, Vicki. At a distance."

"A gap?"

"Agape."

"I hear The Omen's recording a new number Ivar just wrote, something called, *Ptomaine in Spain Falls Rainly in the Plains.* Now, Jesus, Peter, Paul, and Mary, doesn't that prove—"

"My cup runneth over. With a grateful dead of migraines, a loving spoonful of cold sweats, a holding company of grand-mal seizures. I wish you and your whole generation well, and godspeed, without traffic jams. Goodbye, Vicki."

Leopard skin. Ho. Syllogism serenade sweatshirt. Hm.

Afterword:

I haven't paid much attention to science fiction but the last time I thought about it, 11:43 P. M., October 29, 1948, I didn't think much of it.

It was a particularly smoggy day in Los Angeles. I wasn't in Los Angeles, I was in Greenwich Village reading a self-complacent report in the Herald-Trib on Angelenos about to breathe their last and observing with no complacency whatsoever that my window sills, desk, typewriter, manuscripts, and therefore, by logical inference, my lungs, were beady with soot.

I remember what thoughts went through my head. That the poisoning of air, earth and all living creatures was not an invention of the writers of sf. That this infestation of a whole planet, quite beyond the wildest imaginings of sf writers, had been brought about altogether absentmindedly, as the merest byproduct, by the scientists. That science, in other words, turned out much better fiction than sf ever could.

That was when I stopped thinking about sf and began to pay attention to science. As a writer of non-sf fiction I know how to go to the source.

I saw the bad joke being staged when, on the occasion of our first land-

ing on the moon, the "experts" asked to telecomment on the event were two deans of sf. They spoke emotionally, while, I imagine, the entire scientific community snickered, about how they had both prefigured this moon voyaging in their sf novels.

All they had prefigured was the physical displacement of human beings from earth to the moon, which meant that they had prefigured nothing. Not the diversionary nature of the gala, to take our minds off the unsatisfactory results of the displacement of U. S. citizens to Vietnam. Not the vomitous showbizz inanity. Not the PR milking of the solemn moment by Tacky Dick, the everybody-wants-to-get-into-the-act circus atmosphere. (Nixon had his PR reasons, of course. He badly needed to have his oily image associated with some real estate in the cosmos on which there was no static-making and bolixing Ho.)

Not, certainly, the later commercial exploitation of the astronaut program, which began to suggest that the whole NASA spending spree was by way of giving enough big-science panache to Scott Carpenter so he could do all those commercials for Standard Oil pushing their fake F-310 gasoline additive as the surefire cure for air pollution, lumbago, and, possibly, impotence.

The sf deans may have thought science had vindicated them but all it had done was show up the "avantgarde" fictioneers about science for the stragglers behind reality they always are. I continued with profit to go on not thinking about sf.

This is by way of getting it straight that the two stories presented here are not sf. They are fiction, to be sure, about matters that embrace certain scientific considerations, but they are not sf, whose premise is that science embraces all matters and that therefore any sf work, which is about nothing but science or the superficialities of science deftly skimmed off, is by definition about everything. Sf is in the nature of things about things, sometimes disguised as people. A very different kind of fiction becomes necessary when you're interested in people not reduced to things.

These stories should not be taken as anything more than finger exercises. It's sometimes relaxing and restorative for writers to do a story with the little finger after long periods of working with both fists. I can tell you from long experience that it's hard, and very tiring, to do any extended typing with both hands balled into fists. It results, among other things, in a lot of misspellings.

These stories are in a minor, though I would hope not altogether trivial, key. One thing they are trying to say is that you can't get any fiction of consequence out of science unless you gain enough elevation over the subject to see that science is not coterminous with the human condition, however much its increasingly demonic and mindless energies seem nowadays to be devoted to curing that condition through the process of elimination. Which, to be sure, would eliminate science, too. But it takes

somebody more or other than a scientist or sf writer to see that. It also requires a science-freed eye to see how plain fucking boring much of science is, a concept foreign to both scientists and sf writers.

"The Bisquit Position" has to do with the reactions of a handsome Alaskan malamute to napalm—not the concept of napalm, the experience. Napalm is a direct product of science, again, one the sf people didn't manage to dream up in the head before the scientists got it sizzling in, and on, the flesh. The attitude of a goodlooking, intelligent dog to the experience of napalm, not the concept of it, does, I contend, go somewhat beyond the purlieus of sf, particularly since the sf people, being so busy writing their highly imaginative TV scripts for "Lost in Space" and "Star Trek," seldom get around to expressing much of an attitude toward napalm.

This is a story much more about Vietnam, even, in the end, about human attitudes toward meat both human and animal, than about napalm and, therefore, science. Sf writers don't seem to be notably up in arms about the U. S.-stagemanaged bestialities in Vietnam. They don't seem to get into politics much at all.

You'll never get science to stir up any real social conscience in scientists, they're much too busy smashing society and its environs under various military-industrial-complex contracts. But if science doesn't generate some pretty hot politics in sf writers they're clearly cases of tails wagging dogs.

That rule can be broadened. If consciousness in general doesn't bring out some damned booming politics in writers in general, especially in these deadend times, the proof is in that said writers are unconscious.

"The Girl With Rapid Eye Movements," on the other hand, is a facetious, though perhaps not entirely beside the point, treatment of the thesis that rock lyricists, who put themselves forth as the free-est minds and souls, really dictate their lyrics to each other. The medium through which the dictation takes place (in this case, anyhow) is ESP during a period of REM, or deep-sleep dreaming, for both parties, which does put us in the realm of science of a sort. (In other more frequent cases the medium for the dictation is plagiarism, which can account for some very rapid eye movements indeed.)

Somewhat below all this horseplay I am concerned, I think, with the ways in which officious parties of various sorts are now beginning to monitor our dreams, having run out of daylight activities to break and enter. The monitoring devices, again, are derived from the new sciences of eavesdropping and peeepingtometry, so I suppose for this reason too we might say the story at least brushes the science world, before recoiling in utter disgust.

But the heroine of this story is both prescient and indifferent to science, having at her disposal means of reaching into other people's heads, particularly male ones, that came into being long before the wheel. She is, of course, none other than Robert Graves' White Goddess, whom I

have taken the liberty of dressing in see-through blouse and tie-dyed bell-bottoms.

One of the most discouraging things about scientists—as about the sf writers who dog them around hoping to catch a dropped idea—is that they've so completely lost sight of the W. G. who inspires us all as to imagine they themselves are responsible for their fancy and fevered imaginings. Now you know and I know it just doesn't work that way. I'm not giving you the dismal cliche about behind every successful man stands a woman. I don't know what self-respecting woman would be caught dead behind the scientists and sf writers of today. But some dire presence, some hag form of the proud old Muse, one of the Gorgons, Medusa, say, maybe all three Furies, has got to be tickling these people from behind. They just couldn't be the unassisted authors of their dread works. Nor can I see why they'd claim to be. If I had anything to do with work like that I'd sure want to claim some collaboration.

I suppose we can't blame the scientists too much for this blind spot; they're too busy with their military contracts to look upward or backward, let alone inward. But sf writers are definitely to be faulted for such oversight. The Pale but Potent Lady, Graves has made very clear, inspires all art, for those who can open themselves to the communion. It's the sf writers' blindness to this Faded Femme Fatale, inherited from the scientists they so venerate and panhandle from, that prevents their work from being inspired. The droppings from science may give a writer thin formulas to play with; the electric emanations of the Unpushy Muse might give him fervor.

Orwell's *1984* is taken by many to be a classic work of sf. The one thing we know for sure about *1984*, whatever else in it may hold your masochistic interest, is that it has nothing whatsoever to do with the year 1984 we'll all too soon be encountering.

Orwell—and Bradbury after him—could extrapolate into the future no horrors more shivery than thought control and book-burning. We know now that thought has less and less to be controlled because it is being less and less engaged in. As for books, they won't have to be burned. Right now unsold paperbacks by the millions are being sold to road contractors to be used as fill under freeways.

The way to get rid of troublemaking printed matter is simply to make more and more narcolepsis-producing films, up to the point at which all the image-makers and imager-consumers will sleepwalk to the polls to elect Marshall McLuhan president by acclamation.

Repression is not in the future so much as more and more celluloid. Why scare people with horror stories about books being burned? Pretty soon you're not going to be able to give them away.

I have somewhat arbitrarily given this brace of stories the overall title of "Monitored Dreams and Strategic Cremations" because I think science

is working very hard to make for us a world of collectivized dreaming and stepped-up missionary work—in other lands and on the home front, too—with updated weapons of instant cookery. Thanks to science, and the aura of untouchability given to it by sf, they'll be programmatically charcoaling our outsides (in the name of making the world safe for the ants, or some up-and-coming virus) while systematically trespassing on our insides (in the name of data collection, census taking, keeping the computers well-fed). This, or something very like it, is what capitalism offers us as it enters its amuck, apocalyptic phase.

Science has from the beginning been what it most spectacularly is now, the handmaiden of capitalism. Sf has all along been the handmaiden of, as well as the parasite on, science. This is a treason to the profession of writing, which in its serious forms can be a handmaiden of nothing but disdain for, and assault upon, that-which-is.

They will, of course, improve their dream monitoring in order to make their cremations more strategic. With the technical assistance of the for-anybody's-hire scientists. And the gleeful sidelines cheers of their sf votaries.

Those subversive enough to go on reading instead of living other people's lives out in the movies can do something to stymie the scientists. All they have to do is stymie the governments and social systems that harness the scientists to do their proliferating monitory and cremational work. Stymie, in this context, means, quite simply, overthrow.

I mean, the decade ahead has got to be a period of the most radical mass politicalization and polarization. Now, as in the thirties, we are emerging from a time of sexual revolt, that is, bohemianism, into a time of political revolt, that is, social revolutionism. Put another way, the bohemianism of the sixties, paralleling that of the twenties, is beginning to be bristlingly politicalized, in a way that promises to make the farthest-left politics of the proletarianized thirties look like amateur night.

Sure as shooting, and I use the term advisedly, revolutions are going to come in wholesale lots in the years ahead. Whether or not they win and, further, manage not to degenerate or grow fatcat, will depend in large measure on whether enough people stop living ersatz lives in the movies, and filling their heads with the irrelevant muzzy junk of sf, and lose their awe of scientists, who are an integral part of what has got to be overthrown. And turn to reading again, that is, reading in the realm of ideas, rasping ideas, incendiary ideas, which would mean a boredom, finally, with sf, which is simply films, formulas, honed mindlessness put on the printed page in place of literature.

I have a dangerous vision. I have a dangerous vision. I have a dangerous vision. I see capitalism once and for all overthrown; truly overthrown, not just replaced with a new power structure just as fawning upon scientists and just as exploitative of them and their fake charisma as ever was the

old. The only kind of socialism or communism I'm interested in is one that makes science and scientists look a little bit ridiculous, to be humored, maybe, but never taken in by; never catered to, always kept in their place. Humanism—and if communism isn't humanism, as Marx and Engels defined it, it is nothing—is incompatible with scientism.

And so, an end, finally, finally, to the reactionism that is at the heart of sf, all technology-worship. An end to all the soupy mysticisms that, whether they mean to or not, bolster the slobbering profit economy, all low-level intellectual handmaidens to the Great God Mammon.

And, of course, to this slime of a capitalist terminal-case order that breeds such scientist slaveys and sf hangers-on—what a bonus.



One of the most peculiar of all the superpeculiar facets of the "sf writer generality" is that so many of our most outstanding writers live life-styles that are the very antithesis of what their stories deal with. I'll give you a couple of f'rinstances.

Isaac Asimov writes some of the most far-flung fictions ever conceived by the mind of mortal man (and I'm not just referring to *The Sensual Dirty Old Man* by "Dr. A."). But he won't fly in airplanes. Space journeys to the far side of the Universe he dashes off with his left hand, but his right trembles like a spastic's when he nears a 747.

Robert Silverberg has written novels in which tri-vid and holograms are commonplaces, yet until recently he wouldn't have a TV set in his house.

I won't name any names, because I don't feel like belittling my friends, but if pressed to the wall (like if for instance you had my mother and were holding her as hostage in the matter) I could rattle off the names of a dozen top sf writers whose stories deal exclusively with the living habits and mores of worlds-of-tomorrow, who write with familiarity and detail that borders on minutiae, of the dress and speech patterns of the world of the future. Yet every one of them dresses as though it was the early 1940's, and they speak slang straight out of *Studs Lonigan.* They even vocally put down the creature comforts provided by the technological wonders their stories have predicted. It is as if they conceived of those wonders as worthwhile only as long as they were figments of the imagination; but let them become realities and they are treated with the contempt usually reserved by writers for one of their number who hits with a best-seller.

And so now, with a new generation of sf writers emerging, many of whom are living life-styles the older and more reserved members of the clan might call "pointless" or "counter productive" because they resemble too much the way of the hippie, we have the first of the sf writers to come to us not from pulp magazines or hardcovers or even the mainstream . . . but from television.

The first sf child of his times, David Gerrold.

David Gerrold, *né* David Jerrold Friedman, got his break writing for *Star Trek,* the television series so popular a few years ago. He wrote for that series a segment titled "The Trouble with Tribbles" that was marked

by inventiveness, humor of the whacky Henry Kuttner sort, expertise in the medium of visual effects, and professionalism of a high order. I assure those of you writers who put down scriptwriting as a bastard form of the art, that it is a highly complex, very demanding and difficult medium in which to work. I wish I had a dollar for every Big Name sf writer who thought he could just waltz into TV scriptwriting, and a month later, right around pick-up&cut-off time, was slid out the studio gates on his Big Name backside. So when I say David Gerrold's first time out was marked by expertise and professionalism, I am not just whistling Apartheid.

David sold "The Trouble with Tribbles" in 1967. It was nominated for a Hugo award in the category of Best Dramatic Presentation by the World Science Fiction Convention (held in Berkeley in 1968), and came in second behind another *Star Trek* script, which is pretty fair for a first-timer. At that convention, incidentally, the ancient and onerous fan custom of auctioning off an hour of a writer's time—the monies to be donated to the convention sinking fund—if you have attended a sf convention you know the word "sinking" is used advisedly—was once again pursued. Your editor was auctioned off for seventy-two dollars, Gerrold was auctioned off for twenty-two dollars and one of his furry little tribbles was auctioned off for twenty-two dollars *and fifty cents*, which says something about the market value of six foot tall, one hundred and fifty pound, brown-haired, hazel-eyed *Star Trek* scenarists, as compared to useless balls of fluff. But then, no one ever denied that *Star Trek* "trekkies" are bats from the git-go.

Moving right along . . .

Since the unseemly notoriety attendant on airing of his script, David (born an Aquarian on 1/24/44) sold other teleplay treatments and episodes to *Star Trek*, most of which never got past the preliminary stages. The sanity and ethics of some of the *Star Trek* production personnel has frequently been called into question, but in this case the lucidity of their caution and good sense shines through like a nova.

Surging forward from this impressive career opener, David struck forcefully on several creative fronts:

He was hired to write a film treatment for Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and was fired (David swears) for doing it right. That is, the "producer," a Hollywood type gentleman who'd bought the book because his girl friend had read it, though *he* hadn't, fired David when our Gerrold told him to take his girl friend's ideas for the way the movie should be written and jam them up his, her, or both their nether apertures in the key of C#. (He was also hired to develop an original screen story titled *Whatever Happened to Millard Fillmore?*) As of this writing, neither film has seen release, though Gerrold has.

He sold a plethora of stories to magazines and original anthologies, including Harry Harrison's NOVA and A,DV. The story you are about to

read was David's third or fourth submission. He first submitted a very long, incredibly moronic thing called "In the Deadlands." Very dumb story. Full of pages of pseudo artsycraftsy nonsense like this:

The men tramped all that day.
Tramp.
Tramp.
Tramp.
Tramp.
Tramp.
They tramped into the night.

And that's all there'd be on the damned page. I'd have had to pay him five thousand dollars for the use of the silly thing, just on page-count alone. No, we are much better off with the story herein offered. Besides, it's a goodie.

He wrote novels and sold them. *The Flying Sorcerers* (originally titled "The Misspelled Magishun") in collaboration with Larry Niven, published in August of 1971 by Ballantine. *Yesterday's Children,* bought but as of this writing unpublished by Dell. Spring 1972, *The Space Skimmer,* from Ballantine and a book of short stories, still untitled. *When Harlie Was One,* from Ballantine, late 1972, and a sequel to *The Space Skimmer* in early 1973. Additionally, a first hardcover sale: to Random House: *The Man Who Folded Himself.*

He edited anthologies. The much-touted and long-awaited *Generation,* from Dell, featuring new writers; and *Protostars* from Ballantine.

All of this while working full-time as a clerk in a liquor store. Now tell me Gerrold doesn't have all the credentials for being a *great* science fiction writer!

But all kidding aside, folks . . .

David recently returned from a five month stay in Ireland. He lived in a suburb of Dublin called Dun Laoghaire, just four blocks from James Joyce Tower and a few miles from fellow expatriate sf'er Anne McCaffrey. He swears he had nothing to do with feeding the Protestants to the Catholics.

Let's see, is there anything else you should know about Gerrold? Mmm, yeah, a few things.

• He graduated from San Fernando Valley State College in 1967 with a B.A. in Theater Arts, and prior to his graduation attended Los Angeles Valley Junior College where he majored in Art and Journalism, and then University of Southern California majoring in Cinema.

• His professional career began in 1963 at the age of 19 when he produced a ten-minute animated educational film called *A Positive Look at Negative Numbers* for which he wrote the script, did the animation, inked and painted cels and therefrom received honorable mention for same from the Educational Film Library Association.

• He plays the violin. Not terribly distinguishedly.

• He is an alumnus of the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity, out of which your editor was hurled in 1954 at Ohio State University, and about which your editor assures you nothing good can be said. Scratch two points for Gerrold.

• In 1968, when he received his Hugo nomination, he was 23 years old, the youngest active member of the Writers Guild of America, the guild of the Hollywood TV and film writers.

And finally, about this story, and its acquisition, the following must be said, merely to keep Gerrold in his place. Next to your editor, whose ego problems have been diagnosed in detail by no less a psychiatric authority than the European sf novelist Stanislaw Lem (whose conclusions about me terminate just this side of my being incarcerated as a dangerous psychopath), David Gerrold has an egomania terrible to confront. When he offered this story for publication, though it was worth the same money offered to all other authors in the book, I insisted he take one-third the rate, just to break into A,DV. It was an act of love and compassion, not parsimoniousness, I assure you.

For without these little acts intended to bring David back to Earth regularly, with a background and a promise of wonders such as David has already shown, he would be barely tolerable.

I know you will read this story, bearing these facts in mind, with reserve and dispassion. And when you tell him how much you liked it, do it left-handedly.

After all, we have to live with him.



David Gerrold

WITH A FINGER IN MY I

When I looked in the mirror this morning, the pupil was gone from my left eye. Most of the iris had disappeared too. There was just a blank white area and a greasy smudge to indicate where the iris had previously been.

At first I thought it had something to do with the contact lenses, but then I realized that I don't wear lenses. I never have.

It looked kind of odd, that one blank eye staring back at me, but the unsettling thing about it was that I could still see out of it. When I put my hand over my good right eye, I found that the eyesight in my left was as good as ever and it worried me.

If I hadn't been able to see out of it, I wouldn't have worried. It would have meant only that during the night I had gone blind in that eye. But for the pupil of the eye to just fade away without affecting my sight at all—well, it worried me. It could be a symptom of something serious.

Of course, I thought about calling the doctor, but I didn't know any doctors and I felt a little bit embarrassed about troubling a perfect stranger with my problems. But there was that eye and it kept staring at me, so finally I went looking for the phone book.

Only, the phone book seemed to have disappeared during the night. I had been using it to prop up one end of the bookshelf and now it was gone. So was the bookshelf—I began to wonder if perhaps I had been robbed.

First my eye, then the phone book, now my bookshelf had all disappeared. If it had not been that today was Tuesday, I should have been worried. In fact, I was already worried, but Tuesday is my day to ponder all the might-have-beens that had become never-wases. Monday is my day to worry about personal effects (such as eyes and phone books) and Monday would not be back for six days. I was throwing myself off schedule by worrying on a Tuesday. When Monday returned, then I would worry about the phone book, if I didn't have something else of a more pressing nature to worry about first.

(I find that pigeonholing my worrying like that helps me to keep an orderly mind—by allotting only so much time to each problem I am able to keep the world in its proper perspective.) But there was still the matter of the eye and that was upsetting me. Moreover, it was *distorting* my perspective.

I resolved to do something about it immediately. I set out in search of the phone, but somewhere along the way that too had disappeared, so I was forced to abandon that exploration.

It was very frustrating—this distressing habit of disappearing that the inanimate objects had picked up. Every time I started to look for something, I found that it had already vanished, as if daring me to find it. It was like playing hide-and-go-seek, and since I had long ago given up such childish pastimes, I resolved not to encourage them any further and refused to look for them any more. (Let them come to me.)

I decided that I would walk to the doctor. (I would have put on my cap, but that would have meant looking for it and I was afraid that it too would have disappeared by the time I found it.)

Once outside, I noticed that people were staring at me in a strange way as they passed. After a bit, I realized that it must have been my eye. I had forgotten completely about it, not realizing that it might look a bit strange to others.

I started to turn around to go back for my sunglasses, but I knew that if I started to look for them, they too would surely disappear. So I turned around and headed once again for the doctor's.

"Let them come to me," I muttered, thinking of the sunglasses. I must have startled the old lady I was passing at the time because she turned to stare at me in a most peculiar manner.

I shoved my hands into my coat pockets and pushed onward. Almost immediately I felt something hard and flat in my left-hand pocket. It was my sunglasses in their case. They had indeed come to me. It was rewarding to see that I was still the master of the inanimate objects in my life.

I took the glasses out and put them on, only to find that the left lens of the glasses had faded to a milky white. It matched my eye perfectly, but I found that, unlike my eye, I was quite unable to see through the opaqued lens. I would just have to ignore the stares of passersby and proceed directly on to the doctor's office.

After a bit, however, I realized that I did not know where I was going—as I noted earlier, I did not know any doctors. And I most certainly knew that if I started to search for the office of one, I would probably never find it at all. So I stood on the sidewalk and muttered to myself, "Let them come to me."

I must confess that I was a little bit leery of this procedure—remembering what had happened with the sunglasses—but in truth, I had no alternative. When I turned around I saw a sign on the building behind me. It said, "Medical Center." So I went in.

I walked up to the receptionist and I looked at her and she looked at me. She looked me right in the eye (the left one) and said, "Yes, what can we do for you?"

I said, "I would like to see a doctor."

"Certainly," she said. "There goes one down the hall now. If you look quickly, you can catch a glimpse of him. See! There he goes!"

I looked and she was right—there *was* a doctor going down the hall. I could see him myself. I knew he was a doctor because he was wearing golf shoes and a sweater; then he disappeared around a bend in the corridor. I turned back to the girl. "That wasn't exactly what I meant," I said.

"Well, what was it you meant?"

I said, "I would like for a doctor to look at me."

"Oh," she said. "Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

"I thought I did," I said, but very softly.

"No, you didn't," she said. "And speak up. I can hardly hear you." She picked up her microphone and spoke into it, "Dr. Gibbon, puh-lease come to reception . . ." Then she put down her microphone and looked at me expectantly.

I did not say anything. I waited. After a moment, another man in golf shoes and sweater came out of one of the nearby doors and walked over to us. He looked at the girl behind the desk and she said to him, "This gentleman would like a doctor to look at him."

The doctor took a step back and looked at me. He looked me up and down, then asked me to turn around and he looked at me some more. Then he said, "Okay," and walked back into his office.

I asked, "Is that all?"

She said, "Of course, that's all. That's all you asked for. That will be ten dollars please."

"Wait a minute," I said. "I wanted him to look at my eye."

"Well," she said, "you should have said so in the first place. You know we're very busy here. We haven't got time to keep calling doctors down here to look at just anyone who wanders in. If you had wanted him to look at your eye in particular, you should have said so."

"But I don't want someone to just look at my eye," I said. "I want someone to cure it."

"Why?" she said. "Is there something wrong with it?"

I said, "Can't you see? The pupil has disappeared."

"Oh," she said. "So it has. Did you look for it?"

"Yes, I did," I said. "I looked all over for it—that's probably why I can't find it."

"Maybe you left it somewhere," she cooed softly. "Where was the last place you were?"

"I wasn't anywhere," I said.

"Well, maybe that's your trouble."

"I meant that I stayed home last night. I didn't go anywhere! And I don't feel very well."

"You don't look very well," she said. "You should see a doctor."

"I already have," I said. "He went down that hall."

"Oh, that's right. I remember now."

"Look," I said. I was starting to get a little angry. "Will you please get me an appointment with a doctor?"

"Is that what you want—an *appointment*?"

"Yes, that is what I want."

"You're sure that's *all* you want now? You're not going to come back later and complain that we didn't give you what you want?"

"I'm sure," I said. "I'm not going to come back."

"Good. That's what we want to be sure of."

By now, everything seemed to be all wrong. The whole world seemed to be slipping off sideways—all squished together and stretched out and tilted so that everything was sliding down towards the edge. So far, nothing had gone over, but I thought I could see tiny cracks appearing in the surface.

I shook my head to clear it, but all that did was to produce a very distinct rattling noise—like a very small walnut in a very large shell.

I sat down on the couch to wait—I was still unable to think clearly. The fog swirled in thicker than ever, obscuring everything. Visibility had been reduced to zero and the controllers were threatening to close down all operations until the ceiling lifted. I protested, no—wasn't the ceiling all right where it was?—but they just ignored me.

I stood up then and tried to push the ceiling back by hand, but I couldn't reach it and had to stand on a chair. Even then, the surface of it was hard and unyielding. (Although, I was close enough to see that there were numerous cracks and flaws in it.)

I started to push on it again, but a strong hand on my shoulder and a deep voice stopped me. "Lay down on the couch," she said. "Just close your eyes. Relax. Lie back and relax."

"All right," I said, but I did not lay on my back. I lay on my stomach and pressed my face into the hard unyielding surface.

"Relax," she said again.

"I'll try," I said, forcing myself.

"Look out the window," the doctor said. "What do you see?"

"I see clouds," I said.

"What kind?"

"What kind???"

"Yes. What kind?"

I looked again. "Cottage cheese clouds. Little scuds of cottage cheese clouds."

"Cottage cheese clouds—?" asked the doctor.

"Yes," I said. "Cottage cheese clouds. Hard and unyielding."

"Large curd or small curd?"

"Huh?" I asked. I rolled over and looked at her. She did not have on golf shoes, but she was wearing a sweater. Instead of the golf shoes, she

had on high heels. But she was a doctor—I could tell that. Her shoes still had cleats.

"I asked you a question," she rumbled in that deep voice of hers.

"Yes, you did," I agreed. "Would you mind repeating it?"

"No, I wouldn't mind," she said and waited quietly.

I waited also. For a moment there was silence between us. I pushed the silence to one side and asked, "Well, what was it?"

This time she answered, "I asked whether the clouds were large curd or small curd."

"I give up," I said. "What were they?"

"That's very good of you to give up—otherwise we'd have had to come in after you and take you by force. By surrendering your misconceptions now you have made it so much easier for both of us."

The whole thing was coming disjointed and teetered precariously on the edge. Bigger cracks were beginning to appear in the image and tiny pieces were starting to slip out and fall slowly to the ground where they shattered like so many soap bubbles.

"Uh—" I said. "Uh, Doctor—there's something wrong with my eye."

"Your I?"

"Uh, yes. The pupil is gone."

"The pupil is gone from your I?" The doctor was astounded. "How astounding!"

I could only nod—so I did. (A bit too hard perhaps. A few more pieces came flaking off and fluttered gently to the floor. We watched for a bit.)

"Hm," she said. "I have a theory about that. Would you like to hear it?"

I didn't answer. She was going to tell me her theory whether I wanted to hear it or not.

"The world is coming to an end," she whispered conspiratorially.

"Right now?" I asked, somewhat worriedly. I still hadn't fed the cat.

"No, but soon," she reassured me.

"Oh," I said.

We sat there in silence. After a bit, she cleared her throat. "I think . . ." she began slowly, then she trailed off.

"That's nice," I said, but she didn't hear me.

". . . I think that the world exists only as a reflection of our minds. It exists the way it does only because that's the way we think it does."

"*I* think—therefore *I* exist," I said. But she ignored me. She told me to be quiet.

"Yes, you exist," she confirmed. (I'm glad she did—I was beginning to be a bit worried—and this was the wrong day for it. The last time I looked

this was Tuesday.) "You exist," she said, "because you think you do. And the world also exists because you think it does."

"Then, when I die—the world ends with me . . . ?" I asked hopefully, making a mental note not to die.

"No—that's nonsense. No sane and rational man believes in solipsism." She scratched at her eyeball with a fork and went on.

"When you die—*you* cease to exist," she said. "But the world goes on—it goes on because everybody else who's still alive still believes that it exists. (The only thing they've stopped believing in is you.) You see, the world is a collective figment of all of our individual imaginations."

"I'm sorry," I said stiffly. "I do not believe in collectivism." I unbent a little so as to sit up. "I am a staunch Republican."

"Don't you see?" she said, ignoring my interruption. "This mass hallucination that the world is real just keeps on going because of its own inertia. You believe in it because that's the way it was when you first began to exist—that is when everybody else first began to believe you existed. When you were born, you saw that the world followed a certain set of rules that other people believed in, so you believed in them too—the fact that you believe in them just gives them that much more strength."

"Oh," I said. I lay there listening to her, trying to figure out some way to leave gracefully. My eye was starting to hurt and I couldn't see the ceiling any more. The fog was rolling in again.

"Look at the church!" she said suddenly.

"Huh?" I said.

"Look at the church!" she said it again, insistent.

I tried to. I lifted my head and tried to look at the church, but the fog was too thick. I couldn't even see my toes.

"Look at it," she said. "*Faith* is the basic precept of religion—faith that what they're telling you is true! Don't they tell you to have faith in the church, that faith can work miracles?!! Well, I'll tell you something—it can! If enough people believe in something, it becomes reality!"

By now, my eye was throbbing most painfully. I tried to sit up, but her strong hands held me back. She leaned closer and whispered intensely, "Yes! It's true. It is."

"If you say so," I nodded.

She went on, "Fortunately, the church long ago abandoned miracles in favor of conservatism—now, it's fighting to preserve the status quo! The church is one of the last bastions of reality—it's one of the few things holding back chaos!"

"Chaos?"

"Yes, chaos."

"Oh."

"The world is changing," she explained. "Man is changing it."

I nodded. "Yes, I know. I read the newspapers too."

"No, no! That's not what I meant! Man is changing his world unconsciously! More and more people are starting to believe that they really can change their environment—and the more they believe it, the more drastically it changes. I'll give you an example—fossils!"

"Fossils?"

"Yes, fossils. Nobody ever discovered any fossils until people started believing in evolution—then when they did start to believe in it, you couldn't turn around without tripping over fossils."

"You really believe this?" I asked.

"Yes, I do!" she said intensely.

"Then it must be so," I said.

"Oh, it is," she agreed and I knew that she really did believe it. She made a very convincing case. In fact, the more she talked, the more I began to believe it too.

"Why did you tell me all this?" I asked.

"Because we're in great danger. That's why." She whispered fiercely, "The world isn't changing uniformly. Everybody is starting to believe in different things and they're forming pockets of non-causality."

"Like a pimple?" I offered.

"Yes," she said and I could see a small one forming on the tip of her nose. "It works this way: a fanatic meets another fanatic, then the two of them meet with some other people who share the same hallucinations and pretty soon there are a whole bunch of fanatics all believing the same thing —pretty soon, their delusions become real for them—they've started to contradict the known reality and replaced it with a node of non-reality."

I nodded and concentrated on wrapping a swirl of the fog securely around me.

"The more it changes, the more people believe in the changes, and the stronger they become. If this keeps up we may be the only sane people left in the world—and we're in danger—"

"They're outnumbering our reality?" I suggested.

"Worse than that—all of their different outlooks are starting to flaw the structure of space! Even the shape of the Earth is changing! Why, at one time, it was really flat—the world didn't turn round until people started to believe it was round."

I turned round then and looked at her, but she had disappeared into the fog. All that was left was her grin.

"But the world is really pear shaped," I said. "I read it in *Scientific American.*"

"And why do you think it's changing shape?" the grin asked. "It's because a certain nation is starting to believe that it's really bigger than it is. The Earth is bulging out to accommodate them."

"Oh," I said.

"It's the fault of the news media—television is influencing our image of the world! They keep telling us that the world is changing—and more and more people keep believing it."

"Well," I said. "With the shape of the world the way it is today, any change has got to be for the—"

"Oh, God—not you too! All you people keep talking about the world going to pieces—falling apart at the seams—"

And then even the grin was gone.

I was left there. I was also right. Other people had begun to notice it too. Great chunks of the surface *had* gone blotchy and holes had appeared in it. More and more pieces were falling out all the time, but the waters had not yet broken through from the other side.

I poked my finger through one of the holes and I could feel the soft gelatinous surface behind. Perhaps it hadn't completely thawed out yet.

So far, nothing had been accomplished about my eye—not only was it beginning to ache something fierce, but my I was beginning to twinge a bit also and I had a feeling that that too might be going opaque.

"Have you found yourself yet?!!" one of the speakers in the park demanded. (I hadn't even looked—and remembering my previous experiences with looking for things, I certainly was not going to initiate any kind of a search.) I walked on.

Farther on, there was another speaker—this one on a soup box. "We should be thankful for this great nation of ours," the speaker woofed and tweetered, "where so many people are allowed to believe in so many different things."

I rubbed at my eye. I had an uneasy queasy feeling that great cracks were opening in the ceiling.

"Anyone can get up and speak for his cause—any group can believe in anything they choose—indeed we can remake the world if we want to! And in our own images!"

Things were teetering right and left—also write and wrong.

"But the truly great thing about it," he continued, "is that no matter how much we contradict each other, we are all working together for the common good! Our great democratic system lets us minimize our differences so

that we can all compromise ourselves. Only by suggesting all the alternatives to a problem can we select the best possible solution. In the long run, this ultimate freedom and individuality will help all of us to achieve the most good for the most people!"

It sounded good to me.

When I got home, the workmen were just finishing with the wallpaper. It was amazing how solid the surface looked once all the cracks and flaws in it had been covered with a gaudy flowered facade.

I could no longer tell where the plaster had given way—and the bare surface of the understructure had disappeared into the fog. Indeed, the only thing was that the ceiling seemed to be much lower than before.

I paused long enough to stroke the cat. He waved as I came in. "Like—hello, man," said the cat. "Give me a J."

"I can't. I'm having trouble with my I."

"Well, then give me a dollar."

"What for?"

"For a trip," he said.

"Oh." I gave him a dollar, waited for the trip.

He dropped the bill into his mouth, lit it, picked up his suitcase and quickly rose to a cruising level of thirty thousand feet. Then he headed west. I did not quite understand this. The fog had gotten much worse and the controllers were just not letting any traffic through.

There had been something I had wanted to ask, but I had forgotten it. Oh, well—it couldn't have been very important. But I wish I could figure out—

The man on the TV was a Doctor. He sat on top of it with his feet dangling in front of the screen (his cleats were scratching the image) and said that the drugs were destroying the realities. Drugs could destroy a person's sanity by altering his perceptions of the world until he could no longer perceive reality at all.

"Just so long as it doesn't change what he believes in," I muttered and turned him off. Then I turned him out. It was getting late and I wanted to get some sleep. However, I did make a mental note not to have my prescription refilled. Already the wallpaper was peeling.

In fact, by now, only the framework of the structure is left, and it looks like it's made out of chocolate pudding. Maybe it is. Perhaps it *is* the drugs. Maybe they *are* altering our collective fogments—but I haven't noticed anything.

Afterword:

I've often wondered just what the difference is between a madman and a politician. I suspect it has something to do with the number of followers that either has.

For instance, what would Mao Tse-Tung be without 700 million Chinese under him? Just another cranky old man.

I remember once seeing a cartoon showing a psychiatrist looking out of his office window at an arriving patient. There below him, on the street, was a royal coach drawn by four ornately harnessed thoroughbreds. There was a coachman, two footmen, and a very regal looking set of guards—all very loyally aiding a man dressed disturbingly like Napoleon.

That cartoon says it better than any set of words. When we start taking our madmen seriously, we're in trouble. Look what happened when Germany started listening to a deranged paper-hanger.

Too many of our insanities are tolerated because they are harmless on an individual level—but multiply them by a millionfold and you have a nation that is culturally sick. These things stem from each individual's conception of himself—which he arbitrarily assumes to be the nature of the world as well. These conceptions are haphazardly picked up during youth—along with all of the other opinions, neuroses, hangups and etceteras common to the human animal.

(Sometimes I wonder how some people can do some of the things they do to impressionable children—don't they realize it's not the child they're hurting, but the adult who will stem from that child? Ah, but that's a rhetorical question—)

As yet, there doesn't seem to be any way to prove that any one person's set of conceptions, opinions, neuroses, hangups and etceteras are any more correct than anyone else's set—let alone sane. (Define sanity.)

Keeping this in mind about all human beings—and especially those who consider themselves *leaders*—I ask, shouldn't we concentrate on ascertaining just what the questions are before we decide on the answers?



Introduction to IN THE BARN

More than any other writer, Piers Anthony is responsible for there *being* an *Again, Dangerous Visions* and a forthcoming final volume in (what has now become a) trilogy. I talked about that a bit in the general introduction to this book, but I think it bears repeating here, in Piers's own little section preceding "In the Barn," which is very much the kind of *story* that was being sought when DV was first conceived.

In the introduction to David Gerrold's story, which you've just read, if you're dealing with this literary entity sequentially, I noted that David had come to sf not through the traditional channels accepted by the old-line *aficionados,* but via TV, a totem and a route of his times. Rather than struggling up through the pulp magazines, writing crap at a penny-a-word for ten years, or pounding out witless action paperbacks for a grand-and-a-half (for four months' work), Gerrold got his break into sf paid handsomely for a different *kind* of dreaming. But not till he had written those penny-a-word stories for the magazines—in some ways lesser work than his TV script—was he accepted by the cadre. The mass of sf readers and fans are a fickle people. They don't take to newcomers all that quickly, though the editors and their fellow-writers do. The fans seem loath to raise to the heights too quickly, those new writers constantly banging on the doors and breaking the windows of the house of sf glory.

Most frequently, the fans will have known about a writer for some time, will have followed his life and his career, particularly if he started out in the ranks of fandom, writing for the amateur magazines, finally selling a story here, a story there. And eventually, when a fan turned writer has paid sufficient dues in the eyes of the omniscient observers, they will grudgingly admit him to the ranks of the professionals, even though he may have been selling for ten years. It is a peculiar kind of peer-group acceptance, and it's as Robert Silverberg once said: for that kind of writer, his public progress in the craft is like that of the Chambered Nautilus, the cephalopod that moves through the various rooms of its shell till it emerges and dies. In effect, it carries its past on its back. So, too, do sf writers who have to win the approbation of sf fans. The fans never forget. They find it difficult to deal with the reality of a writer *today,* as he is. They see him still as eighteen years old and trying to effect the metamorphosis from amateur to pro. It can be a killing thing, forever shadowed in the eyes of one's "audience" by the ineradicable record of what one has

been. Some writers never outgrow the need to win the praise of that tiny coterie of vocal fans. And there are writers in our genre whose work has been stunted forever because fans did not want them to move forward, change, expand. If you doubt the truth of these remarks—and I await with a certain stoicism the inevitability of fan magazine response to these harsh criticisms of The Faithful—you need only ask Isaac Asimov how he feels when fans tell him the best thing he's ever written is "Nightfall," published in 1941, years before the first of his hundred-plus books. You need only ask Philip K. Dick or James Schmitz or Robert Heinlein or any of the many other writers who avoid contact with fandom, why they have chosen to absent themselves from close contact with organized fans and their publications. You need only ask Kurt Vonnegut why he fought so hard to have the words "science fiction" disassociated from his work. That is, if you can track them down.

Only rarely in our field does a writer emerge quickly and totally, like Athena from the forehead of Zeus, whole and complete, writing the way he or she wants to write, and giving very little of a damn for the opinions of the fans with their frequently already-formed conceptions of what is acceptable in the genre.

It happened with Sheckley, and it happened with Ursula Le Guin, and it happened with Lafferty, and it happened with Norman Spinrad, and it happened with Tom Disch . . .

And it happened with Piers Anthony.

He came into being between the closing of *Dangerous Visions* to contributors, and the book's publication. In that one year—1967—Piers Anthony's *Chthon* (pronounced *thōn*) was published by Betty Ballantine (whose antennæ for new writers are supersensitive and almost always amazingly accurate) and was an immediate sensation. It was nominated for both the Hugo and the Nebula in that year, and though it missed copping the awards, the name Piers Anthony was suddenly a first-rank one. His work began appearing in all the top magazines, and more important, what he wrote was talked about. He became a focal point of controversy, and when his contentiously exciting replies to critics began appearing in the fanzines, it was apparent here was a man who was willing to stand toe-to-toe with all the self-styled little literary dictators, and punch the shit out of them when their opinions were muddle-headed or impertinent or uninformed. And often when they weren't.

I met Piers A. D. Jacob at Damon Knight's 1966 Milford (Penna.) Writers' Workshop, and while it took some time till later for us to become what each of us would call "friends," we developed instant respect for one another. I know I did for him, and he assures me the reverse was true. Though I don't recall Piers ever raising his voice at that workshop—a situation in which obsidian idols would become hysterical—his presence was felt, and he had the strength of personal conviction to attack with solid

literary judgments some of the gods in attendance. When we all went out to dinner at one of the lesser dining spas in Milford, Piers ordered a special vegetarian meal (with some difficulty), and my respect for him increased at the manner in which he handled the remarks and stares of his fellow writers. It was clear that Piers was his own kind of man, that he had decided in what way he could best support the kind of life he felt he needed to enrich himself, and in the most laudatory senses of the word he was a "strange" man. In some ways he is the most interesting of all the interesting people who write sf. The fascination of the man, incidentally, carries over strongly into his work, and—if I can be pardoned equating the writer with what he writes—where his soul resides in life has much to do with the depth of his stories.

In any case, Piers was too late for DV, but he wrote a very long, very perceptive review of the book for one of the fanzines, and in it he mentioned that if there was to be a sequel, he would rain fire and brimstone on me if he was overlooked. At that point, contemplating no companion volumes, I regretted having closed the book just before the advent of Anthony, because I was deeply impressed by *Chthon.*

And later, when Larry Ashmead shunted my little red wagon onto the spur leading to A,DV and it became obvious I should not repeat anybody who'd been in the first volume, I started drawing up a list of writers I wanted in this book. The first name on the list was Piers Anthony. He seemed to embody all the qualities necessary for an appearance in a book intended to carry forward the ideas of DV: he had come to prominence during the period of "the new wave" (God forgive my use of that phrase), he wrote in a style and with a verve peculiarly his own, he had a sound grounding in the disciplines of the best sf of the past, he was outspoken, his themes were fresh and different, and he was brave.

So I solicited a story from him.

He sent me a manuscript titled "The Barn" and I liked it very much. I made a few suggestions for revision and wondered if he'd mind adding "In" to the title.

Here, in part, was his response, included with this introduction to the man himself, as a (hopefully) interesting insight into how an editor and a writer can work together.

October 14, 1968

Dear Harlan,

When I saw the ms of "The Barn" back, I knew my work had bounced . . . yet again, and of course that particular piece had no real hope of publication elsewhere. You had nicely preserved the ms by backing it with cardboard, though, and used your own envelope. I had enclosed postage but not envelope because I had figured you would want the story.

Ah, well, and I took the story out—and discovered that the cardboard was instead a six-page cardboard-colored letter *accepting* the story. You bastard, you shook me up again.

Business first: can do. You ask for revision *not* deleting the meaty portions, but intensifying them by increasing the protagonist's personal involvement. You are talking my language. Fact is, the version of the story I showed you I knew was sketchy, because I concentrated on the brutality, the shock value. As it stood, I did not consider it high-class literature—yet it seemed to me it could be improved quite a bit by filling in more on the hero (?), Hitch. His own background, a frustrated love affair, some kind of emotional parallel to what he saw in the barn—but I didn't do it a) because it would have lengthened the story, that might already be unacceptable because of what it described, and b) because it would have required additional work and craftsmanship, and I've put my full skill into my work only to have it bounced by all markets too many times already. One does hesitate to open his vein too far if he suspects his blood is draining not into a patient clinging to life but a rank sewer.

OK—it seems to me now that we see eye-to-eye on this story, that lengthening and strengthening of personal involvement will not be effort wasted on you, and I shall go to it. You suggest that Hitch might fuck (that word won't be used in the story: not because I'm prudish, but because it would strike at a different cerebral level than I'm aiming for in this story) her, and feel an attachment. So what I have in mind is to run through the sick scene—hand-milking, anal temperature, heated erection (what *is* the term for perpetual and painful erection? I needed it for this story, couldn't remember it, and couldn't find it listed. I thought it was peripeneurises or some such, but found no such word in my dictionary. Damn frustrating, to know the word exists but not be able to pinpoint it.) pretty much as before, then have the contact with Iota, the teen-aged breeder, be too much. . . .

Main reason I stick to novels now is that I have yet to fail to sell an sf novel, yet still can not sell more than about one story in five, though it is the same skill applied to each form. Seems as though the magazines are determined to bounce anything with any reasonable spark of originality or imagination—but let's not get back into that gripe. You proved the truth of any complaints I might make when you published DV. (You know, I haven't seen any other editor claim he *would* have published "Riders of the Purple Wage" either. They still claim it is a wide-open market, but they don't mention that . . .)

You say you created A,DV just for *me?* I find that hard to believe. How about this: you are afraid that if you *don't* include me, I will review it again . . . anyway, whatever the weight of various factors, I'm glad you had the first and will have a second. The field does need this type of shaking up. Even more, the field needs the replacement of about four magazine

editors . . . but that's another matter. You realize, I trust, that you won't be able to come up with another "Purple Wage," and that all the people who condemned *it* will then condemn *you* for not duplicating the feat? Yeah, you know.

Lastly, the baby. She's a year old now, been walking since 9½ months, has shoulder-length hair, is impossibly cute. My prejudice, of course—except that everyone who sees her agrees. Name is Penelope—"Penny"—kind of you to inquire. I can't do much writing on the days I am taking care of her (my wife works 3 days a week, thus I work the remaining 4), but should be able to handle the "Barn" revision this coming weekend. You should be hearing from me again, then, in about a week.

Sincerely,

Piers

And then, just five days later, I received the following . . .

October 19, 1968

Dear Harlan,

Here, 4,000 words longer, is "In the Barn." I incorporated your notions and mine, and have what I believe is a superior version. I have not proofread it, so there will be typos etc., but wanted to get it out to you as soon as possible. Hurricane Gladys passed by here in the last day, and we were without power for 17 hours, so portions of the manuscript were typed by kerosene lamplight.

This revision helped take my mind off a different problem. Four days ago I had a call from the last publisher I submitted my novel *Macroscope* to, Avon. He was ready to offer an advance of $5,000 without significant revision . . . but it turned out he hadn't read the last 90 pages. Since those very pages made another publisher change its mind, I advised him to finish the ms, then make his offer again if he still felt the same. He said ok, he'd call back in a day or two . . . and that was the last I heard. Ouch! Did I scare him off?

Piers

As it turned out, Piers had not scared off Avon's editor, George Ernsberger, and *Macroscope* was published in 1969 to mixed, but controversial, reviews.

In the last few years Piers has run afoul of the Recession-produced wearies even longer-established, bigger-name writers have come to know.

(We can thank Messrs. Nixon, Agnew, Mitchell, Rogers *et thugs* for that condition of life: possibly the most innovative method yet devised for "balancing the economy." They may balance it so well that within a short time we'll all be back on the barter system, which might not be a bad idea at that. Anyhow . . .) Yet he has continued to write, and his work continues to be marked by vigor, innovation and a commendable fearlessness.

I think "In the Barn" will surprise, delight and possibly even shock a few of you; but whatever its final judgment by critics and posterity, it holds for this editor the essence of what this book attempts to do in advancing sf and the fiction of the imagination.

As for the man behind the story, I include here his autobiographical musings, in many ways as fascinating as the stories they helped produce. Friends, I give you Piers A. D. Jacob.

"I was born in Oxford, England on August 6, 1934, thus (I think) beating out John Brunner for the honor of being the first contemporary sf writer to be born in that particular locale by about six weeks. Both my parents graduated from Oxford University, which is why I happened to be there at the time. They both went on to obtain Ph.D's in America, while I went on to become an, er, science fiction writer. Happens in the best of families. I lived in England to about the age of four, when I joined my parents in Spain. They were doing relief work under the auspices of the AFSC (American Friends Service Committee), feeding milk and food to the hungry children during the Spanish civil war. I believe my father, Alfred Jacob (brother, that fouls up my pseudonym, doesn't it) was head of the Spanish AFSC relief project. When Franco took over, things became dubious; my family's sympathies were with the Loyalists, who lost that war. One day my father disappeared. After several days he managed to smuggle out a note, and thus was documented what the new government had denied: he had been thrown in jail. One of those holes with a trench for sanitary facilities and no separate bathrooms for the female prisoners: the sort you read about in novels but don't really believe exist. They *do* exist. He got out, but the agreement was that he would depart the country. That spared the Fascists having to admit they had made a mistake. I don't know what happened to the stores of food for the starving children after that, but I doubt they went where intended. We boarded the *Excalibur* (this is from memory, so I don't guarantee ship or spelling, but I think that's it) and steamed for America in August, 1940. It happened to be the same ship and the same voyage that the Duke of Windsor made, going to the Bahamas. Remember, he was King Edward VIII of England, who reigned for less than a year until he abdicated in order to marry an American divorcee. I had my sixth birthday on that voyage, celebrated by a cake made of sawdust (they were short of party supplies: WW II, you know) and a harmonica present. I played the latter end-

lessly, and I wonder to this day whether the one time King of England had to grit his teeth at the interminable racket.

"School in America was no fun. I attended five schools while struggling through first grade, flunking it twice. Those first grade schools were in five states, too: Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine and New York. If I were to judge states by that sampling, I would rate Pennsylvania at the top, New Hampshire in the middle, and the rest at the bottom. In New York they were trying to teach me to pronounce my words correctly—not realizing that it was *my English accent* they were attempting to eradicate.

"College was a kind of paradise. All the food I could eat (and I ate more than any person my size I know, without gaining weight) and almost complete freedom. It was a no-grade system, so there was no class pressure except the student's own desire to learn, and my desire was not particularly strong at first. Much of that freedom was wasted, as I did not achieve puberty until age 18 and did not shave until 21, but I did learn the essentials, as demonstrated by the fact that I got married upon graduation. For my thesis I wrote a science fiction novel, at 95,000 words the longest thesis in the history of the college until that time, 1956. It never sold, but years later I reworked one segment of it for a contest and won $5,000. I was drafted into the army in March, 1957, took basic at Ft. Dix and Survey training at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma.

"The army was not paradise. I, as a pacifistically inclined vegetarian, barely made it through basic (about a third of my cycle *didn't*—illness, mostly). They called me 'No Meat.' When the time came for me to make PFC they pulled a battery rank-freeze. I went to the battalion C.O. and next day exactly one PFC stripe came down: mine.

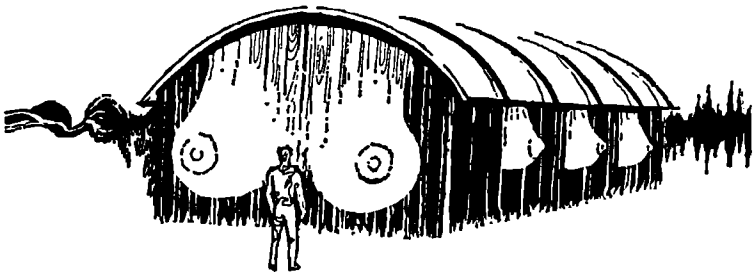
"In 1959 we moved to Florida, where we stayed. We had medical problems, so that we were married eleven years before we had a baby survive birth. Our first, Penny, came in 1967, and our second, Chery, in 1970; both bright, cute little girls well worth waiting for. Penny walked at 9½ months and spoke 500 words by 18 months; not sure I can do as much myself, some days! We're basically settled and happy, and now I've even conformed to the writer's image by growing a beard.

"My writing career has been similar to other aspects of my life. I wrote on and off for eight years before selling my first story late in 1962 for $20.

"I have sold stories to all the major sf magazines in this country (hard to count exactly, because some have been republished as portions of a novel)—a score or so, I guess. Eleven novels at this writing, with four more on the market, and more in progress, since I earn my living by writing. They range from juvenile sf to pornographic fantasy, though my ultimate aspiration is to write straight history. Six have sold in England, and I have a few translation sales: Holland, Germany, Japan.

"Titles of novels: *Chthon* (Ballantine 1967); *Sos the Rope* (F&SF,

Pyramid, 1968, contest winner); *The Ring* (with Robert Margroff; Ace Special 1968); *Omnivore* (Ballantine 1968, SF Book Club 1969); *Macroscope* (Avon 1969); *The E.S.P. Worm* (w/Margroff; Paperback Library 1970; *Orn* (serialized in *Amazing* magazine, 1970; Avon 1971? SF Book Club 1971?); *Hasan* (serialized in *Fantastic* magazine, 1969–70; bought by a book publisher but written off without publication in 1971); *Var the Stick* (Bantam 1971?); *Prostho Plus* (the dental series novelized; Berkley 1972?); *Neq the Sword* (Bantam 1972?). Question marks indicate my guess when they will be published. One novel, *Chthon,* was in the running for both Nebula and Hugo, but made neither; *Macroscope* was on the Hugo ballot but lost, and one of the dental stories, 'Getting Through University,' was also on the Hugo ballot."



Piers Anthony

IN THE BARN

The barn was tremendous. It was reminiscent, Hitch thought, of the red giants of classical New England (not to be confused with the blue dwarfs of contemporary farming), but subtly different. The adjacent fences were there as usual, together with the granary and corncrib and round silo and even a standard milkhouse at one end. To one side was a shed with a large tractor and cultivating machinery, and to the other were conventional mounds of hay. But the curves and planes of the main structure—a genuine farmer could probably have called out fifty major and minor aspects of distinction from anything known on Earth-Prime.

Hitch, however, was not a connoisseur of barns, EP or otherwise; he was merely a capable masculine interworld investigator briefed in farming techniques. He could milk a cow, fork manure, operate a disc-harrow or supervise the processing of corn silage—but the nuances of bucolic architecture were beyond him.

This, mundane as it might appear, was it: the site of his dangerous inter-earth mission. Counter-Earth #772, located by another fluke of the probability aperture, and for him a routine investigation into a nonroutine situation. Almost a thousand Earth-alternates had been discovered in the brief decade the aperture had operated reliably, most quite close to Earth-Prime in type. Several even had the same current U.S. President, making for rather intriguing dialogues between heads-of-state. If, as some theorists would have it, this was a case of parallel evolution of worlds, the parallels were exceedingly close; if a case of divergence from Earth-Prime (or if EP represented a split from one of the other worlds—heretical thought!), the break or series of breaks had occurred quite recently.

But only Earth-Prime had developed the aperture; only EP could send its natives into alternate frameworks and bring them back whole, live and sane. Thus it claimed the title of stem-world, the originator, and none of the others had been able to refute it. None—yet. Hitch tried not to think too much about the time when a more advanced Earth would be encountered—one that could talk back. Or fight back.

On the surface, #772 was similar to the other worlds he had visited during past missions, except for one thing. It was retarded. It appeared to have suffered from some planetary cataclysm that had set it back technologically thirty years or so. A giant meteor-strike, a recent ice-age—Hitch was not much on historical or geological analysis, but knew that something had severely reduced its animal life, and so set everything back while the people readjusted.

There were no bears on #772, no camels, no horses, sheep or dogs. No cats or pigs. Few rodents. Man, in fact, was about the only mammal that remained, and it would be centuries before he had any overpopulation problem here. Perhaps a germ from outer space had wiped the mammals out, or a bad freeze; Hitch didn't know and hardly cared. His concern was with immediacies. His job was to find out how it was that livestock was such an important enterprise, dominating the economics of this world. Barns were everywhere, and milk was a staple industry—yet there were no cows or goats or similar domesticants.

That was why he now stood before this barn. Within it must lie the secret to #772's sinister success.

So—a little innocuous snooping, before the official welcome to EP's commonwealth of alternates. Earth-Prime did not want to back into an alliance with a repressive dictatorship or human-sacrifice society or whatever other bizarrity might be manifested. Every alternate *was* different, in some obvious or devious manner, and some were—well, no matter what Io said, that was not his worry. She liked to lecture him on the theoretical

elements of alternistic intercourse, while cleverly avoiding the more practical man-woman intercourse *he* craved. In the months he had known her he had developed a considerable frustration.

Now he had to make like a farmhand, in the name of Earth-Prime security and diplomacy. A fine sex-sublimation *that* promised to be! He could contemplate manure and dream of Iolanthe's face.

He kicked a clod of dirt and advanced on his mission. Too bad the initial surveyor had not taken the trouble to peek into a barn. But virgin-world investigators were notoriously gun-shy if not outright cowards. They popped in and out again in seconds, repeating in scattered locations, then turned their automatic cameras and sensors over to the lab for processing in detail while they resumed well-paid vacations. The dirty work was left to the second-round investigators like Hitch.

Behind the barn were long corrals extending down to a meandering river. That would be where the livestock foraged during the day. But the only photograph of such an area had evidently been taken of a cleanup session, because human beings had been in the pastures instead of animals. Typically blundering surveyor!

No, he had to be fair, even to a first-rounder. The work *was* risky, because there was no way to tell in advance what menaces lurked upon an unprobed alternate. The man might land in a cloud of mustard-gas or worse, or in the jaws of a carnosaur, and pop back into EP a blistered or bloody hulk. He had to keep himself alive long enough for his equipment to function properly, and there was no time to poke into such things as barns. Robotic equipment couldn't be used because of the peril of having it fall into inimical hands. The first investigator of #772 probably had not even been aware of the shortage of animals, nor would he have considered it significant. Only the tedious lab analysis had showed up the incongruity of this particular world.

Still, that picture was unusual. Maybe it had been a barnyard party, because in the foreground had been a splendidly naked woman. The farmers of #772 evidently knew how to let off steam, once the hay was in!

Once he got home, *he* was going to let off steam—and this time sweet Io would not divert the subject until well after the ellipsis.

He was very near the barn now, but in no hurry. His mission could terminate suddenly therein, and natural caution restrained him.

Transfer to #772 had been no problem. A mere opening of the interworld veil, a boost through, and Hitch was in the same geographic area of another frame of reality. When he finished here, a coded touch on the stud embedded in his skull would summon the recovery aperture in seconds, and he would be hooked back through. He was in no danger so

long as he kept alert enough to anticipate trouble by those few seconds. All he had to do was make his investigation and get the facts without arousing suspicion or getting into trouble with the locals. He was allowed no weapon other than a nondescript knife strapped to his ankle, per the usual policy. He agreed; imagine the trouble a lost stunner could cause . . .

So far it had been deceptively simple. He had been landed in a wooded area near a fair-sized town, so that his entry had not flabbergasted any happenstance observer. That was another fringe benefit of the initial survey: the identification of suitable places for more leisurely entry. It wouldn't do to find himself superimposed upon a tree!

He had walked into that town and filched a newspaper. The language of #772 matched that of EP, at least in America, and he read the classified section without difficulty. Only the occasional slang terms put him off. Under HELP WANTED were a number of ads for livestock attendants. That was what he was here for.

No bovines or caprines or equines or porcines—what *did* they use?

The gentleman farmer to whom he applied at break of day hadn't even checked his faked credentials. Hitch had counted on that; dawn was rush-hour for a farm, and an under-staffed outfit could hardly be choosy then. "Excellent! We need an experienced man. We have some fine animals here, and we don't like to skimp on supervision. We try to take good care of our stock."

Animals, stock. Did they milk chickens or turtles here? "Well," Hitch had said with the proper diffidence, "it has been a little while since I worked a farm. I've been traveling abroad." That was to forestall challenge of his un-#772 accent. "Probably take me a day or so to recover the feel of it, to fall back into the old routine, you know. But I'll do my best." For the hour or two he was here, anyway.

"I understand. I'll give you a schedule for my smallest unit. Fifty head, and not a surly one among them. Except perhaps for Iota—but she's in heat. They generally do get frisky about that time. No cause for alarm." He brought out a pad and began scribbling.

"You know the names of all your animals?" Hitch hardly cared about that inconsequential, but preferred to keep the farmer talking.

The man obliged, smiling with pride as his pencil moved. "All of them. None of that absentee ownership here—I run my farm myself. And I assure you every cow I own is champion-sired."

Cow? Hitch suspected that the labman who had made the critical report on #772 had been imbibing the developer fluid. No bovines, indeed! For a damn clerical error, he had been sent out—

"And if you have any trouble, just call on me," the farmer said, handing him the written schedule and a small book. "I'd show you the layout myself, but I'm behind on my paperwork."

"Trouble?"

"If an animal gets injured—sometimes they bang against the stalls or slip. Or if any equipment malfunctions—"

"Oh, of course." Yes, he could see the man was in a hurry. Perfect timing.

It had been *too* easy. Now Hitch's experienced nose smelled more than manure: trouble. It was the quiet missions that were most apt to boomerang.

He glanced at the schedule-paper before he entered the indicated cowshed. The handwriting was surprisingly elegant: 1. FEEDING 2. MILKING 3. PASTURE 4. CLEANUP . . . and several tighter lines below. It all seemed perfectly routine. The booklet was a detailed manual of instructions for reference when the need arose. All quite in order. There were cows in that barn, despite what any half-crocked report had said, and he would verify it shortly. Very shortly.

Why, then, did he have such a premonition of disaster?

Hitch shrugged and entered. There was a stifling aroma of backhouse at first, but of course this was typical. A cowbarn was the barniest kind of barn. His nose began to adapt almost immediately, though the odor was unlike that of the unit he had been briefed in. He ceased—almost—to notice it.

He paused just inside the door to let his other senses adapt to the gloom and rustle of the balmy interior. He faced a kind of hallway leading deep into the barn, lined on either side by stalls. Above the long feeding troughs twin rows of heads projected, emerging from the padded slats of the individual compartments. They turned to face him expectantly as he approached, making gentle, almost human murmurs of anticipation. This morning the herd was hungry, naturally; it was already late.

At the far end was the entrance to the "milkshed"—an area sealed off from the stable by a pair of tight doors. Short halls opened left and right from where he stood, putting him at the head of a T configuration. The left offshoot contained bags of feed; the other—

Hitch blinked, trying to banish the remaining fogginess. For a moment, peering down that right-hand passage, he could have sworn he had seen a beautiful, black-haired woman staring at him from a stall—naked. A woman very like Iolanthe—except that he had never so much as glimpsed Io in the nude.

Ridiculous; his more determined glance showed nothing there. His subconscious was playing tricks on him, perking up a dull assignment.

He faced forward with self-conscious determination. The episode, fleeting and insubstantial as it had been, had shaken him up, and now it was almost as though he had stagefright before the audience of animals.

As his eyes adjusted completely, Hitch felt a paralysis of shock coming over him. These were not bovine or caprine snouts greeting him; these were *human* heads. The fair features and lank tresses of healthy young women. Each stood in her stall, naked, hands grasping the slats since there was room only for the head to poke through. Blondes, brunettes, redheads; tall, petite, voluptuous—all types were represented. This group, clothed, could have mixed enhancingly into any festive Earth-Prime crowd.

Except for two things. First, their bosoms. The breasts were enormous and pendulous, in some cases hanging down to waist-level, and quite ample in proportion. Hitch was sure no conventional brassiere could confine these melons. They were long beyond cosmetic control. It would require a plastic surgeon with a sadistic nature to make even a start on the job.

Second, the girls' expressions. They were the blank, amiable stares of idiocy.

Milkers . . .

For some reason he had a sudden vision of a hive of bees, the workers buzzing in and out.

He had seen enough. His hand lifted to the spot on his skull where his hair covered the signal-button—and hesitated as his eye dwelt on the nearest pair of mammaries. Certainly he had the solution to the riddle; certainly this alternate was not fit for commonwealth status. Quite likely his report would launch a planetary police action, for the brutal farming of human beings was intolerable. Yet—

The udderlike extremities quivered gently with the girl's respiration, impossibly full. He was attracted and repelled, as the intellectual element within him strove to suppress the physical. To put his hand on one of those . . .

If he left now—who would feed the hungry cows?

His report could wait half an hour. It would take longer than that for him to return to headquarters, even after the aperture had been utilized. Time was not short, yet.

Hitch opened the instruction book and read the paragraph on feeding. Water was no problem, he learned; it was piped into each cell to be sipped as desired. But the food had to be dumped into the trough by hand.

He returned to the storage area and loaded a sack of enriched biscuits onto a dolly. He wheeled this into the main hall and used the clean metal scoop to ladle out two pounds to each individual. The girls reached

eagerly through to grasp the morsels, picking them up wholehanded, thumbs not opposed, and chewing on the black chunks with gusto. Hitch noticed that they all had strong white teeth, but could not determine why they failed to use their thumbs and fingers as—as thumbs and fingers. Why were they deliberately clumsy? Yes, they were healthy animals . . . and nothing more.

He had to return twice for new bags, keeping his eyes averted from the —empty?—right-hand hall lest his imagination taunt him again. He suspected that he was being too generous with the feed, but in due course breakfast had been served. He stood back and watched the feast.

The first ones had already finished, and a couple were squatting in the corners of their stalls, their bowels evidently stimulated to performance by the roughage. His presence did not seem to embarrass them during such intimate acts, any more than the presence of the farmer restrained a defecating cow. And these cows did seem to be contented. Had they all been lobotomized? He had observed no scars . . .

Idly, he sampled a biscuit. It was tough but not fibrous, and the flavor was surprisingly rich. According to the label, virtually every vitamin and mineral necessary for animal health and rich milk was contained herein. Only those elements copious in pasture foliage were skimped. Rolling the mass over his tongue, he could believe it. He wondered what kind of pasture was available for such as these; surely they didn't eat grass and leaves. Were there vegetables and fruits out there among the salt licks?

Now he had fed the herd. The cows would not suffer if he deserted them, since the shift would change before they became really hungry again. He had no reason to dawdle longer. He could activate the signal and—

Again his hand halted short of the button. Those bobbling teats reminded him of the second item on his schedule: milking. He knew that real cows hurt if they did not get milked on time. These—udders—looked overfull already.

Damn it, he hadn't sacrificed his humanity when he obtained his investigator's license! The report could wait.

And, a small insidious voice jaunted him, there was that vision in the T-hall stall. There *could* be a naked girl in there, obviously. One that did not resemble these pendulous cows. A—virginal type . . . that looked like Iolanthe.

That was the real reason he couldn't press the stud yet. He could not leave until he screwed up the courage to check that stall—thoroughly.

He reviewed the manual, glad for the moment to revert to routine. It seemed there were six milking machines for this wing: suction devices with vacuum-adhesive conical receptors. He opened the milking room and trun-

dled one machine up to the first milking stand and flipped the switch. It hummed.

He hesitated before undertaking the next step, but the instructions were clear and he reminded himself that a job was a job. The prospect, he had to admit, was weird but not entirely onerous. He unbolted the first gate—the entire front of the stall swung open—and approached its occupant cautiously with the milking harness.

She was a tall brunette, generous of haunch and hair as well as the obvious. To his surprise she stood docilely while he attached the harness: fiber straps around neck and midriff and the chest just below the arms, with crosspieces down the back and between the breasts. The last was tight because the mammaries hung against each other like full wineskins (so it wasn't a contemporary image; nothing more apt came to mind) but he got it into place by sawing it through. The whole was designed to keep the cow from jumping off the stand or fidgeting too far from the milking machine, though Hitch doubted that the harness would withstand a determined lunge. These animals were well-trained, and required only gentle guidance. He hoped.

He had an unbidden vision of the cow careering about the barn, mooing, he trying ineffectively to brake her by clinging to one milk-slick protuberance. No!

He fastened the clasps and led her to the stand. This was a padded ramp with a cutaway in the center for the bulk of the milking machine and hooks for the termini of the harness. The girl mounted it without instruction and placed her two hands knuckle-down on the front section and her knees on the back, so that she straddled the machine. Her breasts depended enormously, reaching down just beyond her elbows. The brown nipples were tremendous, and Hitch observed flecks of white on them, as though the very weight of milk were forcing the first squirts out.

He brought up one milker-cup and placed it over her right breast. It was shaped to accommodate the expanded nipple in the center, with a special circular flange of flexible rubber. The outer cone adhered by suction, its slightly moist perimeter making the seal perfect. He attached the left cup, turned the dial to MILK and stood back to watch the proceedings.

The feeder-cones covered only the lowermost surface of each breast, though they would have engulfed the architecture of a normal woman. They seemed to be efficient, regardless; the machine generated bursts of shaped suction that extracted the fluid quickly and cleanly. He could see the white of it passing through the transparent tubing, and hear the squirts of it striking the bottom of the covered pail as the breasts jumped to alter-

nating vacuum. One-two! One-two! the rhythm was compelling, the pulsing whiteness suggestive of an interminable seminal ejaculation.

It's only milk! he reminded himself. But, unbidden, his erogenous zones were responding.

The girl masticated a chunk of hard cracker she had preserved, cudlike, in her cheek and waited with a half-smile. She was used to this, and glad to be relieved of the night's accumulation.

Only forty-nine to go! He left her there and proceeded to the next with considerably enhanced confidence. Cows were cows, after all, whatever their physical form.

By the time he had the sixth stand occupied, the first cow was done. He unhooked the brunette, whose bosom was now sadly slack, led her to the door in the far side of the milk room, and removed the halter. The front center strap came away from between dangling ribbons of flesh. How much had she been good for? Two quarts? A gallon? He had no idea of the prevailing standards, but presumed she was an adequate milker. She skipped outside with a happy twinkle of buttocks, her hair flouncing. From this viewpoint, beautiful.

Before he closed the door he observed that there were great piles of apples and carrots and what looked like unshelled peanuts in the yard. The girl was already scattering them about, not yet hungry enough to do more than play with her food. And there *were* salt-licks, down beside the stream.

The following hour was hectic. It took him, once he got the hang of it, about thirty seconds to place each cow and attach the milker, and about fifteen seconds to turn her loose again once drained. But more time was required for those farthest from the milk room, and every five cows he had to replace each machine's weighty bucket. As a result he was kept hopping, and the attention he spared for each individual became quite perfunctory. Dairy farming was hard work!

Sweat rolled down his nose as he placed the final capped bucket on the conveyor leading to the processing section of the barn and put the hoses and cups into the automatic washer/sterilizer. Milking was done, the stock pastured—last time he had looked, they were roughhousing amid peanut shells and splashing in the shallow river—and he could go home with a clear conscience. Whatever pay Hitch had earned so far in this world the owner could keep, courtesy of Earth-Prime. The man would need all his resources, when the EP police action commenced!

Whom was he fooling? He wasn't even close to making the return trip to Earth-Prime. He still had that stall to check. If there were a woman there, and if she did resemble Iolanthe—well, this *was* an alternate world.

Many, perhaps most of its people could be identical or very similar to those of Earth. *There could be an Iolanthe here!*

Perhaps one more available than his own . . .

He closed his mind to the thought again, not caring to face its ramifications all at once. Anyway, there were concrete, mission-inspired reasons for him to remain here longer. For one thing, these milkers were obviously virtually mindless, rendered so by what means he could not tell. But they could not have freshened so voluminously without first having been bred. That meant calving, and not so very long ago—and what had happened to the babies?

Naturally his report would not be complete without this information. This was too blatant a situation to investigate casually. He had almost come to think of human beings as animals, during the rush of the milking, but of course they were not. This barn represented the most serious breach of human rights ever encountered in the alternate worlds, and it wasn't even in the name of war or racism. These were Caucasian animals—*girls!* he reminded himself furiously. How great was the total degradation of liberty, worldwide? Were there Negro and Mongol cows, or were other races used for brute-work or sport or . . . meat?

He had to discover much more, but he could not break loose and wander around the rest of the barn without a pretext. That would attract attention to himself all too quickly. And he did not *want* to poke into the right wing . . . yet. He would have to continue his chores in a routine manner—and keep his eyes and ears wide open until he learned it all.

Next on the schedule was cleanup. He read the manual and discovered that this was not as bad as it might have been. The girls were naturally fastidious, and deposited their intestinal refuse in sumps provided in the corner of each stall. He had merely to activate the section fertilizer pump and flush each residue down its pipe, checking to make sure that no units were clogged. The smell from the vents was not sweet, but no direct handling was required.

Theoretically, however, he was supposed to check first to make sure the bowels were well-formed and of the proper color, consistency and effluvium, since nonconformity was an early signal of illness. If suspicious, he was also to probe for worms or bloodclots before flushing a given deposit. There was a special pan and spreader fork for this purpose. Nevertheless he ignored this instruction and flushed each sump without looking or sniffing closely. There were limits.

"Duty ends where my nose begins," he muttered.

He completed the cleanup circuit and could no longer avoid the problem of the T offshoot. Now that the main stable was empty, he could hear

sounds from this wing. It *was* occupied! Anxiously he reviewed his schedule. The facts were there, obvious the moment he chose to look. The occupants of this section were special cases: items to take care of after the routine chores were accomplished.

He set himself and approached the wing. *There could be an Iolanthe here*—a stupid one.

To his relief and regret, the first stall contained a sick cow. She lay on a pallet along the side of the stall, a shapely blonde whose mammaries had diminished to merely voluptuous stature. He could tell they had shrunk because there were stretch-marks on them defining the grandeur that had been. Yet at this moment her bustline would have strained an EP tape measure.

There was a note that she had to be milked by hand, so as not to contaminate the equipment (even through sterilization? fussy, fussy!), and the milk disposed of. She would be tapered off entirely, then bred again when fully recovered. Her temperature had to be checked to make sure her fever remained down. Her name was Flora.

He had not paid attention to the names until now, though they were printed on the crosspiece of each gate. His ignorance had facilitated impersonality and blunted the horror of this monstrous barn. Now—

Hitch peered through the slats and surveyed this new problem. Milk her by hand? Take her temperature? That meant far more intimate contact than hitherto. He delved into the manual. Yes, the procedures were there . . .

Well, one thing at a time. He entered the pen with a small open bucket. "Up, Flora," he said briskly.

She looked at him with a disturbing but illusory semblance of intelligence, but did not move her torso. Damn the humanization wrought by knowledge of her name! He simply could not think of her any longer as an animal.

"Flora, I have to milk you," he explained. The anomaly of it struck him afresh, and he wondered whether he should not get out of this world right away.

No, not yet. He would never be satisfied if he left without verifying that vision of Io.

Flora continued to lie there on her side, one leg pulled up. Her hair fell across her face and curled over one outstretched arm, and he noticed how neatly it matched the hue of her pubic region.

He looked in the book again. "Milking a supine cow by hand . . ." the instructions began. Nothing like a complete manual!

He propped the bucket under the upper nipple and took Flora's breast

in both hands. The feel of it gave him an immediate erection, despite everything he had seen during the mass-milking. It seemed he had been sight-anesthetized but not touch-anesthetized; or perhaps it was the fact that this was a true breast by his definitions rather than a gross udder, despite the stretch-marks. Or maybe it was simply the name. Had he known any blondes called Flora?

Was there a black-haired cow named Iolanthe?

In the line of duty . . .

He centered the nipple and squeezed. Nothing happened. He tried again, more positively, and succeeded in producing a translucent driblet. One milked a bovine-cow by squeezing the neck of the teat shut and applying more gentle pressure with the remainder of the hand so that the milk had only one exit, but the human breast was structured differently. It took him several tries to accomplish anything substantial and he was afraid it was rough on her, but Flora did not move or make any sign. Once he took hold too far back and feared he had bruised one of the internal glands, but she merely watched him with sad gray eyes.

The job was inexpert and messy, but he managed to get several ounces into the bucket and probably several more on the two of them and the floor. It didn't matter; the point was to relieve the pressure, not to extract every tantalizing drop. *Why don't I just put my mouth on it and suck it out?* he thought wickedly. *Who would know?* But he remembered that the milk was supposed to be bad.

He poured the hard-won liquid down the disposal sump, flushed it, and tackled the nether breast.

"What have they done to you?" he asked rhetorically as he worked. "What makes you all—pardon the expression—so stupid? No woman on my planet would tolerate what I'm doing to you now." But he wondered about that as he said it; probably there were some types who—

Flora opened her mouth and he thought for a horrifying moment she was going to reply, but it was only a yawn. There was something funny about her tongue.

Now he had to take her temperature. The book cautioned him to insert the thermometer rectally, because the normal animal was apt to bite anything placed in her mouth. As if he hadn't done enough already! He had pulled some weird stunts as an interworld investigator, but this was breaking the record.

Still, she was ill, or had been, and it would be neglectful to skip the temperature. It had been neglectful to skip the feces inspection, too, he thought, but somehow it was different now. More—personal.

"Over, Flora," he said. "I can't get at you from this angle." He opened

the supply box nailed to a wooden beam and found the thermometer: a rounded plastic tube about half an inch in diameter, eight inches long, with a handle and gauge on the end. The type of rugged instrument, in short, one would use on an animal—a patient that might squirm during intromission. There was a blob of yellowish grease on the business end.

When she still did not respond, he set the thermometer carefully in the feeding trough and tried to haul her about by hand. He grasped her around the middle and hefted. Her slim midsection came up and her well-fleshed leg straightened, but that was all. She was too heavy to juggle when uncooperative. He eased her down, leaving her prone on the pallet. It would have to do. At least the target was approachable, instead of aimed at the wall.

He recovered the thermometer and squatted beside her. With the fingers of his free hand he pried apart the fleshy buttocks, searching for the anus. It didn't work very well; her hindquarters were generous, and her position squeezed the mounds together. He succeeded only in changing the configuration of the crevice. He could probably open the spot to view by using both hands, but then would not be able to insert the thermometer. Finally he flattened one buttock with his left hand and guided the tip of the instrument along the crack with his right, leaving a slug-trail of grease. When he judged he was in the right area, he pushed, hoping the slant was correct.

There was resistance, she squirmed, and the rounded point jogged over and sank in. He was surprised at the ease with which it penetrated, after the prior difficulties. He let the stem shift until the angle was about ninety degrees and depressed it until he estimated that the tip was a couple of inches deep beyond the sphincter. He readjusted himself and settled down for the prescribed two minutes.

God, he thought while he waited. What was he doing in this stable, with a naked buxom woman stretched out, he straddling her thighs and his clammy hand on her rear and jamming a rod up her rectum? His own member was so stiff it was painful.

To have you like this, Io—your dainty, chaste, aseptic little ass—

The seconds stretched out, incredibly long. He wondered whether his watch had stopped, but heard it still ticking. What would he tell the boys, in the next post-mission (post *e*mission?) bull-session? That he had been milking cows? Surely they would laugh off the truth. Truth was a fleshy buttock and a dizzy feeling.

The time, somehow, was almost up, and he began to ease out the thermometer. At that point she moved again, perhaps in response to the withdrawal, climbing to her knees with her head still down. He had to follow

quickly to prevent the tube from ramming too far inside, and almost lost his balance. But the new position flung open her buttocks and revealed to him the thermometer's actual point of entry.

Not the anus. Well, it probably didn't make any difference. The temperature couldn't vary that much between adjacent apertures. Carefully he drew the length of plastic out and checked the gauge. It reached the "normal" marker exactly.

"Flora, you're mending," he announced with his best bedside manner, averting his gaze from the intriguing view presented. "You'll be spry again in no time."

Perhaps it was the pseudo-confident tone. She rolled over, her breasts creased from the pallet, and smiled. He retreated into the passage and ladled out a pound of the special sick-animal crackers. It had been rough, for more reasons than he cared to think about.

The next occupied pen was going to be worse. It was the one in which he had seen—the girl. The one he had avoided until this moment. The one that fastened him to this world.

There could be an Iolanthe here.

He peered at the instructions before taking the plunge. This cow was in heat, and had to be conducted to the bull for mating. The handbook had, he discovered, a sketch of the barn's floor-plan, so he knew where to take her. "It is important that copulation be witnessed," the book said sternly, "and the precise time of connection noted, so that the bull can be properly paced."

Hitch took the last step and looked in, his pulses driving. It was not Iolanthe.

Just like that the bubble burst. Of *course* it wasn't Io. He had seen a black-haired girl in poor light, and his mind had been on the black-haired girl he knew at home, and the similarity of names—his stiff member had pinned the image to the desire.

This was a yearling—if that were the proper description. In human terms, about sixteen years old and never bred before. Her breasts were slight and firm, her haunches slender but well-formed, her movements animate. She paced nervously about the pen, uttering faint squeals of impatience. Her glossy hair flung out, whipping around her torso when she turned. She was, if not Iolanthe, still a strikingly attractive specimen by his definitions, perhaps because of her fire. The others had been, comparatively—cows.

Naturally a woman in heat would have sex appeal. That was what the condition was for. Mating.

Her name, of course, was Iota. The farmer had mentioned her specifi-

cally, and Hitch had made the connection, at least subconsciously, the instant he saw her first. "All right, Iota, time for an experience you'll never forget," he said.

She spun to face him, black pupils seeming to flare. Then with a bound she was glued to the slats, her high young mammaries poking through conically. Her breath was rapid as she reached for him. Could she, could she be—

A younger edition of Iolanthe?

Some interworld parallels were exact, others inexact. Iolanthe, Iota—both Io, as though they were sisters or more than sisters. Iolanthe might have looked like this at sixteen.

Ridiculous! It was just a mental phenomenon, a thing anchored to his yearning. A thousand, a million girls looked like this at this age.

He had a task to do. He would do it.

"Easy, girl. Stand back so I can open the gate. You and I are going to the bull-pen."

As if in answer, she flung herself back and watched him alertly from the far side. He unlatched the gate—strange that these girls were all so dull they could not work these simple fastenings themselves, even after seeing it done repeatedly—and stepped inside with the halter.

Immediately she was on him, her lithe body pressed against his front, her arms clasped about his chest, her pelvis jerking against his crotch in an unmistakable gesture. She was in heat, all right—and she figured him for the bull!

And he was tempted, as her motions provided a most specific physical stimulation. Recent events had heightened his awareness of his own masculinity, to phrase it euphemistically. What difference would it make, to the owner, exactly *who* bred her? All they wanted was the milk when she freshened. And this whole foul system would be thrown out when the Earth-Prime troops—correction, law & order expediters—came. The chances were she would never become a milker anyway.

He looked into her eyes and read the mindless lust. Never had he perceived such graphic yearning in a woman. She had no brain, only a hungry pudendum.

She was, after all, an animal, not a human being. Fornication with her would be tantamount to bestiality, and the concept repelled him even as his member throbbed in response to the urgent pressure of her vulva.

"Get away from me!" he cried, shoving her roughly aside. God! They had even reduced women to animal cycles, in lieu of human periodicy. To control freshening, no doubt, and forestall restlessness at inconvenient times. There would be no mooning in the absence of male company, this

way, except for those few days when the repressed sexuality of a year or more was triggered.

She hunched against the wall, tears coming. He saw that her emotions were human, though her mind was not. She felt rejection as keenly as anyone, but lacked the sophistication to control or conceal her reaction.

He had been too harsh with her. "Take it easy, Iota. I didn't mean to yell at you. I *wasn't* yelling at you!" No—he had been shouting across the worlds at Iolanthe, who had teased him similarly for so long. Arousing the urge, but unavailable for the gratification. The difference was that this time *he* had called it off. Taking out his suppressions on this innocent wanton who could not know what drove him.

She peered at him uncertainly, her face bearing the sheen of smeared tears. He lifted the harness and shook it. "I have to put this on you and take you to the bull. That's all. Do you understand?"

Still she hesitated. How *could* she understand? She was an animal. The tone of his voice was all she followed.

Or *was* it?

The animals here were incredibly stupid, considering their human origin. Obviously they had been somehow bludgeoned into this passivity. Drugs, perhaps—the biscuits could contain a potent mix. Probably most of the subjects finally gave up thinking; it was easier just to go along. But what of a young one? Her metabolism might have greater resource, particularly when she was ready to mate. To be in heat—it was the animal way to be in potent sexual love. Powerful juices there, very powerful. Counteractants?

But more: suppose an individual succeeded for a time in throwing off the mind-suppressant? Started protesting?

What was the reply of *any* tyranny to insurrection? The smart cow would keep her mouth shut, at least in the barn. She would conform. Her life depended on it.

Iota might not be stupid at all. She might be doing exactly what was expected of her. Concealing her awareness.

She was still damned attractive in her primeval way.

She had been watching him with that preternatural alertness of hers, and now she approached him again, cautiously.

He set the harness over her shoulders and reached around her body to fasten the straps. "Can you talk?" he whispered into her ear, afraid of being overheard. He doubted there were hidden mikes—that would not be economically feasible for a retarded technology like this—but other farmhands could be in the area.

She lifted her arms to facilitate the tightening of the clasps. A thick

strand of hair curved around her left shoulder and the inside arc of her left breast. She was not as scantily endowed as he had thought at first; he had merely become acclimatized to the monstrosities of the milkers. She was clean, too, except for the feet, and there was an alluring woman-smell about her.

"Can you talk, Iota!" he whispered more urgently. "Maybe I can help you."

She perked up at the sound of her name. Her breathing became rapid again. She rested her forearms against his shoulders and looked into his face. Her eyes were large, the irises black in this light. But she did not smile or speak.

"You can trust me, Iota," he said. "Just give me some sign. Some evidence that you're not—"

She closed her arms gently around his neck and drew him in to her. Again her breasts touched him; again her hips nudged his groin. The woman-smell became stronger.

Was she trying to show him that she comprehended, or was it merely a more careful sexual offering?

What difference did it make?

He had fastened the straps long since, but his arms were still about her. He slid his hands across her smooth back, down to the slight indentations above her buttocks. She responded, putting increasing pressure against him.

What the hell.

Hitch looked about. There was no one in the stable, apart from the cows in the special stalls. He tightened his embrace and carried her upright into her own compartment. "You want to get bred, OK," he muttered.

He put her down in the straw. She yielded to his directions, eager to oblige. He kneeled between her spread legs, released his belt and opened his trousers, watching her. Then, unable to restrain himself any longer, he put his left hand on her cleft to work the labia apart. The entire area was slick and hot. He transferred the hand to his own loin, supporting the weight of his body with the other hand as he descended, and guided himself down the burning crevice and in. He was reminded strikingly of the manner he had placed the thermometer not long ago. There didn't seem to be any hymen.

He spread himself upon her, embedded to the hilt. He tried to kiss her, but the position was wrong and she didn't seem to understand. What opportunity would she have had to learn about kissing?

He had expected an immediate and explosive climax, but was disap-

pointed. Iota had a dismayingly capacious vaginal tract; he could neither plumb the well to its depth nor find purchase at its rim. He realized belatedly that cows would naturally be selected for ready breeding and birthing. Entry had been too easy; there was no internal resistance, no friction.

After all his buildup, he couldn't come. It was like dancing alone in a spacious ballroom.

She lay there passively, waiting for him to proceed.

Angry, now, he pulled back, plunged, withdrew and plunged again, his sword impaling only phantoms.

And felt his weapon growing flaccid. "Bitch," he said.

But it was the bovine, not the canine, image that had unmanned him. It just wasn't in him to fornicate with a placid, mindless cow.

She looked up at him reproachfully as he disengaged and covered up, but he was too disturbed to care. "Get up, animal. You want bull, you'll *get* bull."

She stood up and he took hold of the harness leash and jerked her forward. "Move," he said firmly, and she moved. There was, it seemed, a trick to handling animals, and he had mastered it out of necessity. He was becoming an experienced farmer.

They traveled down long dim corridors to the bullpen, she tugging eagerly at the leash and seeking to poke into side passages. She had forgotten the frustration of the recent episode already. Obviously she had never been in this section of the barn before, and curiosity had not been entirely suppressed along with intelligence. She *was* stupid, of course; otherwise he would not have failed with her.

He didn't know much about lobotomy, but this didn't seem like it. Yet what technique . . . ?

The bull was a giant of a man, full-bearded and hirsute. His feet and hands were crusted with callus and there was dirt on his belly. His tremendous penis hoisted, derrick-like, the moment he winded Iota, and he hurled himself around his large pen. Only the stout double harness and chained collar that bound him to the far rail inhibited his savage lunges. He stank of urine.

Hitch loosed Iota and shoved her into the pen. He was anxious to have the bull cover up any guilty traces of his own abortive gesture.

She was abruptly hesitant, standing just beyond the range of the man-monster that reared and chafed and bellowed to get at her and bucked awesomely with his tumescence. She wasn't afraid of him, though his mass was easily twice hers; she was merely uncertain how to proceed in the face of so much meat.

She made as if to step forward, then withdrew. She was trying to flirt!

Hitch found quick sympathy for the bull, allied with his own apprehension. "You idiotic tease, get over there!" he cried at her.

Startled, she did.

The bull reached out and grabbed her by one shoulder, employing the same five-fingered mitten-grip Hitch had observed with the cows. Iota spun under the force of it, thrown off-balance, and the bull caught at her opposite hip and hauled her in to his chest backwards. He clubbed her so that she doubled over and rammed his spurting organ into her narrow cleft, thrusting again and again so fiercely that her abdomen bowed out with each lunge.

That was the treatment she had been waiting for! She hadn't even been aware of Hitch's effort, thinking it only the preliminary inspection.

Then Iota tumbled to the floor, stunned by the impact of the courtship but hardly miserable. She was in heat, after all, and now that she had found out what it was all about, she liked it. She lay on her back in the soiled straw, smiling, legs lifted, though Hitch was sure she would suffer shortly from terrible bruises inside and out. What a performance!

The beast was on her again, this time from the front, biting at her breasts while trying to get into position for another assault. His organ glistened moistly, still erect.

"Get that heifer out of there!" someone shouted, and Hitch started. It was another farmhand. "Want to sap our best stud?"

Hitch ran out into the pen, wary of the bull, and caught hold of one of Iota's blissfully outstretched arms. It was obvious that she would happily absorb all the punishment the creature chose to deliver. A festoon of white goo stretched downward from the bull's penis as he made a last attempt at the vanishing target. Then Hitch hauled Iota across the floor until they were entirely out of range of the monster and stood her on her feet. She was still dazed as he reharnessed her, not even wincing as the strap chafed across the deep toothmarks on her breast.

The other farmhand glanced at him as they trooped by, but did not say anything. Just as well.

About halfway back, Hitch remembered that he had forgotten to post the time of service on the bull's chart. He decided not to risk further embarrassment by returning for that errand. The bull seemed to have sufficient pep to go around, anyway.

Iota was dreamily contented as he returned her to her stall, though there was a driblet of gluey blood on one leg. Apparently there *had* been a hymen . . . Well, she was out of heat now, and she wasn't a virgin heifer any more!

There was trouble in the final stall. He had been so occupied with the

prior chores on the schedule that he hadn't bothered to read ahead, and now he regretted it. He had just witnessed, per instructions, a copulation, and it was as though gestation had occurred in minutes. This next cow was delivering!

She lay on her side, legs pulled up, whimpering as her body strained. There was something funny about her tongue too, as it projected between her teeth. Was there a *physical* reason these animals never spoke? The head of the calf had already emerged, its hair brown like that of the mother. Hitch had thought all babies were bald. All *human* babies . . .

Should he summon help? He was no obstetrician!

But then he would have to explain why he hadn't notified anyone earlier, and he had no excuse apart from carelessness and personal concupiscence. Better to stick with it himself.

Odd, he thought, how one could become committed against his intention. This laboring cow was not really his problem, and she belonged literally to another world, yet he had to do what he could for her. The activities of this brutal barn were as important to him at this moment as anything he could remember. Even its most repulsive aspects fascinated him. It represented a direct personal challenge as well as an intellectual one. Iota—

As the cow struggled to force out the massive bundle, Hitch skimmed nervously through the manual. Good—the stock was generally hardy, and seldom required more than nominal supervision during parturition. Signs of trouble? No, none of the alarm signals itemized were evident. This was a normal delivery.

But the text stressed the importance of removing the new-birthed calf immediately and taking it to the nursery for proper processing. The mother was not supposed to have any opportunity to lick it down, suckle it or develop any attachment.

And how about the father? How about *any* observer with a trace of human feeling? It was as though he *had* impregnated a cow, and now his offspring was being manifested. He had failed with Iolanthe, he had failed with Iota, but he still had something to prove. Something to salvage from this disaster of a world.

The cow heaved again, and more of the balled-up calf emerged. There was blood soaking into the pallet, but the manual assured him callously that this was normal. He wanted to *do* something, but knew that his best bet was noninterference. He was sure now that a human woman could not have given birth so readily without anesthetic or medication. In some ways the animals were fortunate, not that it justified any part of this. That large, loose vagina—

"What's going on here?"

Hitch jumped again. The voice behind him was that of the owner! For an experienced investigator, he had been inexcusably careless about his observations. Twice now, men had come upon him by surprise.

"She's birthing," he said. "Routine, so I didn't—"

"In the *nightstall*?" the man demanded angrily, his white hair seeming to stand on end. It was the way he combed it, Hitch decided irrelevantly. "On a bare pallet?"

Oops—he must have missed a paragraph. "I told you it's been a while since I—the other farm didn't have separate places to—"

"That farm was in violation of the law, not to mention the policies of compassionate procedure." The owner was already inside the stall and squatting down beside the laboring cow. "It was a mistake, Esmeralda," he said soothingly. "I never meant to put you through this here. I had a special delivery-booth for you, with fresh clean straw and padded walls . . ." He stroked her hair and patted her shoulder, and the animal relaxed a little. Obviously she recognized the gentle master. Probably he came by the stables periodically to encourage the beasts and grant them lumps of sugar. "In just a moment I'll give you a shot to ease the pain, but not just yet. It will make you sleepy, and we have to finish this job first. You've been very good. You're one of my best. It's all right now, dear."

Hitch realized with a peculiar mixture of emotions that it wasn't all acting. The farmer really did care about the comfort and welfare of his animals. Hitch had somehow assumed that brutality was the inevitable concomitant of the degradation of human beings. But actually he had seen no harshness; this entire barn was set up for the maximum creature comfort compatible with efficiency, with this backward technology. Had he misjudged the situation?

Under the owner's sure guidance the calving was quickly completed. The man lifted the infant—a female—and spanked her into awareness before cutting and tying off the umbilical cord. He wrapped her in a towel that materialized from somewhere and stood up. "Here," he said to Hitch, "take it to the nursery."

Hitch found himself with babe in arms.

"All right, Esme," the owner said to the cow, his voice low and friendly. "Let's take care of that afterbirth. Here—I'll give you that shot I promised. It only stings for a second. Hold still—there. You'll feel much better soon. Just relax, and in a moment you'll be asleep. In a few days you'll be back with the herd where you belong, the finest milker of them all." He looked up and spied Hitch still standing there. "Get moving, man! Do you want her to see it?"

Hitch got moving. He did not feel at all comfortable carrying the baby, for all his determination of a moment ago to help it in some way, but that was the least of it. Its cries, never very loud (did they breed for that, too?), had subsided almost immediately as it felt the supposed comfort of human arms, and probably that was fortunate because otherwise the mother would have been attracted to the sound. But this removal of the baby so quickly from its parent, so that it could never know a true family—how could that be tolerated? Yet he was cooperating, carrying it down the dusky passages to the nursery.

The fact that he had witnessed its arrival did not make him responsible for it, technically—but the baby had, in more than a manner of speaking, been given into his charge. His prior mood returned, intensified; he *did* feel responsible.

"I'll take care of you, little girl," he said inanely. "I'll keep you safe. I'll—"

He was talking like a hypocrite. There was very little he could do for this baby except put it in the nursery. He didn't know the first thing about child care. And—he was no longer entirely certain that he *should* do anything specific if he had the opportunity.

He had been ready to condemn this entire world out of hand, but in the face of this last development he wasn't sure, oddly. This breeding and milking of human beings was shocking—but was it actually evil? The preliminary report had remarked on the strange peacefulness of this alternate Earth: computer analysis suggested that there was no war here, and had not been for some time. That was another riddle of #772. Was it because those who ruled it were compassionate men, despite the barbarity of their regime?

Which was better: to have a society peacefully unified by a true segregation of functions—men-men vs animal-men—or to have every person born to contend so selfishly for the privileges of humanity that all succeeded only in being worse than animals? Earth-Prime remained in serious jeopardy of self-extermination; was that the preferred system to impose on all the alternate Earths too?

#772 did have its positive side. Economically it functioned well, and it would probably never have runaway inflation or population increase or class warfare. Could it be that with the breakup of the family system, the human rights and dignities system, the all-men-are-created-equal system —could it be that this was the true key to permanent worldwide peace?

He had not seen a single discontented cow.

By taking this baby from its mother and conveying it to the impersonal nursery, was he in fact doing it the greatest favor of its existence?

He wondered.

The nursery caught him by surprise. It was a cool quiet area more like a laboratory than the playroom he had anticipated. A series of opaque tanks lined the hall. As he passed between them he heard a faint noise, like that of an infant crying in a confined space, and the baby in his arms heard it and came alive loudly.

Hitch felt suddenly uneasy, but he took the squalling bundle hastily up to the archaically garbed matron at a central desk. "This is Esmeralda's offspring," he said.

"I don't recognize you," the woman said, glowering at him. Epitome of gradeschool disciplinarian. He almost flinched.

"I'm a new man, just hired this morning. The boss is in with the mother now. He said to—"

"Boss? What nonsense is this?"

Hitch paused, nonplussed, before he realized that he had run afoul of another slang expression. This one evidently hadn't carried over into #772. "The owner, the man who—"

"Very well," she snapped. "Let me see it."

She took the bundle, put it unceremoniously on the desk, and unwrapped it. She probed the genital area with a harsh finger, ignoring the baby's screams. This time Hitch did flinch. "Female. Good. No abnormalities. Males are such a waste."

"A waste? Why?"

She unrolled a strip of something like masking tape and tore it off. She grasped one of the baby's tiny hands. "Haven't you worked in a barn before? You can't get milk from a bull."

Obviously not. But a good bull did have his function, as Iota's experience had shown. Hitch watched the woman tape the miniature thumb and fingers together, forming a bandage resembling a stiff mitten, and something unpleasant clicked. Hands so bound in infancy could not function normally in later life; certain essential muscles would atrophy and certain nerves would fail to develop. It was said by some that man owed his intelligence to the use of his opposable thumb . . .

"I haven't been involved with this end of it," he explained somewhat lamely. "What happens to the males?"

"We have to kill them, of course, except for the few we geld for manual labor." She had finished taping the hands; now she had a bright scalpel poised just above the little face.

Hitch assumed she was going to cut the tape away or take a sample of hair. He wasn't really thinking about it, since he was still trying to digest what he had just learned. Slaughter of almost all males born here . . .

She hooked thumb and forefinger into the baby's cheeks, forcing its mouth open uncomfortably. The knife came down, entered the mouth, probed beneath the tongue before Hitch could protest. Suddenly the screams were horrible.

Hitch watched, paralyzed, as bubbling blood overflowed the tiny lip. "What—?"

"Wouldn't want it to grow up talking," she said. "Amazing how much trouble one little cut can save. Now take this calf down to tank seven."

"I don't—" There was too much to grapple with. They cut the tongues so that speech would be impossible? There went another bastion of intelligence, ruthlessly excised.

With the best intentions, he had delivered his charge into this enormity. He felt ill.

The matron sighed impatiently. "That's right, you're new here. Very well. I'll show you so you'll know next time. Make sure you get it straight. I'm too busy to tell you twice."

Too busy mutilating innocent babies? But he did not speak. It was as though his own tongue had felt the blade.

She took the baby down to tank seven, ignoring the red droplets that trailed behind, and lifted the lid. The container was about half full of liquid, and a harness dangled from one side. She pinned the baby in the crook of one elbow and fitted the little arms, legs and head into the loops and tightened the fastenings so that the head was firmly out of the fluid. Some of it splashed on Hitch when she immersed the infant, and he discovered that it was some kind of thin oil, luke-warm.

The baby screamed and thrashed, afraid of the dark interior or perhaps bruised by the crude straps, but only succeeded in frothing redly and making a few small splashes with its bound hands. The harness held it secure and helpless.

The matron lowered the lid, checking to make sure the breathing vents were clear, and the pitiful cries were muted.

Hitch fumbled numbly for words. "You—what's that for? It—"

"It is important that the environment be controlled," the woman explained curtly. "No unnecessary tactile, auditory or visual stimulation for the first six months. Then they get too big for the tanks, so we put them in the dark cells. The first three years are critical; after that it's fairly safe to exercise them, though we generally wait another year to be certain. And we keep the protein down until six; then we increase the dose because we *want* them to grow."

"I—I don't understand." But he did, horribly. In his mind the incongruous but too-relevant picture of a bee-hive returned, the worker-bees grow-

ing in their tight hexagonal cells. His intuition, when he first saw the cows, had been sure.

"Don't you know *anything*? Protein is the chief brain food. Most of the brain develops in the first few years, so we have to watch their diet closely. Too little, and they're too stupid to follow simple commands; too much, and they're too smart. We raise good cows here; we have excellent quality control."

Hitch looked at the rows of isolation tanks: quality control. What could he say? He knew that severe dietary deficiencies in infancy and childhood could permanently warp a person's mental, physical and emotional development. Like the bees of the hive, the members of the human society could not achieve their full potential unless they had the proper care in infancy. Those bees scheduled to be workers were raised on specially deficient honey, and became sexless, blunted insects. The few selected to be queens were given royal jelly and extra attention, and developed into completely formed insects. Bees did not specialize in high intelligence, so the restriction was physical and sexual. With human beings, it would hit the human specialization: the brain. With proper guidance, the body might recover almost completely from early protein deprivation, but never the mind.

EP had researched this in order to foster larger, brighter, healthier children and adults. #772 used the same information to deliberately convert women to cows. No drugs were required, or surgical lobotomy. And there was no hope that any individual could preserve or recover full intelligence, with such a lifelong regime. No wonder he had gotten nowhere with Iota!

He heard the babies wailing. What price, peace?

"And," he said as she turned away, "and any of these calves could grow up to be as intelligent and lively as we are, if raised properly?"

"They *could*. But that's against the law, and of course such misfits wouldn't be successful as milkers. They're really quite well off here; we take good care of our own. We're very fortunate to have developed this system. Can you imagine using actual filthy *beasts* for farming?"

And he had milked those placid cows and had his round with Iota . . .

He left her, sick in body and spirit as he passed by the wailing tanks. In each was a human baby crying out its heritage in a mind-stifling environment, deprived of that stimulation and response essential to normal development, systematically malnourished. No health, no comfort, no future —because each had been born in the barn. In the barn.

He could do nothing about it, short-range. If he ran amok amid the tanks, as he was momentarily inclined to, what would he accomplish except

the execution of babies? And this was only one barn of perhaps millions. No—it would take generations to undo the damage wrought here.

He paused as he passed tank #7, hearing a cry already poignant. The baby he had carried here, in his naivete. Esmeralda's child. The responsibility he had abrogated. The final and most terrible failure.

A newborn personality, bound and bloody in the dark, never to know true freedom, doomed to a lifelong waking nightmare . . . until the contentment of idiocy took over.

Suddenly Hitch understood what Iolanthe meant by integrity of purpose over and above the standards of any single world. There were limits beyond which personal ambition and duty became meaningless.

He stepped up to the tank and lifted the lid. The cries became loud. He clapped his free hand to his ankle, feeling for the blade concealed there. He brought it up, plunged it into the tank, and slashed away the straps.

"Hey!" the matron cried sharply.

He dropped the knife and grabbed the floundering infant, lifting it out. He hugged it to his shirtfront with both arms and barged ahead. By the time the supervisor got there, Hitch was out of the nursery, leaving a trail of oil droplets from the empty tank.

As soon as he was out of sight he balanced the baby awkwardly in one arm and reached up to touch the stud in his skull.

It was risky. He had no guarantee there would be an open space at this location on Earth-Prime. But he was committed.

Five seconds passed. Then he was wrenched into his own world by the unseen operator. Safely!

There was no welcoming party. The operator had merely aligned interworld coordinates and opened the veil by remote control. Hitch would have to make his own way back to headquarters, where he would present his devastating report. Armies would mass at his behest, but he felt no exhilaration. Those tanks . . .

He held the baby more carefully, looking for a place to put it down so that he could remove the remaining strap-fragments and wrap it protectively. He knew almost nothing about what to do for it, except to keep it warm. But the baby, blessedly, was already asleep again, trusting in him as it had before though there was blood on its cheek. The mutilated tongue . . .

He was in a barn. Not really surprisingly; the alternate framework tended to run parallel in detail, so that a structure could occupy the same location in a dozen Earths. There were many more barns in #772 than in EP, but it still didn't stretch coincidence to have a perfect match. The one he trekked through now was an Earth-Prime barn, though, an old-

fashioned red one. It had the same layout as the other, but it contained horses or sheep or—cows.

He walked down the passage, cradling the sleeping baby—*his* baby!—and looking into the stalls. He passed the milkroom and entered the empty stable, noting how it had changed for animal accommodation. He couldn't resist entering the special wing again.

The first stall contained an ill cow who munched on alfalfa hay. The second was occupied by a lively heifer who paused to look soulfully at him with large soft eyes and licked its teeth with a speech-mute tongue. Had she just been bred? The third—

Then it struck him. He had been shocked that man could so ruthlessly exploit man, there on #772. It was not even slavery on the other world, but such thorough subjugation of the less fortunate members of society that no reprieve was even thinkable for the—cows. When man was rendered truly into animal, revolt was literally inconceivable for the domesticants.

Yet what of the animals of *this* world, Earth-Prime? Man had, perhaps, the right to be inhumane to man—but how could he justify the subjugation of a species not his own? Had the free-roving bovines of ten thousand years ago come voluntarily to man's barns, or had they been genocidally compelled? What irredeemable crime had been perpetrated against them?

If Earth-Prime attempted to pass judgment on this counter-Earth system, what precedent would it be setting? For no one knew what the limits of the alternate-universe framework were. It was probable that somewhere within it were worlds more advanced, more powerful than EP. Worlds with the might to blast away all mammalian life including man himself from the Earth, leaving the birds and snakes and frogs to dominate instead. Had it been such intervention that set back #772?

Worlds that could very well judge EP as EP judged counter-Earth #772. Worlds that might consider *any* domestication of *any* species to be an intolerable crime against nature . . .

Iolanthe would take care of the baby; he was sure of that. She was that sort of person. Prompt remedial surgery should mitigate the injury to the tongue. But the rest of it—a world full of similar misery—

He knew that in saving this one baby he had accomplished virtually nothing. His act might even give warning to #772 and thus precipitate far more cruelty than before. But that futility was only part of his growing horror.

Could he be sure in his own mind that Earth-Prime had the right of it? Between it and #772 was a difference only in the actual species of mammal occupying the barn. The other world was, if anything, kinder to its stock than was EP.

No—he was being foolishly anthropomorphic! It was folly to attempt to attribute human feelings or rights to cows. They had no larger potential, while the human domesticants of #772 *did*. Yet—

Yet—

Yet what sort of a report could he afford to make?

Afterword:

The name inscribed over the bullpen is HARLAN, though the description is not necessarily physical. I was one of those who supposed his intellectual scrotum contained two jellybeans, but I learned that there were, after all, nitties in his gritty. Thus I applauded the potency of the first DANG VIS and clamored for admission to the second.

Why? Why:

Our field of speculative fiction, like our nation, like our world, becomes too complacent at times. Originality and candor are not always sought, not always appreciated, even when the need becomes critical. At such times there may be no gentle way to fertilize the willing medium; we have to call upon a bull-editor, a rampaging volume, and irate authors such as these you read here. Perhaps even so the mission will fail—but we must, must try. For it is in the expansion of our horizons, including especially these literary and moral ones, that our brightest future lies.

In the Barn is intended to be a shocker, of course. It could have been told without the, if you'll pardon the expression, vulgar detail. But the real shock should not stem from the portrayal of acts every normal person practices. It should be this: this story is a true representation of a situation that exists widely in America, and in the world, and that has existed for millennia. Only one detail has been changed: one form of mammal has been substituted for another in the barn.

Does human morality *have* to be defined in terms of humans? Is it impossible for us to recognize the inherent rights of nonhuman creatures? Surely, if we can show no more respect for cows, for chickens, for pigs, for any animal or color or philosophy—no more respect than this—surely we have defined our own morality unmistakably.



Introduction to

SOUNDLESS EVENING:

Yesterday, speaking to a workshop group of hopeful writers at the University of Colorado, I was asked to explain why so much contemporary fiction (typified by the Updike/Cheever school as published in *The New Yorker*) was murky, seemingly pointless and devoid of plot . . . and I responded in my snotty manner that it was a perpetuation of the myth that people who say little, who speak rarely and who—when they do speak, orally or in their fiction—speak enigmatically are DEEP and MEANINGFUL.

Christian charity on the part of you readers will excuse this editor's frequent chauvinism and tendencies toward simplistic answers. A product of perfect toilet training in the Outback, I'm certain.

Because if that theory is true, then how to explain Ms. Lee Hoffman, a woman of incredible depth and awesome powers, who is verbally stingy?

If that theory is correct, how then does one explain *Quandry*, the single most mordantly witty fanzine ever to grace a mailbox, created and edited and nourished on the droll humor of Lee Hoffman?

If that theory is supportable, there is no explanation for the hours of stories told around midnight campfires concerning the legend of Lee Hoffman.

Clearly, your editor is either dead wrong in his belief, or Lee Hoffman is *homo superior*.

It is possible to be in Lee's company, in an oyster bar or cocktail lounge, and she won't say anything for forty minutes, lying back as it were, and allowing the more garrulous and egomaniacal members of the group to monopolize center stage. Then at minute forty-one point thirty-six she will slide one Dorothy Parker-like line into the conversation and everyone will fall down. At that point you will realize that Lee Hoffman is what has held the group together for three hours, that everyone has been vying to see her smile or get her to laugh or nod her head sagely. She is the glue that holds the Universe together.

I've known Lee so long now it seems as if I can't remember a time when I didn't. Beatley's On-The-Lake Hotel it was, Bellefontaine, Ohio, sometime back in the *very* early Fifties. It's gotta be twenty years Lee and I have known one another. Every five years she drops me a line informing me that another installment is due on my serial "!nissassa" for her magazine, *Science Fiction Five-Yearly*. Oh God how I adore Lee Hoffman.

Here is what she's written, book-length: most of it has nothing to do with sf, despite the length and depth of time Lee has been a freak of the form. It is the beginning of a substantial body of writing in the field of the western novel. And she is good. So bloody good she won the Western Writers of American Spur award for *The Valdez Horses* in 1967. And if you think the only good writing in Westerns has been done by Steve Frazee and Dorothy Johnson and Jack Schaeffer and A. B. Guthrie and Elmer Kelton, then you have missed *The Legend of Blackjack Sam* and *Gunfight at Laramie* (Ace, 1966), *Bred to Kill* (Ballantine, 1967), *The Yarborough Brand* (Avon, 1968), *Dead Man's Gold* (Ace, 1968), *West of Cheyenne* (Doubleday, 1969), *Wild Riders* (Signet, 1969), *Return to Broken Crossing* (Ace, 1969) and *Loco* (Dell, 1971). But if all you read is science fiction, then you'll like *The Caves of Karst* (Ballantine, 1969) and half of a Belmont Double edition containing *Telepower* (1967). You will *not* like the other half of that Belmont book, despite the fact (or perhaps because of the fact) that it is a short novel by your editor.

It *is* interesting to note—as a dumb sidelight—that the name Lee chose for the hero of *Telepower,* the short novel in the book we shared, was Beldone; and that just happened to be the phony name I used when running with a kid gang, many years ago. What was I saying about the *karass* a while ago?

But enough trivia. Here is Hoffman, for herself.

"I was born in Chicago, Illinois, in the neighborhood where Dillinger got it. I spent a good deal of my pre-school life in the local museums, which my mother loved to browse. I've never outgrown my fascination with things which are ancient, obsolete and in ruins.

"We moved to Lake Worth, Florida, in time for me to begin school a half term later than most kids. In Florida, I lolled about the beaches, played under Australian pines, and discovered comic books, which provided a good incentive for learning to read.

"Then we moved to Savannah, Georgia, where I continued my schooling, and eventually started my education. At 18 I completed the two years of junior college available in town. Until that time I'd had various ideas of what I wanted to do for a living: horse ranching, radio engineering, theatre, things like that. On leaving college, I hadn't the least idea of what I wanted to do.

"I ran through a batch of odd and occasionally peculiar jobs, as would seem to be customary with people destined to become professional writers: I worked as a puppeteer, a stage hand, a shill to a horse trader in Kansas, doing minor radio repairs, handfeeding a Gordon press, handling complaints for an importer of foreign cars, in printing production (ever notice how often writer-types have worked in printing? Something to do with a confusion between cause and effect, I suppose), and reading slush for the first science fiction magazine to publish Harlan Ellison. I did a stint as a

reporter/photographer on assignment in the Bahamas with a borrowed camera, sold a few drawings for publication, and wrote a few articles for car magazines.

"As to writing fiction, well, my mother used to tell me stories. Then I started telling her stories. I began to put one on paper (ruled tablet paper with a soft lead pencil) when I was in the sixth grade. I never finished that one, but for a couple or three years I kept whupping off 500 word novels, having moved on to notebook paper and a pen. I did most of my writing in class, during lectures, when I wasn't busy thinking up excuses for my declining grades.

"After college, I had a job consisting mostly of sitting around waiting for the phone to ring. I read until I got tired of reading, and then started writing Westerns for my own amusement. I considered trying to sell some of the stuff, but decided I 'wasn't ready yet.'

"I put aside notions of writing fiction professionally for the time being, and eventually pretty much forgot them. I had a career planned in the printing trade. Then one day, Ted White suggested that we collaborate on a book. That idea never got anywhere, but it gave me a notion to try another book of my own. A Western. I did it and, clutching the ms. in my grubby little hands, rushed up to Ace to give it to Terry Carr.

"Terry liked it, but Ace hadn't yet passed judgment, when suddenly one day Terry phoned me with an assignment to do *another* Western. I grabbed at the chance.

"At the time, I'd quit my last job and was taking a few weeks off from nine-to-fiving. The next thing I knew I had one book sold, one contracted and another in the works. I decided not to go hunting a steady job again until the money started running low. Well, that was over six years ago and I'm still on the bum. So far I've sold sixteen books.

"As to me, I'm a pack rat. I collect things. I have at various times owned six horses, two motorcycles, one fifth of a racing go-kart, a quart of vintage Okefenokee swamp water, the largest *labelled* rusty nail collection in the neighborhood, and over 2,500 fossil sharks teeth (hand-collected), not to mention uncountable other odds and ends, mostly books.

"I live in genteel poverty in an extremely cluttered hole under a tenement on what was the Lower East Side when I moved in, but has since become The East Village, though I don't think I am in any way responsible for this.

"Mine is a life of occasional hectivity, much leisure, frequent confusion, and many pleasures. I count among my friends some of the finest people in the world. It is not always an easy life, but it is a good one."



Lee Hoffman

SOUNDLESS EVENING

The holovision was turned low, its play of colors muted to soft pastels, and the accompanying music barely audible. The windows, set at *translucent,* glowed with the warmth of the twilight beyond them. The ventilating system fed the room with air that was fresh and pure, pumped directly from outdoors. All the world was soft, and warm, and comfortable.

Settled in his favorite easy chair, Winston Adamson sipped a fresh vegetable-juice cocktail and spied on his daughter from the corner of his eye. He felt a pleasant amusement in watching her.

She stood beside the cat's bed, gazing with rapt curiosity at Tammy and the kittens. Five of them in the litter. Mewling, squirming little furry lumps of life. Tammy's first offspring. Even where he sat, Winston could hear Tammy's soft contented purring.

The child, Lorette, was Thea and Winston Adamson's third at the present. Not the third-born. There had been two others between the first two and this little girl. He found himself suddenly thinking of those two. Jimmy and Beth. Both gone now. But there was still Lorette. She had the same brightness of eye, the same small pouched mouth, the eager hands—always curious, always exploring. The pleasure he took in watching her was the same.

Charming children, he told himself with pride. It was a shame that kids couldn't stay that way—all cute and cuddly and small.

Something vaguely unpleasant touched the edge of his contentment, drawing a withered brown line along it. His oldest boy, Bob, wasn't turning out at all the way he had hoped. The boy was full of foolish ideas about wanting to *change* the world. *Change* perfection!

Dammitall, why?

But as the question formed itself, Winston shoved it away. He refused to examine it. He didn't like questions. He rarely asked them of himself. Most had been answered for him long before it might have occurred to him to ask. It was better this way. The chair was comfortable. The house

was comfortable. The world was comfortable. Winston was satisfied. He couldn't understand why everyone else wasn't just as content.

Now his older daughter, Nancy, made perfectly good sense. She never seemed to think of anything but boys. A few more years, and she'd be married, with offspring of her own in the making. It pleased him to think of her.

Lorette glanced toward him. Catching his eyes on her, she smiled. He knew he was going to miss that smile, just as he missed Jimmy's. And Beth's. But he was still young. There would be more children, other smiles.

A bell chimed as the front door opened. That would be Thea back from her errands. As she came in from the entryway, Lorette ran to her. She gave the child a quick peck of a kiss, then turned to the mirror at her side. A light flicked itself on, illuminating her face. She removed her hat carefully, not disturbing the precise pattern of curls that capped her skull.

Lorette left her mother, returning her attention to the little life forms sucking strength from their own mother's body.

Thea said, "I confirmed our names on the waiting list, but it may be years before anything turns up."

"Too bad," Winston muttered with a shrug. "I'd rather have liked to keep this one."

Thea nodded, but she seemed distracted. Her eyes glittered. "You should have seen the people at Life Administration. Some of them were actually begging for permits. I mean it, Win, actually begging."

She dropped into her favorite chair with a sigh, and went on, "One woman *cried.* In public. Believe me, it was humiliating to see. And it's not as if they didn't know . . ."

Just the idea of seeing a person cry was disquieting. Winston recoiled from the thought. He didn't want to hear about it. But Thea seemed to be taking morbid delight in telling him all of the sordid details. He sat still, trying not to hear the words she poured at him.

The image of a woman crying in public persisted in his mind. He railed at it, resenting it. The woman had no right to do such a thing. She'd certainly known beforehand what the situation was. Everyone knew.

It was all so simple, so logical, so reasonable. There was a limit to the population the planet could support in comfort. That limit had been reached long ago. For a time, during the age of the Emotionalist Revolution, there had been chaos. But when the furor died down, cooler heads prevailed. With the return to sense and sanity, a logical solution had been sought—and found.

A life permit was issued to every individual. It entitled him to reproduce

and rear one offspring—one human to take the place of one human. A pair of children to each couple. Simple. One for one.

Since not every individual did reproduce a replacement for himself, the permits of those who died childless could be redistributed, allowing some couples to rear a third child to its adulthood. The population balance was maintained constant.

But children were so—well—*cute.*

With or without logic, people wanted children. They wanted to fondle baby forms, cuddle toddlers, bask in the unquestioning and unqualified love given by the very young. So there was no official attempt to limit the number—not of *little* ones.

After all, very small children took up very little space and were a very small drain on the world's resources. It wasn't until they grew—not officially until they reached the age of five—that they were considered to become individuals, and a concern of society as a whole.

Lorette would be five tomorrow.

"I brought the capsule and arranged the pickup," Thea said.

Winston nodded. Looking toward his daughter, he said, "It's bedtime, honey."

"Now?"

"Yes, now."

"Can't I watch Tammy's babies? Just a while more?"

"No."

She pouted, but she didn't argue.

"Give daddy a big hug," he told her.

She came to him, throwing her arms around his neck. He felt the warmth of her body, and he remembered Jimmy and Beth.

"Come along to bed." Thea took the child's hand.

Laughing, Lorette began to tell her mother some story about Tammy and the kittens.

"Be sure you drink all your milk," Winston called after them as Thea led the child from the room.

He leaned back, sipping his cocktail and not thinking anything at all. He reclined in quiet, blank comfort, hardly aware of the soft music and Tammy's steady purr.

When Thea returned, he asked, "You gave her the capsule?"

Thea nodded. Wordlessly, she passed by him and went on into her bedroom.

He found himself getting to his feet. For no reason he went to Lorette's room. She was curled on her side in the bed, her hair in a loose tow tousle, her face soft and smooth by the dim nightlight. Small pink lips. Long pale

lashes. A tiny ear, perfectly formed, half-hidden under stray hair. The sheet over her stirred slightly at the gentle shallow motion of her breathing.

Even as he watched, the motion stopped.

He turned his back. The collection service would be here soon. They would take care of everything now, just as they had twice before. It was all very simple.

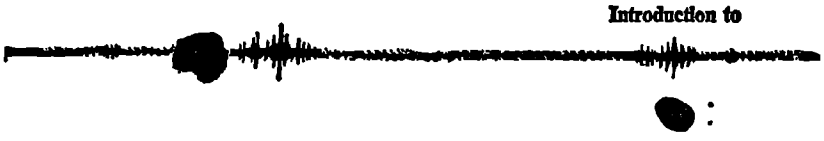
He walked back into the living room. Tammy was still purring. The silence seemed very deep, the purr very loud. He looked down at the squirming suckling pieces of Tammy's self that worked their dim-formed forepaws at her belly.

Suddenly, for no reason at all that he could understand, Winston began to cry.

Afterword:

"Soundless Evening" is a nexus of a multitude of ideas, thoughts, theories and possible ramifications. It isn't a prophecy but an exploration. It is set in a future but, like most of *Dangerous Visions* and this book, it concerns *now*. With this particular story I must agree with Robert Silverberg, who said in DV that the story has to speak for itself. Anything else I might add would be superfluous. At least it should be, if the story is at all successful.

Introduction to



Many years ago, when the Earth was young and dinosaurs like *Collier's*, *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Blue Book* roamed the world, I was in Philadelphia for a sf convention. Or maybe it was New York. After a while all sf conventions look alike. At some, Heinlein makes a surprise entrance just as he wins a Hugo award, wearing a white dinner jacket, scaring the hell out of those who believed a) he was on the opposite coast and b) there is an order to the Universe. At others, fans fall through motion picture screens and make it difficult for samaritans to be good. But that's another story. Sadly, as this is written, I learned that John W. Campbell, since 1937 editor of *Analog* (formerly *Astounding*), will never attend another convention: his death on July 11th, 1971 has thrown the entire field into shock and, whether he was loved, admired, tolerated or disliked, there is no denying he was the single most important formative force in modern sf, a man who was very much his own man, who lived by his own lights and by dint of enormous personal magnetism influenced everyone in the genre. The overwhelming sentiment is that he will be sorely missed and we will never be the same again. Nor will conventions, where John Campbell's presence was always felt.

But back in the antediluvian era when I attended the convention I'm trying to recall, John Campbell was very much with us, and meeting him at a convention was not as startling as the encounter I'm about to relate.

Wandering through one of the many party suites late one night in Chicago (or was it Seattle?) I chanced upon a *very* tall, slim man, with a sketch pad, leaning against a wall, drawing sketches like mad. I managed to get behind him and I crawled up onto a window ledge to look over his shoulder (I *said* tall, didn't I?) so I could see what he was drawing. He was cartooning his impressions of the weird fans in the room at the time. I instantly struck up a kinship with him, for *I*, too, saw the fans with one big eye in the middle of the forehead, with green, ichor-dripping hides, with claws instead of hands, with slavering jaws and hairy ears.

I asked him his name, and he said, "Gahan Wilson."

He pronounced it GAY-un.

He said he was from *Collier's*, and he was going to do a cartoon-and-text piece on sf conventions.

Even then, in San Francisco—or possibly Cleveland—I was a slavish fan of the peculiar and singular cartoons of Gahan Wilson. Now it is fifteen years later and that piece on conventions never appeared, *Collier's* is

gone, but Gahan Wilson is still very much alive. I would have said alive and *well,* but . . . well . . . one need only examine the contents of his three books (*Gahan Wilson's Graveside Manner* [Ace, 1965]; *The Man in the Cannibal Pot* [Doubleday, 1967]; *I Paint What I See* [Simon & Schuster, 1971]) to realize that Gahan is anything but well. At least in terms acceptable to straights the world over. Nonetheless, Gahan Wilson has become—through his regular cartoons in *Playboy, The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* and other periodicals—the premier cartoonist of the bizarre. It has been many years, in fact, since even Chas. Addams gave him a run for the money. When someone at a party says, "I saw the *wildest* cartoon . . ." and begins to describe it, chances are nine out of ten that they'll be describing a Wilson monstrousness. (Who, after all, can forget that desiccated Santa clogging the chimney, or the death of the sandwich man, or the vampire in the Intensive Care ward?)

What few people who admire Gahan Wilson know, is that he writes. Not just captions, you understand, but criticism, book reviews, and stories. Ah, mm, yes. Stories.

When it came time to assemble this book, I contacted Gahan and suggested he invent a whole new kind of story, a combination of words and pictures in which one could not survive without the other. A verbalization, as it were, of the peculiarly Gahanoid humor seeping (one might even venture *festooned*) from his cartoons. I said it could be possibly termed a "vieword" story. Gahan liked the sound of the word, and what he contributed follows. I think you will find this initial vieword offering a nonpareil addition to the rotting body of Mr. Wilson's deranged work. Further, he promises us more vieword stories, in other places, from time to time. It behooves each of us to indulge our vile masochism by insisting that he keep that promise.

But for the nonce, here is  , and here is Wilson for himself. Gahan? Are you there? Oh, *there* you are; well, drop down at once, clean up all that sickly green stuff, and tell the people about yourself.

"I am a simple, Midwestern lad, born in Evanston, Illinois. I had a delightful early youth, dwelling in a brick warren with a cinder back yard which crawled with other infants. Hallowe'ens were of the Bradburian *genre* in Evanston, leaves scuttling down the broad streets, a delightfully scary old gentleman in a huge old house nearby to torment, soaping of windows (only the rotten kids used wax), and like that. We played games in the basements, behind the parked cars (some of which had windowshades in the back windows), until we dropped. We wore shorts, the boys, at least, and the girls had pigtails. Then organized sports hit the scene and life turned, by degrees, into a ghastly hell which still raises the small hairs at the back of my neck when I think of it. With the approach of high school this ghastly phase of my life drew to its end and I discovered the world was full of creeps, back alley wanderers, dreamers, chickens, twitching cripples, and that we were not at all as bad as we had been convinced,

and that we could have our own kind of fun. This led to a fantastic blossoming which has not yet stopped. From birth, I guess, I wanted to be a cartoonist. There exists a crude, hand-drawn comic strip (showing some space opera type battling robots) which has scrawls in the balloon instead of words, indicating my bent was set before literacy. I went to a couple of commercial art schools during summers and found they taught a superficial kind of art, that nobody could teach being funny, and so took a full four years at The Art Institute of Chicago, a good course, consisting entirely of actual work, painting, drawing, graphics, under teachers of various persuasions. A solid trade school approach. Then a brief stay in the Air Force (it turned out I *was* 4F, after all) and then a brief stay in Europe (France, mostly), and then an attack on the New York markets which paid off, mostly because of a series of flukes as I was then considered *really* far out and all the usual entrances to the better markets seemed hopelessly closed. What happened was that the regular cartoon editor of *Collier's* left for *Look*, and the art director, who'd taken over on a temporary basis, not knowing what sort of cartoons he should buy, bought mine. Then, when they got a new man in, he kept on doing it, bless his heart. After *Collier's* vanished I tied in with Hef at *Playboy*, and have never regretted it. He is a superb editor and exceptionally fair in his treatment of those who work for him. And, yes, the Mansion is all they say it is. I took a wander in Europe for a couple of years (for me, at least, London is the best big city in the world) and enjoyed it very, very much. I am now married to a beautiful, intelligent, and talented woman who writes for major magazines under the name of Nancy Winters. She is far better than I deserve but, so far, I am getting away with it."

Gahan Wilson



The first time Reginald Archer saw the thing, it was, in its simplicity, absolute. It owned not the slightest complication or involvement. It lacked the tiniest, the remotest, the most insignificant trace of embellishment. It looked like this:



A spot. Nothing more. Black, as you see, somewhat lopsided, as you see—an unprepossessing, unpretentious spot.

It was located on Reginald Archer's dazzlingly white linen tablecloth, on his breakfast table, three and one half inches from the side of his egg cup. Reginald Archer was in the act of opening the egg in the egg cup when he saw the spot.

He paused and frowned. Reginald Archer was a bachelor, had been one for his full forty-three years, and he was fond of a smoothly running household. Things like black spots on table linens displeased him, perhaps beyond reason. He rang the bell to summon his butler, Faulks.

That worthy entered and, seeing the dark expression upon his master's face, approached his side with caution. He cleared his throat, bowed ever so slightly, just exactly the right amount of bow, and, following the direction of his master's thin, pale, pointing finger, observed, in his turn, the spot.

"What," asked Archer, "is *this* doing here?"

Faulks, after a moment's solemn consideration, owned he had no idea how the spot had come to be there, apologized profusely for its presence, and promised its imminent and permanent removal. Archer stood, the egg left untasted in its cup, his appetite quite gone, and left the room.

It was Archer's habit to retire every morning to his study and there tend to any little chores of correspondence and finance which had accumulated. His approach to this, as to everything else, was precise to the point of being ritualistic; he liked to arrange his days in reliable, predictable patterns. He had seated himself at his desk, a lovely affair of lustrous mahogany, and was reaching for the mail which had been tidily stacked for his perusal, when, on the green blotter which entirely covered the desk's working surface, he saw:



He paled, I do not exaggerate, and rang once more for his butler. There was a pause, a longer pause than would usually have occurred, before the trustworthy Faulks responded to his master's summons. The butler's face bore a recognizable confusion.

"The spot, sir—" Faulks began, but Archer cut him short.

"Bother the spot," he snapped, indicating the offense on the blotter. "What is *this*?"

Faulks peered at the  in bafflement.

"I do not know, sir," he said. "I have never seen anything quite like it."

"Nor have I," said Archer. "Nor do I wish to see its likes again. Have it removed."

Faulks began to carefully take away the blotter, sliding it out from the leather corner grips which held it to the desk, as Archer watched him icily. Then, for the first time, Archer noticed his elderly servant's very odd expression. He recalled Faulks' discontinued comment.

"What is it you were trying to tell me, then?" he asked.

The butler glanced up at him, hesitated, and then spoke.

"It's about the spot, sir," he said. "The one on the tablecloth. I went to look at it, after you had left, sir, and, I cannot understand it, sir—it was *gone!*"

"Gone?" asked Archer.

"Gone," said Faulks.

The butler glanced down at the blotter, which he now held before him, and started.

"And so is *this,* sir!" he gasped, and, turning round the blotter, revealed it to be innocent of the slightest trace of a 

Conscious, now, that something very much out of the ordinary was afoot, Archer gazed thoughtfully into space. Faulks, watching, observed the gaze suddenly harden into focus.

"Look over there, Faulks," said Archer, in a quiet tone. "Over yonder, at the wall."

Faulks did as he was told, wondering at his master's instructions. Then comprehension dawned, for there, on the wallpaper, directly under an indifferent seascape, was:



Archer stood, and the two men crossed the room.

"What can it be, sir?" asked Faulks.

"I can't imagine," said Archer.

He turned to speak, but when he saw his butler's eyes move to his, he looked quickly back at the wall. Too late—the  was gone.

"It needs constant observation," Archer murmured, then, aloud: "Look for it, Faulks. Look for it. And when you see it, *don't take your eyes from it for a second!*"

They walked about the room in an intensive search. They had not been at it for more than a moment when Faulks gave an exclamation.

"Here, sir!" he cried. "On the window sill!"

Archer hurried to his side and saw:



"Don't let it out of your sight!" he hissed.

As the butler stood, transfixed and gaping, his master chewed furiously at the knuckles of his left hand. Whatever the thing was, it must be taken care of, and promptly. He would not allow such continued disruption in his house.

But how to get rid of it? He shifted to the knuckles of his other hand and thought. The thing had, he hated to admit it, but there it was, *supernatural* overtones. Perhaps it was some beastly sort of ghost.

He shoved both hands, together with their attendant knuckles, into his pants pockets. It showed the extreme state of his agitation, for he loathed nothing more than unsightly bulges in a well-cut suit. Who would know about this sort of thing? Who could possibly handle it?

It came to him in a flash—Sir Harry Mandifer! Of course! He'd known Sir Harry back at school, only plain Harry, then, of course, and now they shared several clubs. Harry had taken to writing, made a good thing of it, and now, with piles of money to play with, he'd taken to spiritualism, become, perhaps, the top authority in the field. Sir Harry was just the man! If *only* he could persuade him.

His face set in grimly determined lines, Archer marched to his telephone and dialed Sir Harry's number. It was not so easy to get through to him as it had been in the old days. Now there were secretaries, suspicious and secretive. But he was known, that made all the difference, and soon he and Sir Harry were together on the line. After the customary greetings and small talk, Archer brought the conversation around to the business at hand. Crisply, economically, he described the morning's events. Could Sir Harry find it possible to come? He fancied that time might be an important factor. Sir Harry would! Archer thanked him with all the warmth his somewhat constricted personality would allow, and, with a heartfelt sigh of relief, put back the receiver.

He had barely done it when he heard Faulks give a small cry of despair. He turned to see the old fellow wringing his hands in abject misery.

"I just blinked, sir!" he quavered. "Only blinked!"

It had been enough. A fraction of a second unwatched, and the  was gone from the sill.

Resignedly, they once again took up the search.

Sir Harry Mandifer settled back comfortably in the cushioned seat of his limousine and congratulated himself on settling the business of Marston Rectory the night before. It would not have done to leave that dangerous affair in the lurch, but the bones of the Mewing Nun had been found at last, and now she would rest peacefully in a consecrated grave. No more would headless children decorate the Cornish landscape, no more would the nights resound with mothers' lamentations. He had done his job, done it well, and now he was free to investigate what sounded a perfectly charming mystery.

Contentedly, the large man lit a cigar and watched the streets go sliding by. Delicious that a man as cautious and organized as poor old Archer should find himself confronted with something so outrageous. It only showed you that the tidiest lives have nothing but quicksand for a base. The snuggest haven's full of trap doors and sliding panels, unsuspected attics and suddenly discovered rooms. Why should the careful Archer find himself exempt? And he hadn't.

The limousine drifted to a gentle stop before Archer's house and Mandifer, emerging from his car, gazed up at the building with pleasure. It was a gracious Georgian structure which had been in Archer's family since the time of its construction. Mandifer mounted its steps and was about to apply himself to its knocker when the door flew open and he found himself facing a desperately agitated Faulks.

"Oh, sir," gasped the butler, speaking in piteous tones, "I'm so glad you could come! We don't know what to make of it, sir, and we can't hardly keep track of it, it moves so fast!"

"There, Faulks, there," rumbled Sir Harry, moving smoothly into the entrance with the unstoppable authority of a great clipper ship under full sail. "It can't be as bad as all that, now, can it?"

"Oh, it can, sir, it can," said Faulks, following in Mandifer's wake down the hall. "You just can't get a *hold* on it, sir, is what it is, and everytime it's back, it's *bigger*, sir!"

"In the study, isn't it?" asked Sir Harry, opening the door of that room and gazing inside.

He stood stock still and his eyes widened a trifle because the sight before him, even for one so experienced in peculiar sights as he, was startling.

Imagine a beautiful room, exquisitely furnished, impeccably maintained. Imagine the occupant of that room to be a thin, tallish gentleman, dressed faultlessly, in the best possible taste. Conceive of the whole thing, man and room in combination, to be a flawless example of the sort of styled perfection that only large amounts of money, filtered through generations of confident privilege, can produce.

Now see that man on his hands and knees, in one of the room's corners, staring, bug-eyed, at the wall, and, on the wall, picture:



"Remarkable," said Sir Harry Mandifer.

"Isn't it, sir?" moaned Faulks. "Oh, isn't it?"

"I'm so glad you could come, Sir Harry," said Archer, from his crouched position in the corner. It was difficult to make out his words as he spoke them through clenched teeth. "Forgive me for not rising, but if I take my eyes off this thing, or even blink, the whole—oh, God *damn* it!"

Instantly, the



vanished from the wall. Archer gave out an explosive sigh, clapped his hands to his face, and sat back heavily on the floor.

"Don't tell me where it's got to, now, Faulks," he said, "I don't want to know; I don't want to hear about it."

Faulks said nothing, only touched a trembling hand on Sir Harry's shoulder and pointed to the ceiling. There, almost directly in its center, was:



Sir Harry leaned his head close to Faulks' ear and whispered: "Keep looking at it for as long as you can, old man. Try not to let it get away."

Then in his normal, conversational tone, which was a kind of cheerful roar, he spoke to Archer: "Seems you have a bit of a sticky problem here, what?"

Archer looked up grimly from between his fingers. Then, carefully, he lowered his arms and stood. He brushed himself off, made a few adjustments of his coat and tie, and spoke:

"I'm sorry, Sir Harry. I'm afraid I rather let it get the better of me."

"No such thing!" boomed Sir Harry Mandifer, clapping Archer on the back. "Besides, it's enough to rattle anyone. Gave me quite a turn, myself, and I'm used to this sort of nonsense!"

Sir Harry had developed his sturdy technique of encouragement during many a campaign in haunted house and ghost-ridden moor, and it did not fail him now. Archer's return to self-possession was almost immediate. Satisfied at the restoration, Sir Harry looked up at the ceiling.

"You say it started as a kind of spot?" he asked, peering at the dark thing which spread above them.

"About as big as a penny," answered Archer.

"What have the stages been like, between then and now?"

"Little bits come out of it. They get bigger, and, at the same time, other little bits come popping out, and, as if that weren't enough, the whole ghastly thing keeps *swelling*, like some damned balloon."

"Nasty," said Sir Harry.

"I'd say it's gotten to be a yard across," said Archer.

"At least."

"What do you make of it, Sir Harry?"

"It looks to me like a sort of plant."

Both the butler and Archer gaped at him. The



instantly disappeared.

"I'm sorry, sir," said the butler, stricken.

"What do you mean, *plant*?" asked Archer. "It can't be a plant, Sir Harry. It's perfectly flat, for one thing."

"Have you touched it?"

Archer sniffed.

"Not very likely," he said.

Discreetly, the butler cleared his throat.

"It's on the floor, gentlemen," he said.



The three looked down at the thing with reflectful expressions. Its longest reach was now a little over four feet.

"You'll notice," said Sir Harry, "that the texture of the carpet does not show through the blackness, therefore it's not like ink, or some other stain. It has an independent surface."

He stooped down, surprisingly graceful for a man of his size, and, pulling a pencil from his pocket, poked at the thing. The pencil went into the darkness for about a quarter of an inch, and then stopped. He jabbed at another point, this time penetrating a good, full inch.

"You see," said Sir Harry, standing. "It does have a complex kind of shape. Our eyes can perceive it only in a two-dimensional way, but the sense of touch moves it along to the third. The obvious implication of all this length, width and breadth business is that your plant's drifted in from some other dimensional set, do you see? I should imagine the original spot was its seed. Am I making myself clear on all this? Do you understand?"

Archer did not, quite, but he gave a reasonably good imitation of a man who had.

"But why did the accursed thing show up here?" he asked.

Sir Harry seemed to have the answer for that one, too, but Faulks interrupted it, whatever it may have been, and we shall never know it.

"Oh, sir," he cried. "It's gone, again!"

It was, indeed. The carpet stretched unblemished under the three men's feet. They looked about the room, somewhat anxiously now, but could find no trace of the invader.

"Perhaps it's gone back into the dining room," said Sir Harry, but a search revealed that it had not.

"There is no reason to assume it must confine itself to the two rooms," said Sir Harry, thoughtfully chewing his lip. "Nor even to the house, itself."

Faulks, standing closer to the hallway door than the others, tottered, slightly, and emitted a strangled sound. The others turned and looked where the old man pointed. There, stretching across the striped paper of the hall across from the door was:



"This is," Archer said, in a choked voice, *"really* a bit too much, Sir Harry. Something simply must be done or the damned thing will take over the whole, bloody house!"

"Keep your eyes fixed on it, Faulks," said Sir Harry, "at all costs." He turned to Archer. "It has substance, I have proven that. It can be attacked. Have you some large, cutting instrument about the place? A machete? Something like that?"

Archer pondered, then brightened, in a grim sort of way.

"I have a kris," he said.

"Get it," said Sir Harry.

Archer strode from the room, clenching and unclenching his hands. There was a longish pause, and then his voice called from another room:

"I can't get the blasted thing off its mounting!"

"I'll come and help," Sir Harry answered. He turned to Faulks who was pointing at the thing on the wall like some loyal bird dog. "Never falter, old man," he said. "Keep your gaze rock steady!"

The kris, an old war souvenir brought to the house by Archer's grand-

father, was fixed to its display panel by a complicatedly woven arrangement of wires, and it took Sir Harry and Archer a good two minutes to get it free. They hurried back to the hall and there jarred to a halt, absolutely thunderstruck. The



was nowhere to be seen, but that was not the worst, the butler, Faulks, was gone! Archer and Sir Harry exchanged startled glances and then called the servant's name, again and again, with no effect whatever.

"What can it be, Sir Harry?" asked Archer. "What, in God's name, has happened?"

Sir Harry Mandifer did not reply. He grasped the kris before him, his eyes darting this way and that, and Archer, to his horror, saw that the man was trembling where he stood. Then, with a visible effort of will, Sir Harry pulled himself together and assumed, once more, his usual staunch air.

"We must find it, Archer," he said, his chin thrust out. "We must find it and we must kill it. We may not have another chance if it gets away, again!"

Sir Harry leading the way, the two men covered the ground floor, going from room to room, but found nothing. A search of the second also proved futile.

"Pray God," said Sir Harry, mounting to the floor above, "the creature has not quit the house."

Archer, now short of breath from simple fear, climbed unsteadily after.

"Perhaps it's gone back where it came from, Sir Harry," he said.

"Not now," the other answered grimly. "Not after Faulks. I think it's found it likes our little world."

"But what *is* it?" asked Archer.

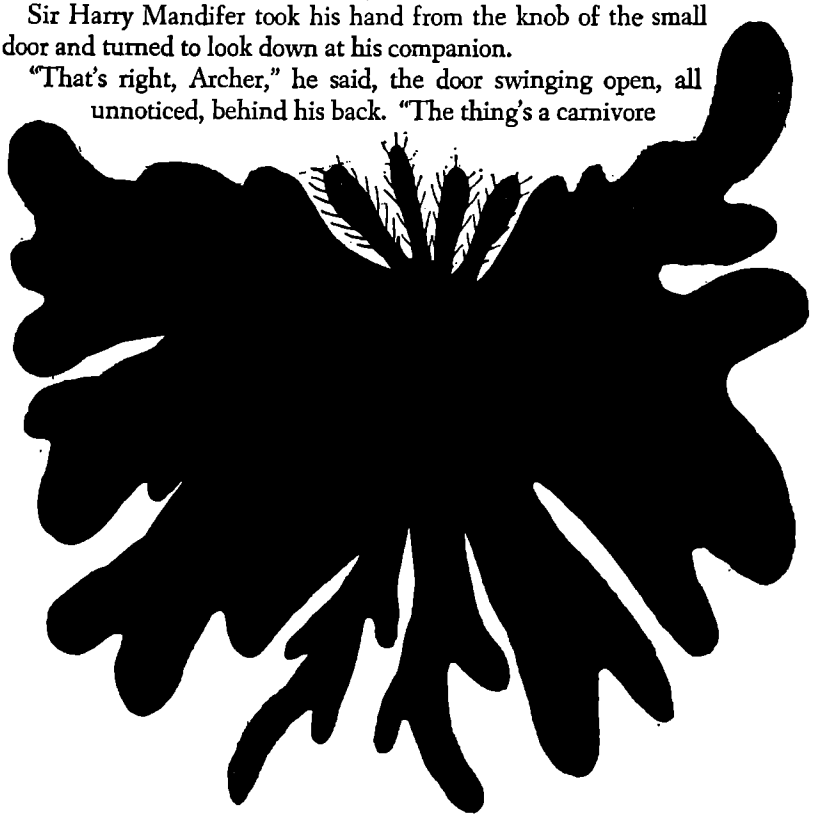
"It's what I said it was—a plant," replied the large man, opening a door and peering into the room revealed. "A special kind of plant. We have them here, in our dimension."

At this point, Archer understood. Sir Harry opened another door, and then another, with no success. There was the attic left. They went up the narrow steps, Sir Harry in the lead, his kris held high before him. Archer, by now, was barely able to drag himself along by the bannister. His breath came in tiny whimpers.

"A meat-eater, isn't it?" he whispered. "*Isn't* it, Sir Harry?"

Sir Harry Mandifer took his hand from the knob of the small door and turned to look down at his companion.

"That's right, Archer," he said, the door swinging open, all unnoticed, behind his back. "The thing's a carnivore



Afterword:

Excuse the little tic at the corner of my left eye and the way I tend to jump at sudden noises, but Harlan Ellison has asked me to expand this Afterword three times, now, and friends, it's having an effect.

The first time I tried to palm him off with a brief, Zennish comment, witty yet profound. It went right over his head. He sent it back with a note describing it as thin. "A bit thin," is what he actually said.

The second time I threw in a couple of telling comments on the basic structure of the cartoon. It was revealing, exciting stuff, and I figured it would hold him.

"More," answered Ellison, warmly, but insatiably.

The third time around I started getting cranky with strangers, and now, on this fourth attempt, I have suddenly realized that the whole *Dangerous Visions* operation has been an elaborate plot to get me. Harlan, Doubleday & Company, Incorporated—the whole bunch of them have discovered, God knows how, that I am the Czar Alexander, and they are determined to thwart my coming conquest of Chicago.

Let them try.

In the meantime, Ellison has coined "vieword" to describe the storytelling technique employed in [redacted], and I suppose that will do (after all, it is his collection) until the literary historians come up with something maybe a little classier. The vieword approach is an attempt to expand the panel cartoon, which is a combination of a visual impact and words. In a panel cartoon the drawing does not illustrate the caption, nor does the caption explain the drawing. They are interdependent parts of one thing. The comic strip is one way of trying to develop the one shot impact of a panel cartoon, the vieword is another.

I have always thought, and I guess my work shows it, that this picture-word medium lends itself to the fantastic grotesque, and [redacted] is nothing if not fantastically grotesque. I enjoyed very much writing-drawing it, and I hope that you enjoyed reading-seeing it.



Introduction to

THE TEST-TUBE CREATURE, AFTERWARD:

Joan Bernott is a remarkable young lady. She is twenty-five years old, has appeared in two of the four prestigious issues of Samuel R. Delany and Marilyn Hacker's paperback magazine *Quark,* and this was the first story she sold, though the other two got into print faster.

I met Joan at the 1969 Clarion Workshop in SF & Fantasy, where (by rough count and intuitive perceptions) the number of men in desperate love with her was eleven. Shortly after the Clarion term, she showed up here in California and stayed a few days at the Ellison stop on the Underground Railroad. No inferences are to be drawn from this: the list of ex-Clarionites who've lived here for varying periods of work-time include Gerard F. Conway, James Sutherland, Ed Bryant, Neil Shapiro, Lucy Seaman and Sandra Rymer (all of whom, incidentally, have sold professionally).

I say remarkable for any number of reasons, most of which I'll pass by in this introduction; not the least of which, however, is that she comes out of amateur writing almost full-blown, with a strength and approach very much her own. One of the others is that she instilled in me, in a remarkably short time, a dislike of such towering dimensions that I must confess only a story of unimpeachable excellence could have bought her into this book. Such a story is the one hereafter entered, and all that remains is Ms. Bernott to speak for herself:

"I was born in Michigan in 1946, grew up in Detroit, and moved to the country several years ago. I am a chronic summertime traveler, to Europe, Canada, throughout the United States, and expect to pay an extended visit to Central America next year.

"I have a B.A. in political science from Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, and am presently working as a free-lance writer and theatre photographer. I expect to begin work on a degree in criminal law at about the time that *Again, Dangerous Visions,* is published."



Joan Bernott

THE TEST-TUBE CREATURE, AFTERWARD

At about nine-thirty Tommy, walking barefoot over the paisley carpet that cushioned his studio apartment, finished disposing of the dishes left from the day's meals and turned out most of the light in the room. Then, by hand, he lit a blue candle chandelier that revolved lazily from the high ceiling, and settled into the velvet armchair by the window. In his lap, he opened a heavy, old volume of Wyeth paintings; the prints served to steady him after an over-populated, over-regimented day. He found his favorite, "Distant Thunder," about midway through the book. It pictured Wyeth's slender wife lying alone in a field under an overcast, Maine sky, and was a most eloquent representation of gentleness waiting for a storm.

At eleven, he still sat there, the book open to the same place; the butts of three cigarettes were mashed into a coffee cup on the chair's broad arm, and his thumbnail rested absently at his lips. Instead of on the picture, or out the window into the neon glare of Fifth Avenue, his attention lay fixed on the tawny, sleeping creature huddled in the far corner of the room. The size of a grown dog, the animal had the bearing and tear-drop head of a weasel, but was more catlike, with the feline's slivered eyes and cautious temperament. Tom called her Hillary. She had been lying very still for almost two hours and now was beginning to quiver with wakefulness.

Strangely impatient, Tom rose abruptly out of the deep chair, coffee cup in hand, and emptied it noisily into the disposal unit near the sink. Hillary shuddered and jerked awake, chittering softly and swabbing her face with one kitten paw. He felt sudden regret at having awakened her and enmeshed himself in the ordeal prematurely. With conscious nonchalance, he turned to face her.

"Nice sleep, Hillary?"

She nodded with graceful enthusiasm and approached him with a long, loping stride. Standing lightly on her hind legs next to him, she stretched, her paws almost reaching his chest. He lifted her up into his arms and ran a friendly but tense hand up and down over her spine. Hillary shivered pleasurably.

At midnight, Tom and Hillary were sitting on the carpet, facing each other through the blue glow over a half-finished chess game. Tom hadn't taken his move for several minutes; her attention hung on the game, her round, moist eyes blinking impassively. He was waiting for her to look up at him.

"Hillary, listen . . ." She blinked once more, offering attention. "Kitten, I—I don't really know how to get started on this. I don't want you to misunderstand, or be hurt, you know?" She seemed to have shrunk a bit into the corner, her forelegs drawn up against her narrow chest, paws knitting themselves into a curiously apprehensive knot. *How can she understand?* Then the phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Hello, Hillary. May I speak to Tom?"

Hillary bowed her head shyly and ambled back to the game table, not looking up as Tom moved across the room and stared into the face on the screen. "Tommy," the face said, "aren't you coming by tonight?"

It was Mary, who lived just down the corridor and up eleven storeys in complex S. She and Tom had been seeing one another with some regularity since they'd met at work several months before.

Tom's eyebrows lifted slightly; *is it Tuesday?* "Mary," he began, "I think I'd better not. Got a lot of work to do yet tonight." His voice trailed off. "I'm really sorry. Jees. I should have phoned you earlier . . ."

A pause. Mary's tone seemed a bit softer. "Oh. Well, maybe later on in the week?" She liked Tom—an arty, thoughtful type, different from the usual lab tech whose emotional range was flanked by tight parentheses.

Tom waited a while for the silence to assert itself. Very gently, but without feeling, he said, "I don't think so, Mary."

The face looked surprised. "So. OK, I guess. Take care of yourself, and your crazy pet." Her giggle cracked over the receiver like static; he nodded, and the screen went blank.

"Tom?"

"Yes, Hill."

"Would you rather not finish the game?"

He turned and smiled at her. "We can finish it, Hillary."

At one-thirty, after she'd won, Tom fondled one of the plastic chessmen, his thumb gliding back and forth over the slender figure, and looked at her in the soft light. Her long silver whiskers and few eyebrow hairs sent shadow lines falling across her face. Warm, pretty eyes.

He considered walking over to the sink and taking the butcher knife out of the drawer. He probably couldn't bring himself to cut her though. The

image of her gaping, bloodied throat sickened him. He covered his face with his hands.

He might poison her; maybe she'd realize what was happening. She'd back away from him; perhaps, trying to catch her, he'd fall and hit his head hard against the leg of the heavy chair. And die. He saw himself lying there inert on the floor of a silent room. Hillary would be silent as well, for a while, then would start to whimper. And cry. Would she touch his face? Or wonder about the ethics of murder? Could she forgive herself, or him? Would she want to die, then, too?

"Tom?"

"Yes, little one."

"Something is wrong?"

He shook his head numbly and stretched over the chess table to scoop her up into his arms. Cradling her lithe body in his lap, he felt her foreleg fall tenderly across his chest, and she rested her head on his shoulder. Tom breathed very deeply and looked out the window. The cloudy sky seemed almost bright. Somehow, this, the easier way, was also better. Feeling far less discomfort in his resignation than he'd imagined would be possible—considering their rather grotesque situation—Tom finally closed his eyes, and Hillary closed hers.

At dawn, they still were there, the two of them in the red velvet chair. It was, really, the first time they'd ever slept together.

Afterword:

My most precise recollection of grade-school catechism classes is the lesson that God created the human race in order that there might exist another, particular receptacle or receiver of his love. The memory lingers because, at the time, I took that concept of causality very much to heart.

Through genetic manipulation, man participates in an especially ordered creative activity. It occurred to me that his motives, in the long run, might parallel that speculated divine motivation. As it is, domesticated animals are the objects of an often inordinate amount of human love and energy. This is logically even more true for mutated intelligent animals. Pets, after all, are easier to love than people.

But "Test-Tube Creature" is a dangerous vision, and wasn't written to flatter animal lovers. The story is gently, even tenderly, told, but is tragic nevertheless, because the Everymen in it—the Toms and Marys—have failed to satisfy one another's human needs. Hillary succeeds, but only in an anthropomorphic sense. She is a substitute, a copy, for someone Tom

can sincerely and happily love and, more importantly, who can return his love.

The story, too, is an indirect sequel to Kate Wilhelm's "The Planners." I appreciate both her fine story and her quality of being a genuine lover of people.



Introduction to AND THE SEA LIKE MIRRORS:

There is a vast difference between being an "unknown" writer, and being an "amateur" writer. It is hardly a subtle difference, yet most unpublished pencil-pushers find it impossible to understand the distinction. *Not* understanding is pernicious. It leads people who might otherwise be utterly happy as shoe clerks or computer programmers or dental technicians to wasted lives of unfulfilled dreams, pounding typewriters and scribbling in journals, and never *ever* finding the right words. The words that make a story or a screenplay or a play something special. So someone will want to buy it and stake an editorial reputation on it, and pay the highest possible compliment for the use of it: a check of money. That says, "You may be 'unknown,' but you are not 'amateur.' You have a talent, and your talent has created a thing of special properties that takes the reader somewhere he has never been before. I love it, and I want to publish it, and I want to be associated with it; I want to let some of the magic of this special thing rub off on me by my act of presenting it." That is the compliment, and it is hard-won. Failing to receive that compliment, thousands of amateurs every year send their amateur stories to magazines and anthologies, send their amateur plays to producers, send their amateur teleplays to agents and studios . . . and die when rejection follows. They have failed to perceive the disparity between amateur and unknown. They believe that being the latter is inherently noble, somehow umbilically linked with greatness, never realizing that if that linkage exists—*if* it exists, and not for a moment will I admit it does—but *if* it does, never understanding that being *amateur* severs the umbilicus. To be unknown is simply to be unknown. To be an amateur is to be tone-deaf, without rhythm, color-blind. It is as far from the state in which the compliment can be won as the chicken is from the eagle. Both are fowl, yet one will forever peck at the dirt, and the other will soar to mountaintops. They scrawl their dreams in journals, they pound on into the night behind typewriters, and they die when their dreams are rejected, never understanding that the amateur is doomed *never* to find the words.

Greg Benford was, for a long time, unknown. He was never an amateur. He was unpublished, but he was ready. He wrote for fan magazines and he sent off manuscripts to the professional journals, but for a long time he was unpublished: he was unknown. But he was no amateur. He only needed the compliment to firm him up, to send him along, to put his dreams before readers.

In 1965, *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* ran a poem by Doris Pitkin Buck (whose dangerous vision will appear in the third volume of this trilogy) in which the cases were made for the Univac and the unicorn, and it was hinted that proliferation of the former would spell doom for the latter. So intriguing was the idea, that the editor of *F&SF* initiated a contest for unpublished writers, soliciting stories in which both a Univac and a unicorn figured prominently.

There were many entries. (I've been working on mine for seven years, and one day soon may complete it.) The winner of the contest was Greg Benford. At which point he was not only not an amateur, he was also not unknown.

Since that time he has sold a number of stories and articles, and a novel, *Deeper than the Darkness* (Ace, 1970). (As a novelette, the story was both Hugo & Nebula finalist in 1970.) He regularly contributes a column on the science in science fiction to *Amazing Stories*.

"And the Sea Like Mirrors" is a fine story. I love it, and I want to publish it, and I want to be associated with it; I want to let some of the magic of this special thing rub off on me by my act of presenting it.

And having done so, all that remains is to present Mr. Gregory Benford.

"I was born in a small town in southern Alabama in 1941. Parents were schoolteachers but my father was away during the War and in 1946 joined the Army as a career. Thus my twin brother and I were hauled to various exotic and chaotic parts of the world, including Japan, Germany, Georgia, Texas, Oklahoma. The effects of all this on my psyche are unknown, but it may have been enough to send me over the deep end and into the morass of science fiction.

"I suppose I was always more interested in the science in sf when I was a teenager; I'm probably one of the thousands who have been recruited to science & engineering by Heinlein's juveniles and a few other occasional books. At any rate I became interested in physics in high school, took a bachelors degree in it in 1963, moved to California and obtained my Masters in 1965 from the University of California. In 1967 I married Joan Abbe, of an old Boston family, and three months later (Nov) got my PhD from UC (La Jolla). There are a number of miscellaneous honors & stuff strewn along the path, though I don't think they mean a damn thing: Phi Beta Kappa, Woodrow Wilson Fellow, some scholarships.

"At the moment I'm doing research (I'm a theoretical physicist) at the University of California and living in Laguna Beach.

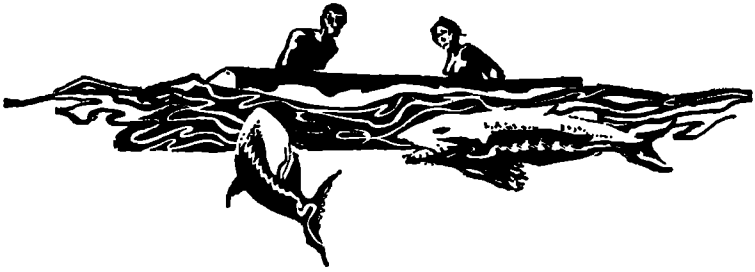
"I do a fair number of things. I surfed for years at La Jolla, have done some scuba diving (went on my second Caribbean jaunt last November), have some interest in ancient civilizations, travel a great deal (spent a good amount of time in a lot of European countries), fairly active politically, try to know as much about everything as possible, prefer trees and quiet

and thus will probably become a lovable eccentric by the time I'm 40, love my wife, read everything.

"I started writing a few stories in 1964 while a graduate student at La Jolla and won a short story contest in F&SF in 1965. Sold them 3 stories and quit to finish my thesis. I started a fanzine called *Void* with my brother (who is now an experimental physicist) when I was 14, and continued it with various coeditors (including Terry Carr and Ted White) until I was 21. I've written a lot of stuff for fanzines about sf, but didn't think it was worth writing the sort of thing that was being published until the recent resurgence in the field. I don't think of myself as a Writer, but as a guy who writes on the side. My life is oriented toward being creative, which is why I like to do research.

"A good deal of the material in 'And the Sea Like Mirrors' is drawn from survival instruction I've had, although some of the things included are the subject of controversy (like drinking sea water) so they shouldn't be taken as the final word.

"Hobbies: drinking wine, playing all racquet games, hiking, contemplating inanimate objects, mysticism, oriental religions, astrophysics."



Gregory Benford

AND THE SEA LIKE MIRRORS

Warren wondered how long they had been drifting. Thirty-seven days, the regular cuts in the tree limb said. Rosa had checked each one with him. At noon each day they made the ritual slice with his worn pocketknife, carefully memorizing each fresh gash as it was made, so they wouldn't confuse it with the others and think it was made the day before.

"What ya lookin' at?" Rosa said, blinking out at him from beneath the low lean-to.

"Counting them," Warren said.

"Thirty-seven," she said, and he knew from the sound of her voice that she didn't believe it either. Order, the beauty of number, structure—it was nothing out here. In all those days, how could they have gotten it right?

One or two must have slipped by. Or in the days of delirium, hadn't he dreamed about sawing down the limb, forcing the days to pass, cutting until his knee slipped in the sweat and he fainted? He couldn't remember.

"Go back to sleep," he said. "I'll be back in. Thought I heard something."

She sat, listening to the hollow slap of waves against the bottom of the raft. There was only the murmur of the sea and an occasional rattling of metal as their rows of tin cans shifted on the deck. In a moment she lay down again and closed her dark eyes, shutting out the stark yellow of the tropical afternoon.

Warren looked back at the limb lashed to the raft. Thirty-seven days since the *Manamix* went down. Thirty-seven intervals of blinding light, starvation, dread, thirst.

There was a liquid rippling in the water and a deep thump against the raft. Rosa sat up. Warren gestured for silence and waited. The jumbled planks and logs of the raft creaked and worked against each other, and then the thump came again.

They moved automatically to their positions. She squatted on a log near the edge, stripped off her white blouse and dipped it into the water. Warren brought out his stick, slotted the rubber strip through the end and braced a long crude arrow against the sling. The arrow was an inch-thick slat from the *Manamix* lifeboat, tapered slightly and with a long iron nail at its head.

He slitted his eyes against the glare and looked out at the shallow troughs of the waves, trying to judge the pitch of the deck. The thumping came again. Warren was almost certain it was a Swarmer now, and not one of the large fish. There was something about the sound of their heads as they probed the underside of the raft, looking for a weakness . . .

Suddenly a ripple caught his attention. Rosa was rhythmically weaving the blouse through the water, and past her scrawny breasts he could see the sea warp and lift slightly with new currents that broke the surface.

That was their tactical error, the one they always made. Instinct told them to look first, gauge the target. Now the Swarmer was gliding back into the blue shadows under the raft, flipping over and coming around for the final pass. Warren tensed, sighted down the arrow.

Rosa must have seen the form an instant earlier. She flicked the rag out

with a quick jerk and the Swarmer put on a last, frantic burst of speed to catch it.

"Haeee!" Rosa screamed. His snout broke water, long thin mouth leering up, pearl white eyes focused on infinity.

Warren let go the arrow and followed it automatically, scrabbling forward on all fours. The Swarmer had taken it under his gills, the nail buried deep in folds of slick green skin.

Rosa snatched at the arrow's line. "Slow!" he said, lowering his chest into the water. "Don't pull it out."

The arrow was enough to stun the Swarmer, but that was all. In a moment he would thrash free of the line. Warren hung partly over the side of the raft and stretched out. He caught a ventral fin in one hand, then another. The Swarmer moved fitfully. Warren swung himself around, the wood cutting into his hip, and levered the body partly onto the raft.

Rosa took a fin and pulled the Swarmer up, flipped it over onto its side and used a foot to roll it away from the water. It began to arch its back, twisting to gain leverage for a push over the side. Its eyes bulged and the thin gills rasped audibly as they flared open and closed.

"Hurry!" Rosa shouted. Warren had his knife out and was weaving over the Swarmer, waiting for the right angle of attack. It slid away from him, toward the water. As it turned the knife came down, slipping into the soft tissues of the side and riding up against the spine. Warren slammed it down the length of the body, feeling the Swarmer convulse in an agony of pain. Then it straightened, gave a slight shiver and was dead.

Rosa was moaning rhythmically, holding it by a fin. Warren stepped back, keeping his footing against the swell, and nudged her.

"Get into the shelter," he said.

She looked up at him blankly, paused and then scuttled under the plywood sheet that formed the roof of the lean-to. He looked after her with mild disgust.

It was the same as the last three times they'd killed one, but this time she seemed more distant and harder to reach. It was as though the Swarmers threw her back into an earlier stage of life, like a child. She could only tolerate the kill if it was part of a ritual, an elaborate program of actions that, if perfectly followed, enabled her to completely shut out the reality of the event.

Fluids were beginning to drain out of the Swarmer as it rocked on the deck. Warren cursed himself for his slowness and fetched the tin cans. He propped the Swarmer against a log, where the planking of the dismantled lifeboat joined the log and made a hollow. He jammed the cans against its

body there, where most of the juices were dripping out, and braced the body against the swaying of the raft.

The green skin was slick, like a seal's. The dorsal and ventral fins were sagging now, in death, but they helped guide the Swarmer through the water with incredible swiftness. In almost every detail it was like an ordinary fish. A little outsized, perhaps, almost four feet long.

The head gave it away. It didn't taper and slant forward, but bulged with a large brain case. It carried the heavy bone forehead like a dolphin, and its face had the curiously squeezed look of some of the larger fish. But the thin mouth, large eyes and jutting jaw were alien. Earth had never evolved this particular combination.

"Look!" Rosa called. Warren stared out into the hills and valleys of water in motion, following her gesture. A gray cylinder floated ten yards from the raft.

The Swarmer was dribbling out the last drops from its lymphatic glands, and Warren knew that to get more would take both of them, hacking and sawing their way through the muscular hide, pressing the flesh for fluid. It wasn't worth the trouble of forcing Rosa into cooperation.

He secured the cans and rolled the Swarmer over the side. Spray splashed into his face. His attention was focused on the cylinder and he did the job routinely for what seemed like the thousandth time, although it probably was somewhere in the twenties. Almost one for every day, he thought.

"Pull it in," he ordered, moving back to the center of the raft. Rosa peered out at him from her shelter, uncomprehending.

He snorted in frustration. Perhaps he should slap her into awareness, like the time before. But the cylinder was drifting slowly away.

He moved gracefully to the tree limb and started unlashing it. His fingers were puffy from constant contact with water and the strips of bark slipped out of them.

In a moment Warren had it free and was walking at a crouch toward the raft edge nearest the cylinder. He noted automatically that no slight ripples disturbed the surface, no green shapes flitted in the deeps below.

It looked safe, just like the times before. If the Skimmers were laying a trap for him, they were taking their time about springing it.

He stopped a foot short of the edge and balanced himself against the swell. The gray tube bobbed sluggishly in the trough of a wave and drifted away a bit more.

Warren breathed deeply, curled his toes reflexively for balance, and leaned against the pitch of the deck, extending his arms out until his muscles popped. The limb was short at least a yard. He couldn't reach the tube.

He swayed back, relaxing, and tried again.

Still short. And the gap had widened by a foot.

Warren closed his eyes against the biting afternoon glare and felt his leg muscles weaken. He mustn't allow himself to get depressed.

If he let go, just once, he would be sucked into the same endless caverns Rosa was wandering. No, he had to hold on.

Warren turned and walked back to the shelter. He realized now how badly he'd wanted that tube, how much he'd looked forward to it.

He might have been able to understand this one. The second message had been a real improvement over the first. There had even been three English words in that one. So this third . . .

"Ah! Ah!" Rosa grunted, nudging him. She gestured frantically, clawing the air.

Warren jerked his head around and searched where the tube had been. A dark blue form leaped out of the water near it. It was a little larger than a Swarmer and it skipped lightly over the greenish foam of a wave.

Before Warren could move or even recognize the Skimmer, it ploughed into the water near the tube and submerged. An instant later it shot out again in an explosion of spray, caught the tube and threw it into the air with a smooth jerk of its head.

Warren brought the limb around, but the Skimmer had turned with startling abruptness and was speeding away. It disappeared into the slope of a wave like green marble and thrashed through. In a moment it was lost in the endlessly changing topography of the southern Pacific.

Rosa gave a dazed cry, but Warren ignored her and scrambled to the edge of the raft. The tube was only a few yards away and he quickly fished it in, noting in the back of his mind that the woman was cowering in the shelter, mumbling to herself.

He carried the slick organic cylinder back to the center of the raft. He handled it carefully, looking for anything that might be different about this one.

It separated easily at the middle and came apart with a small moist pop. Inside was the same rolled sheet. He spread it on the deck.

CONSQUE KOPF AMN SOLID. DA ØLEN SMALL
YOUTH SCHLECT UNS. DERINGER CHANGE DA.
UNS B WSW. SAGEN ARBEIT BEI MOUTH.
CIRCLE STEIN NONGO.

Warren stared down at the thin parchmentlike scroll for a long time. Coming this close to the raft was—for a Skimmer—an incredibly brave act.

They must be getting desperate. Whatever it was they wanted him to know, time must be running out for them.

This would be the last message, he knew. And, shaking his head, almost crying with frustration, he saw that it made no more sense than the first one.

When he woke up in the water the *Manamix* was going down. Long fingers of tropical lightning curled beneath black clouds and he could see the ship taking water heavily to starboard.

It tilted steadily like a giant land animal caught in the endless net of the Swarmers' spinning. The long green strands licked up the sides and over the deck. They were strong and flexible lines of organic chain molecules, spun out from their belly pouches by the thousands of Swarmers who now gathered around the bows. Biologists thought the strands must be used in the mating process, but why they should be of such length no one knew. Those, together with the holes already punched in the side by suicidal Swarmers in groups of three or four, could sink any light vessel.

The *Manamix* was shipping water dangerously. Warren knew the jets would never get out here, five hundred miles off the west coast of South America, in a driving, splintering storm. They would never arrive, as the Captain had said, to drop the canisters of poison that would stop the Swarmers. The *Manamix* had run out of the chemicals days ago, and now the ship wallowed in the swell and aboard the lights were going off and people were screaming.

The picture fixed in his mind. The *Manamix* was frozen as it slid over into its black grave, some orange running lights still winking. Lightning crackled and reflected in a thousand shattered mirrors of the sea. Stench of salt, biting cold, a hail of rain that blinded him. Then the thump of the empty lifeboat against a drifting box nearby and he began to move, to fight again against the current.

The rest was impersonal, as though it had happened to someone else. He climbed into the lifeboat and began paddling it away from the *Manamix* and the Swarmers. He sighted Rosa in the dim light and managed to pull the woman aboard. She was a journalist he'd met before on the *Manamix*.

She was covering the Swarmers for a wire service and wanted to take the run up the South American coast, in hopes they'd get to see a Swarm. The aliens had nearly driven man from the oceans within the last year, and the *Manamix* was one of the few freighter lines still running in the Pacific. She'd tried to get some opinions from Warren over drinks in the

lounge, but he was an engineer and didn't know any more about the Swarmer landings than she did.

They drifted all night. The two lay in the bottom of the boat, trying not to make any noise, because if the Swarm found it and thought it was occupied, their bone foreheads would smash the side in minutes.

As it turned out, the lifeboat began to sink without help from the aliens. It must have been damaged coming over the side of the *Manamix*. Seepage Warren found in the night turned into a steady stream by the time the warm dawn broke over them.

In the first light they could make out other refuse from the *Manamix* drifting nearby. There were uprooted trees as well, probably carried out to sea by the storm that had rushed down on the *Manamix* just as the Swarmers struck.

Warren risked his life and went into the water to collect it. He knew the Swarmers were savage and mindless. He'd read an article that said they were just the youngest forms and the Skimmers were an advanced minority. Swarmers obviously couldn't have built the ships that dropped into Earth's atmosphere and seeded the oceans five years ago.

But young or not, they would kill him instantly if they found him in the water.

Laboriously, for three days they paddled and collected, cut and built and lashed. They broke up the lifeboat and used it for decking over the logs and planking they could find. A coil of wire provided lashing. An aluminum railing could be pounded into adequate nails.

Rosa held up well, at first. They never saw any other survivors of the *Manamix*. Elementary navigation told Warren they were drifting almost precisely due west; if they could hold on, a search pattern might eventually find them.

One night, feeling a curious liberation from his past, he took Rosa with a power and confidence that surprised him. He was sure he would survive.

He used some of the lifeboat's rations for bait and caught a few fish. After some experimentation he made a bow and arrow accurate enough to shoot fish on the surface, but the bait and line were faster.

Then the water began to run out. Rosa kept their stores under the plywood shelter, and at seven days Warren found the water was almost gone. She had been drinking far more than her share.

"I *had* to," she said, backing away from him. "I can't stand it out here. I get so thirsty. And the sun, it's too hot, I just. . ."

He hit her a few times, short, brutal chops. But there was no satisfaction in it. She had taken their water and it was gone. After an hour of depres-

sion, with Rosa cringing away from him at the far end of the raft, he began to think again.

There was a strange freedom in him which came to the surface when he was working on the problem. In the cool, orderly processes of his intellect he found a kind of rest.

He squatted on a level plank and automatically rocked with the swell, but inside, where he lived, the world wasn't just the gurgle and rush of waves, the bleaching raw edge of sun and wind. Inside, there were the books and the diagrams.

More, there were bits and pieces of things he'd known, and now a chance to put them together.

Chemistry. Warren rigged a distilling apparatus using two tin cans. He cut a small slit in the rubber stopper of a water bottle and lowered it into the sea on a long fishing line.

He vaguely remembered—or did he imagine?—that the deeper water was colder. If he pulled a sealed can of it up from twenty feet below, and let it sit inside a second can in the sun, perhaps it would steam like a champagne bucket. Then the evaporated water would condense on the side of the first can, as salt-free moisture.

He tried it again and again. It never worked. But he was trying, he was thinking, he was holding onto himself. That was enough.

Nine days out the water was gone. Rosa cried and called him filthy names. She bit her shoulder in a rage but didn't seem to notice it.

The next day the sea was more turbulent. Water poured over the deck, washing them continually so it was impossible to sleep or even rest. In the late afternoon Warren discovered small jelly seahorses about the size of a dime riding in the sea foam that lapped over the raft. He stared at them and tried to remember what he'd learned of biology.

He knew if they started drinking anything with a high salt content the end would come with stunning swiftness. But he had to take a chance.

Warren kicked and talked the woman into helping him collect a handful of the seahorses. He put a few on his tongue, tentatively, and waited until they melted. They were salty and fishy to the taste, but seemed less salty than sea water. The cool moisture from a full handful brought them both relief, and they gathered them in eagerly until darkness fell.

Day eleven was intolerable.

Warren sat with closed eyes, carefully working through the clear, logical hallways of his mind. The temptation to drink sea water was festering in him, boiling into the clean and neat compartment where he was trying to live.

He had to keep running over the chain of logic to keep himself convinced.

If he drank sea water, he would take in a certain quantity of dissolved salt. But his body needed very little salt, and it had to get rid of any salt it absorbed above this small amount. The work of secreting extra salt is done by the kidneys, which remove from the blood all waste products in the form of urine.

For this the kidneys need water. At least a pint a day.

He made it into a chant and said it over and over. The waves danced and billowed before him. Their dried rations lay heavy and dead in his stomach. He focused on the chant.

Drink a pint of sea water a day. That gives about ten cubic inches of salt-free water.

But the kidneys need more than ten cubic inches to process the salt in the pint.

The kidneys react. They take water from the body tissue.

The body dries up. The tongue turns black.

Nausea. Fever. Death.

Later, Warren guessed that he sat there most of the day, reciting the logic to himself, polishing it down to a few key words, making it perfect.

The thump under the deck brought him out of it. Rosa stirred. Warren knew suddenly, intuitively, what it was. A Swarmer had found them.

He moved smoothly, concentrating. Here was another problem to be solved.

The thumping continued, working across the raft. They were different from the playful knocks the dolphins made.

The Swarmer broke water five yards from the raft and turned belly-over once, goggling at them with a bulging eye. Rosa threw up her hands in terror and the Swarmer, which had started to dive again, stopped and circled around the raft, following her awkward scuttling.

Coolly, Warren shot.

Hauling in the wounded alien, battering it to stillness with a club, gutting it and watching the thin, pale yellow fluid ooze from the tissues into the cans—he did these things alone, working in absolute concentration, and never noticed Rosa. He didn't hear her whimpering, stumbling approach as he lifted a can to his lips.

He caught the cool, slightly acrid taste of the fluid for an instant. And then she struck the can from his hands and it clattered on the deck, spilling the precious juices across the boards.

His punch drove her to her knees. "Why? What . . ."

"Wrong," she stuttered out. "Ugly, bad." She shook her head, blinking. "They're not . . . not *normal*. Can't eat . . ."

"You want to drink, don't you?"

"Na . . . yeah, but not that. Maybe a little, I . . ."

He looked at her coldly and she moved away. The Swarmer was dripping its precious fluids out onto the planking and Warren rushed to prop cans under it. He drank the first can, and the second. Rosa sat on the other side of the raft and whimpered.

The third can he set down halfway between them, and after a moment Rosa came over and sipped it slowly. The taste was bland, not very salty, and remarkably like stale beer.

After that they came to an unspoken agreement. Rosa would help lure the Swarmer if it came near the raft, but she wouldn't—couldn't—gut it and extract the watery pouches of fin-fluid, the blood or the eyes. Warren had to do that.

While Rosa sat dreamily swaying at the center of their rectangular island, humming and singing to herself, coiling deeper into her own private retreats from sun and salt, Warren worked and thought.

He studied the Swarmer body, finding the soft pulpy spots where it was vulnerable to an arrow, tracing its circulatory system and the delicate flow of muscles that moved it. Almost every day now they heard the shuddering bang of a Swarmer under the raft, and always it eventually surfaced and was killed.

They seemed to have none of the wary, vicious predatory instincts the Swarms had shown near land. Perhaps the lone Swarmers out here were scouts for the Swarmer schools that swept the oceans, and were not trained—or bred—to attack.

Warren experimented, practiced, tried new things. He cut up the cloth and made small bags to hold the richer parts of the Swarmer carcass, and then chewed it until every precious drop of the brackish, warm fluid was squeezed out. It nearly made him sick, and after several days, when his body's reserves of water had been built up again, he twisted pieces of the flesh in the cloth and got nearly the same amount.

On Day Twenty-one Rosa sighted the capsule. Her cry awakened Warren from a vague, shifting sleep under the lean-to.

Darting away in the distance was the first Skimmer they'd sighted. The Skimmers were an enigma to the biologists who studied the aliens. There were not many of them, and they operated independently of the Swarms. Only one or two had been killed, in the first months when the aliens were breeding explosively through the oceans—since then, the lean blue forms stayed well out of range of ordinary weapons.

But they didn't control the Swarms, either. Skimmers had been attacked by Swarmers within sight of several ships. They maneuvered intelligently and fought well, but Skimmers lacked the thick frontal bone structure of the Swarmers, and they didn't display such blind ferocity.

Warren fished in the gray tube and turned it over in his hands. The smooth surface of plasticlike organic substance was obviously machined—or was it? Could it have been grown, perfect and symmetrical? The alien ships that dumped eggs into Earth's oceans were obviously the product of an industrial culture. But how could the Swarmers or Skimmers have made them, without maniples?

The thin slick scroll inside was indecipherable.

SECHTON XXMENAPU DE AN SW BY W ABLE. SAGON MXXIL VESSE L ANSAGEN MANNIA WIR UNS??FTH ASDMNØ5B ERTY EARTHN PROFUILEN. CO KALLEN KNOPTFT.

Warren studied it and turned the combinations of letters over in his mind endlessly. It was no code, because some of the words were clearly English or something else close to German.

VESSE L must be VESSEL. And ANSAGEN—to say, to announce? Warren wished he had more than a dim memory of his college language courses.

The message was in clear, cold typeface like a newspaper, and somehow was impressed onto the sheet without showing any slight indentation on the back. A photographic process, perhaps.

It gave him something to focus on through the long bleaching days of waiting, of trying to ignore the salt itch in his growing beard and all over his skin, of listening to the quiet whisper of waves and the endless weaving chant that Rosa had taken up.

She shrieked in terror whenever a Swarmer approached in the distance now, but Warren guessed that, on some level, she knew they were relatively safe until the raft neared a Swarm. The scouting Swarmers might see them, but apparently they couldn't remember the raft's location well enough to bring a full school of the aliens back to attack.

And the Swarmers were coming more frequently now. They were beginning to get two, sometimes three in a day.

The second message gave him fuel for the burning rationality that consumed him. Again a long blue body, a blur of motion, dropped it near the raft just after a Swarmer kill, as though the Skimmers were using it as a diversion.

GEFAHRLICH GROSS SOLID MNXXL%8
ANAXLE".UNS. NORMEN 286 W!! SCATTER
PORTLINE LILAPA XEROT.

Warren wished for writing implements, if only to keep track of the endless permutations he made on the messages. GEFAHRLICH—danger, dangerous? GROSS: big, great. UNS again, German for US.

He tried to scratch marks on the rolled sheets, but the surface wouldn't take an impression. If there were some way to communicate with them, to ask questions, he might get an idea of what the Skimmers wanted. To negotiate? What would be a sign of peaceful intent?

In the back of his mind Warren was beginning to frame theories to explain the messages. Occasionally he recoiled from the alienness of it, but those impulses were getting easier to control.

He understood without ever admitting to himself that his absorption in planning, detail and the cold beauties of logic was as much a comforting distraction as Rosa's primitive chant. So the messages were necessary to his balance.

But he knew it was pointless unless he could fathom the confused lines set out with such rigid neatness on the thin sheets he held.

He squatted, peering at the third message with tired red eyes for long, dragging minutes. Time, he needed time.

"Heh! Wa-Warren!" Rosa called. He followed her gesture.

There was a dot on the horizon. It danced into visibility over the ragged waves, bobbing with random jerks, but it was there.

"Land," Warren breathed deeply.

Rosa's eyes swelled and she barked out a sharp cackling laughter through drawn lips. "Land! Land!" she cried, bouncing on her calloused feet in an erratic jig.

Warren blinked and forced his eyes to focus. He estimated the current and measured the angle the dot made with their course. They could reach it by dark, perhaps sooner. He took his club and began knocking out the supports of the plywood lean-to. In the center of the raft he knelt, measured with hands and fingers, and began constructing a series of supports for a vertical beam.

The work did not take long. Setting a loose-fitting collar into the deck took all Warren's remaining nails, but the large plywood sheet belted easily to the vertical beam he erected in the collar. Wire passed through holes in the sheet held it to the beam, and trailing lines at the corners allowed

him to tack with it from a position at the rear of the raft. It made a passable sail.

He dragged out a makeshift rudder he'd fashioned weeks before and fitted it into the housing he had laboriously carved out near the back edge of the raft. It was weak and clumsy, but with it he could impart a slight side motion to the raft, and hopefully steer toward the island ahead.

It had to be an island. Their chances of ever encountering another were negligible. The chance to stand on firm ground again . . .

Warren held his hand up against the buttery afternoon glare. Firm ground. No continual sickening pitch of the deck. Solid.

SOLID.

Could the Skimmers mean the island? GEFAHRLICH GROSS SOLID. Dangerous great island. SCATTER. Leave? To scatter was to rebound off something. Avoid the island?

Warren smiled to himself. There *was* a key to it. Some beauty, some order that would lift him up out of this stinking raft.

He pulled slowly on the wires and canted the plywood sheet at an angle to the breeze. The rudder creaked as he adjusted it and held it in place with a wooden chock.

The island was nearer and he could see a low ridge running down the middle of it. It didn't look very high. He did a mental calculation and decided they would arrive sooner than he'd expected. The wind was picking up, too.

Rosa was moving about the raft, humming to herself and eating from the food tins that remained. Warren felt a twinge of anger. She was eating out of turn.

She seemed calm, once she'd seen the land. She passed near him and looked up, grinning wildly, and said, "Okay?" Warren nodded.

Okay. They would make the island. But he wasn't satisfied, not yet. He was bringing them in to graze along the southern shore, to have a look before they beached.

Southern? What was there . . .

WSW. West south west. UNS B WSW.

WE BE WSW?

On the WSW part of the island? We—the Skimmers.

He noticed Rosa squatting at the front of the raft, dipping it down slightly into the rushing bluegreen swell and throwing thin sheets of hissing foam over the planks. She knew it wasn't good for the raft to ride like that. It was slowing them down.

But he didn't say anything to her. He needed the time. The Skimmers were all he had out here and they had tried to tell him something.

They were different. They didn't have Swarms, they didn't attack. Their bodies were thinner and they carried a larger brain case.

A vague thought flitted across Warren's mind, a half-defined guess. Was this all a kind of warfare, the Swarms out of control, attacking and isolating the continents while the Skimmers tried to stop them? Something like a race war between political factions?

The island grew and a dim shadow caught Warren's eye. It lay low in the water around the island, a brown line throwing up white rushes of surf that caught the light.

A reef. The island was going to be harder to reach. He would have to bring the raft in and loop around it, trying to find a path into the lagoon. Either that or smash into the reef that ringed the island.

CIRCLE STEIN NONGO. STEIN was—rock! DON'T GO INTO THE CIRCLE.

Warren slammed the tiller over full.

It was all there. The Skimmers were telling him, leading him.

Rosa grunted and looked back at him. She had noticed the change in the raft's direction. He ignored her and pulled in the wires to cant the plywood sheet further into the wind.

It was *all there!* SMALL YOUTH SCHLECT UNS. The Skimmers had misspelled SCHLECHT, German for BAD. SMALL YOUTH BAD US. Were the Swarmers a lower stage of development? Just out of the egg, primitive, running wild in a different environment from the home world?

THE SWARMERS ARE BAD FOR US. US—the Skimmers. Or was Warren included? He must be.

Rosa stumbled toward him and the island seemed to grow.

"Wha'? Land! We go there!"

He wrinkled the salt-caked skin around his eyes, focusing on her face, but it looked different, strange. He didn't know this woman. She was nothing to him.

She stepped closer and he hit her. She whimpered and sat on the deck, peering up at him in confusion.

He ignored her, feeling elated and calm. He gauged the small shifts in the wind and sighted in on the dark mass ahead. The reef stood out clearly now. And . . .

There was something moving on the beach.

Even at this distance he could make them out. Long green bodies lay in the sand, moving slowly inland. They were crawling with painful effort, dragging themselves along, but a few had already made it to the green margin of vegetation.

Swarmers. A Swarm that was learning to crawl out of the sea, practicing on a deserted island in the Pacific. Swarmers entering the next stage of their development.

The island was suddenly nearer and Rosa was pounding at him weakly, shrieking. He had been standing there, numb, trying to think, to understand.

"Crazy? *Crazy?* We *die* out here."

"What?" he said, distracted. The raft was veering, but it would come close to the reef.

"You 'fraid! 'Fraid the rocks." She gaped at him, eyes bulging. "No *man* would . . ."

"Shut up." They were rushing down on the island and the current was picking up.

"Na . . . na, I won't. Gimmie." She looked around wildly. "I swim."

She scrabbled along the deck, picking at the planking. In a moment she found a larger board and tried to pry it up.

Warren breathed deeply and felt a calm swell up from his chest. He would do one last thing for her, and then be alone.

He walked over to the struggling woman, judged the correct angle and levered the board out of the deck with a rasping of nails. She snatched at it.

They were running by the reef now and Warren could see the forms on the beach clearly. They had stubby thick fins at the side that worked slowly against the sand. They crawled like turtles.

No, land wasn't the answer. The Swarmers were on the land now. They'd take it eventually, just as they'd taken the oceans. A man who clung to the land was finished. No, the answer . . .

Warren turned and looked out to sea. The rim of the world was an irregular line in the dusk. A sweeping circular arc, broken here and there by clouds. Clean, free. WSW.

Rosa went over the side with a splash. There was a narrow path through the reef no more than fifty yards away and she made for it, floating partially on the board.

Warren automatically studied the water, but no green forms followed her. If the Swarm wasn't large here they might not notice her before she reached the beach.

He ran an eye along her probable path, estimating, and worked it out. It was good to be calculating again. Rosa would make the shore in a few more minutes.

It was surprisingly difficult to see her, though, for darkness was falling rapidly now. Under the wind the sea was breaking up into oily facets that

reflected the dull orange of the sunset on the clouds. An ocean of mirrors.

He peered down at the water. Mirrors. What did he see there?

"No *man* . . ." she'd said. Maybe not. Maybe he was something more, now. The Skimmers could tell him that.

He felt the tug of the lines in his hand and made a slight correction in the heading to steady a yaw in the raft.

He was gathering speed. When the thin scream came out of the dusk behind him he did not turn around.

Afterword:

Ever since Heinlein, the most frequent hero to appear in science fiction has been The Competent Man. That's only natural—SF is the most optimistic genre in the literary world. But I've always felt The Competent Man was presented a little naively. He's usually a scientist or engineer, but most of the scientists I know are far more complex in their competence than the people you'll meet in science fiction.

In this story I've tried to deal a little more realistically with the classic theme of encounter between man and extraterrestrials. The focus isn't on the Swarmers and Skimmers themselves, but on the fact that they are *alien:* their motivations cannot be understood except perhaps by analogy, and it is their very strangeness that gives them such psychic impact on the human race.

It may well be that the most important first adjustment mankind will make to an alien intelligence will be emotional. It's a totally new problem. We don't know how to deal with it and our gut response may decide everything.

One thing is certain: we will have to make compromises. The man who is rigid and can't compromise his own self image won't avoid this—he will instead run the risk of losing much of what makes him human.

Generally when a man stresses one aspect of his personality he pays a price. How high can it go?

In this story the price he pays is high. I've tried to get the reader to buy as much of Warren's point of view as possible, to accept his universe as valid. It isn't hard to believe. That's the horror of it.

Because you see, the alien doesn't have to be some extraterrestrial life form. Every person on this planet is undergoing a continuous encounter with the incredibly strange world our technology is creating for us just around the corner. It is alien. We have to come to terms with it. So we adjust, we change, we accept. And often we don't know what price we have had to pay, either.



Introduction to BED SHEETS ARE WHITE:

The last few years, with the snowballing acceptance of speculative fiction in the groves of Academe, a number of sf writers—myself included—have been tapped to teach at various college writing workshops in sf and fantasy. From these workshops have come an amazing number of talented new writers. Most of whom teach *us* new tricks.

The best of these workshops was started at Clarion College in Pennsylvania, by Professor Robin S. Wilson (who under the name Robin Scott has a story just a little further on in this volume, thereby proving that we "teachers" have to keep renewing our credentials with our "students"). In 1968, '69 and '70 the Workshop was held at Clarion, and in 1971 it was moved to Tulane in New Orleans. From these four years of Clarion/Tulane alone, several dozen writers have emerged whose names appear with pleasing regularity in the magazines of the field. Some of them are in this book: Ed Bryant, Joan Bernott, and Evelyn Lief. Others will appear in *The Last Dangerous Visions.* But right now, let me tell you a thing about Evelyn.

When I got to Clarion in 1968, I'd only guest-lectured at one Workshop previously, and I was unsure of myself. Deciding my terror could be put to good advantage, I formulated the policy of terrorizing my students. On the first day of class, I was presented for workshopping a selection of stories written toward the end of the previous week, stories written while yet another sf writer had been in guest-lecturer attendance. These stories were, for the most part, undistinguished, sloppy, ungrammatical, devoid of originality, hackneyed, imaginatively constipated, lacking in meaningful characterization, self-indulgent and badly-typed.

In short, the usual nonsense one finds at workshops when the students are larking.

(PAUSE FOR A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR.

(My fellow instructors at Clarion/Tulane are the best goddamed bunch of writing teachers the world has ever known. I've been at other workshops where the "talent" imported to do the teaching was on a much higher reputational level, and if three out of a hundred conferees turned out to be saleable, turned out to derive even the *slightest* worth from their two, four or six week stay at the workshop, it was in the nature of a miracle. Out of a hundred students at Clarion/Tulane in the four years of its existence, more than *half* have sold, continue to sell, and seem on their way to making suc-

cessful careers at *writing what they want to write.* It is not by chance that so many Clarion/Tulane graduates are included in the DV series. I am a cold and heartless sonofabitch when it comes to buying stories for these books, and I assure you they could torture my mother with the Boot and thumbscrews before I'd buy a story on the basis of friendship or any other ground than that I thought it was a good story.

(Thus, be apprised that my fellow instructors—Fritz Leiber, Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delany, Damon Knight, Kate Wilhelm, Robin Scott Wilson, Frederik Pohl and James Sallis—are the very best. Bar none.

(Even so, they are—to a person—gentler souls than your editor. I conceive of writing as a holy chore, and it is my feeling that students who come to a workshop for a six-week crash program are there for one reason and one reason only: to write. I push them. I chivvy and harass them and work them around the clock. They write a story a day and they workshop for hours and write through the night, until . . . by the end of my week's stint as visiting tormenter . . . they collapse and have their barriers down totally for the soothing teaching of whomever follows me. My fellow teachers understand my tactic—and Damon *hates* following me because he then has to deal with a corps of quivering basket cases—but it *seems* to get results, and they *do* write.

(So when I say the manuscripts were not the best, at my arrival, I cast no badmouth at whichever instructor it was who preceded me that year. He or she was simply easier on them than I am. Nonetheless, shock tactics were in order.)

I selected one of the bad batch and decided to use it as a hideous example to the other students.

It happened to be a story by Evelyn Lief.

It took me the better part of an hour to tear that little 1000-word short story to shreds. To flay it, to masticate it, to denounce its author in the vilest possible terms. "This piece of shit isn't fit to line the bottom of a bird cage. Miss Lief, you aren't a writer, you're a ghoul. You should have worked with Burke and Hare. This wretched abomination has as much charm and grace and symmetry as a thalidomide baby. As a writer I'm offended, as an editor I'm repelled, as a human being I'm nauseated. This is a grotesquerie unsullied by the presence of beauty in any form whatsoever. It is unstructured, illogical, moronic, ungrammatical, despicable in the extreme. Rather than simply tearing it to shreds and stomping on it—" which I proceeded to do, to the horror of the class and Robin Wilson "—I should stuff it up whatever available orifice in your body I might find, including the anal one from which it clearly emerged. You are a talentless creature, an affront to anyone seriously considering writing a craft, a chacma baboon in human guise. If you ever *dare* to submit something as noxious as this again, I will beat the crap out of you. Is that clear? Stop crying and answer me! Is that clear, is that perfectly, crystal clear?"

Evelyn Lief went back to her room, with fury and ferocity scrawled a note that said something like FUCK YOU HARLAN ELLISON YOU DON'T KNOW SO GODDAM MUCH! and she put it up over her typewriter and started writing.

The next day she handed in "Bed Sheets are White," I kissed her with deep affection, and bought the story for *Again, Dangerous Visions.*

Here it is, and here is what one of the most talented young writers I know, Evelyn Lief, has to say for herself:

"I'm twenty five years old, five feet and two inches with brown hair and brown eyes. In the winter of 1967 I started reading science fiction, and started writing stories that summer. In the fall I won second prize in a short story contest judged by Fred Pohl and during the summer of 1968 I attended the first Clarion Workshop in Fantasy and Science Fiction. That year I sold my first story, 'Bed Sheets are White.' I sold my second story to David Gerrold for his anthology in the fall of 1968. It is called 'Every Fourth House.' I attended the Clarion Workshop again during the summer of 1969, but didn't sell another story until September 1970. I sold that one, 'The Inspector,' to Robin Wilson for the Clarion anthology (Signet, 1971).

"I was born in Brooklyn in 1945, but lived most of my life in Queens and Long Island, with a sister four years younger and a brother fifteen years younger.

"I've spent several years of my life in a zionist-socialist movement called Hashomer-Hatzair (The Young Guard), and six months with this group on a kibbutz in Israel. I've hitchhiked through Israel, spent a few days traveling in Europe (where I want to return) hitchhiked up and down the coast of California during the summer of 1970, and have traveled countless times to Washington D.C. for antiwar demonstrations.

"I've had two and a half years of college (Queens College) where I studied art before dropping out during the spring of 1967, took a few months to reacquaint myself with myself and then began writing. When I work with words I feel more able to find and express those things that need telling. I expect to be writing all my life. It's a part of me that helps me to sort things out in my head. There is a pleasure in the process of giving order to chaos and yet retaining the essence of life around and inside me, of telling a good story, of reaching a reader who says, 'Yes, I know that feeling. I understand.'

"I'm now living in a three story brownstone on the edge of Bedford-Stuyvesant, a white ghetto of two houses inside the black ghetto. My house is a commune (now of 10 people, last week six, and who knows how many next week) that is just beginning to get it together, buying together, doing things together, and having an occasional spontaneous encounter group to work out our problems. The women here, including myself, are part of the growing women's liberation movement in spirit, and sometimes in action.

Right now I'm working as a typist at New York University Graduate School of Social Work, where I have an electric typewriter and a great deal of free time which I use to write my stories. I only plan to work a few months at a time, so I can have several free months to write and travel."



Evelyn Lief

BED SHEETS ARE WHITE

KEEP OUR HIGHWAYS CLEAN
DON'T LITTER
KEEP CLEAN, KEEP WHITE

The traffic moved slowly.

Gart's palms were sticky. His shirt clung to his stomach.

Noon. Two hundred fifty more miles. I'll never make it in time.

Gart drove his car forward two feet. He knew he was wedged in by the sound of bumpers clashing in front and behind him.

White cars reflected the sun's light.

When Gart looked straight ahead the light blinded him. So he looked down into the car.

My eyes hurt. Maybe I've got a pair of sunglasses.

Gart opened the glove compartment, bent down and looked in.

Nothing. Oh yes. Last week. I remember. They passed a law against them. Just about the last thing to go.

Wish I had a pair of sunglasses.

The line of cars started moving slowly forward. Then, one after another, the cars jerked to a halt.

Not even halfway there.

So tired.

Should never have tried to make the trip in one day. Should have listened to Rita.

Sunglasses. Yeah.

I remember when we still had the gray-blue and gray-black roads. With only a white line down the middle. No line now. Just all white.

He shut his eyes, and held his hands over them.

Ah, nothing.

Gart pressed down and took his hands away quickly.

Red.

The side of his head was red. Blood trickled down past his ear and under his chin.

I was pushed against him. People were on all sides of me.

Above the mass of heads surrounding me I could see a mounted cop. I turned to go the other way. The fuzz was there too.

They were circling. Making the circle smaller and smaller.

NOWHERE TO GO.

The guy with the bloody head fell down. Couldn't see him. But I could feel him next to my feet.

The crowd was pushing against me. They were shoving me toward the empty space over that guy's body.

I'd have to step on him or fall.

NO.

I pushed back, but only managed to stay in the same place.

A chant started, unclear at first. Then:

DOWN WITH LADYBIRD. WE WANT OUR DIRT.

DOWN WITH LADYBIRD. WE WANT OUR DIRT.

Again, again. I felt a sense of power within me. The chant grew louder, louder.

DOWN WITH LADYBIRD. WE WANT OUR DIRT.

Then they sprayed us with the hoses.

I got a stream right in the face. I turned away and fell down over that guy with the bloody head.

I got kicked in the side. Heard some girls screaming. Covered my head with my arms. More kicks, and people stumbling over me.

Then it stopped. No more hoses. Everybody was running away.

Somehow I managed to get to my feet and run. Halfway down the block I looked over my shoulder.

The fuzz was laughing.

Fuck you bastards.

Then I ran.

Run. I'd like to get out and run between the aisles of these paralyzed lumps of scraps with those automatons inside. Run and wave my arms and shout, "My bed sheets aren't white."

How those guys would envy me. They all like what they do in bed. But they'd never admit it.

To be pure, keep clean, keep white. That's THE LAW to them.

God, do I want my sunglasses.

Some cars were turning off the road. Lunch hour was over. The traffic was a little less now, and Gart was able to move at a steady thirty miles per hour.

On my way. At last. Still won't make it home before nightfall. I'll have to stop at a motel.

Tired.

That argument last week with Rita. Too much. What does she want me to do? Change the world by myself?

Those demonstrations years ago didn't do any good. THEY just have more organization, more weapons. Can't do a thing.

Just sit around and rap about it. She thinks something gets done that way.

"White is just a compensation for their guilt. If you can just convince one person of the idiocy of the White Laws, well, then we're making progress."

Those are her favorite lines. And what good does one or two or three more people do?

Nothing. That's what.

And then at night she puts that pink sheet on our bed. Just to spite them, she says.

But what does she do first thing in the morning? Why, she changes it to white. Just like everyone else.

There's one thing they can't make a law against. Can't stop the sky from being blue. And all those hues of red at sunset.

It's almost night. Didn't notice the time at all. You can get hypnotized by all these white buildings.

Better find a motel.

Gart traveled another fifteen minutes looking for a motel advertisement. It was getting darker.

I got a great idea. Rita wants me to do something? I'll just continue driving at night. I'll only be out another hour. And besides, I would like to see everything in shades of black.

Already things aren't so white anymore. I can almost imagine purple or green shades on the sides of the buildings.

Yeah. I think I'll drive home at night.

A half hour later Gart heard a siren.

I knew it. Can't get away with a thing.

He pulled over to the side of the road. The cops came up alongside him.

One of them got out of his car and walked over to Gart.

"Hey mister, you want to get killed or something, driving around at night? You know it's dangerous. The blackness could give you unacceptable thoughts.

"See, you're looking at the sky. Don't you know there was a law passed today against that. Sky's never white. That'll be a double charge.

"Come on out. You're under arrest."

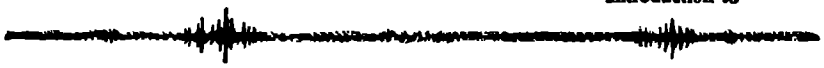
Afterword:

"This story is trite and schoolgirlish. It's the perfect example of every single thing that can be done wrong, all in one piece of writing."

On his second day at the Clarion Workshop in Science Fiction and Fantasy (1968), Harlan ridiculed one of my stories. "Show me how a woman can undulate across the room," he said. I couldn't. At the end of that class I told him I would write *a story*.

But first I took a plain piece of white paper and wrote myself a sign. It said: DAMN YOU, HARLAN ELLISON. Every time I was ready to give up I would look at that sign, and determinedly return to the typewriter. Halfway through the night I added, in small letters, *I'm gonna do it.* And the next morning I had finished "Bed Sheets are White." For me it would have been sufficient to have written a good story in the face of Harlan's criticism. I waited anxiously for his response. It had never entered my mind to dream he would buy the story.

For this and much more, Harlan, thank you.



James Sallis's stories may be the only ones in this book to have *two* Afterwords. One at the front, and the other at the rear.

I do not find it inconsistent that such a departure from form should be attendant on the work of Sallis, rather than that of any other of the forty-one authors in this book. Jim Sallis is clearly one of the most important writers produced by our genre in some time. His arrival on the scene was a matter of discussion and high expectation long before his first story was published. Unimpeachable critical sources who had read Jim's work in manuscript spread the word: we have something outstanding here.

The promise has been overwhelmingly fulfilled. Jim's first book of short stories, *A Few Last Words* (Macmillan, 1970), drew the following comment from *Publishers' Weekly*—until recently not the most knowledgeable judge of what was worthy in sf, and whose reviews are *still* marred by the distasteful use of the abbreviation sci-fic—"There's a freshness and life about most of the writing here that breaks some molds, particularly those that use the weariest of science fiction conventions, and makes Sallis pleasant and surprising to read." This was the *least* complimentary of the reviews *A Few Last Words* received. *The Virginia Kirkus Service* was unstinting in its praise, comparing Sallis to some of the greats of all literature.

Yet this singularity of talent is not the prime reason why I find it fitting that rules must be broken for Sallis, even though it informs the feeling. Sallis seems to me a fascinating life-study. And as he leads his life, so does he break rules. Not always, I'm sorry to say, to his benefit.

Jim Sallis seems to me, in a textural sense, one with F. Scott Fitzgerald: the early promise, the critical success, the brilliance of work, and the inenarrable urge to self-destruction.

In *Dangerous Visions* I spoke at some length of writers I knew personally, dealing with them not merely as creators, but as human beings; in a (possibly misguided) spirit of proving to readers that the works they admired emerged from some very real places. An attempt to demonstrate that words do not simply burn themselves on paper, but come with pain and enormous effort from human beings. I was pilloried on occasion by critics who felt it was not my place to examine the men and women behind the stories; I ignored the reprimands. It seems to me imperative that everyone who reads the work of these special dreamers understands that there

are reasons why a certain story is good, or bad, or derivative, or original. The reasons are always the writer.

And further, informing the readership of the motives and drives of the human behind the story, permits each of us to expect only what writers can give, not what we *want* them to give. In this way we deal more correctly with the *reality* of a writer's capabilities, without expecting some new and glorious height each time out, without expecting more of the same kind of story that pleased us previously, without expecting flawlessness or perfection. Lautrec once said, "One should never meet a man whose work one admires; the man is always so much less than the work." In the main, I take that to be a tragic truth. Dostoyevsky was a reprobate, a gambler, a wife-beater, a deserter of his children, a man who borrowed from his friends and then invariably stiffed them. Yet he wrote *The Idiot* and *The Possessed* and *Crime and Punishment.* So all is forgiven. Poe was heir to very nearly every vice known to Western Man, ending his life tragically and with fearful untimeliness. Yet he wrote "The Masque of the Red Death" and so we revere him.

It is quite possible that speaking of Jim Sallis in the same tone as Poe and Dostoyevsky is not overblowing on my part. His early work indicates a mind and a talent of uncommon dimensions. And so, to the end that he escape the fates that were meted out for Fitzgerald and Horace McCoy and Thomas Heggen and Dylan Thomas and Randall Jarrell, let us speak for a moment of James Sallis, in the spirit of love and admiration, almost as an open letter, in hopes the cautionary tone will be noted.

Jim is a gentle man, with that central core of violence that feeds off the need for recognition, approbation, success. Because he *is* gentle, he is capable of frightening moments of madness in which the frustration of his needs breaks out as senseless activity, followed by a withdrawal into self that is non-productive, alienating, terrifying to Jim and to those who love him and wish to see him succeed.

The drive for stature and accomplishment whips him to the taking-on of multifarious projects, and the attendant pressure paralyzes him, disallows his satisfactorily completing them. It is a cycle of desperation in which the failure to accomplish what he has sworn to do, sends him into a pit depression from which he can emerge only by divesting himself of the responsibilities. And once having regained control over his scene, he understands that he has foregone the approbation he needed to sustain him, and he starts the cycle again.

In this way he struggles from light to dark and dark to light, spinning off only those sparks of brilliant work that circumstance and chance permit to be born. Denying him that which he seeks so desperately, and denying us the concerted and sustained efforts we so hungrily want from him.

Part of this nightmare has been formed by us, the writers and critics and readers who knew the name Sallis before we knew the man and his capaci-

ties for handling his own life. We praised him, as Fitzgerald was praised, without reservation, unstintingly. To his detriment.

In a letter to me dated 17 March 1970, Jim said, "And while I'm at it, I should thank you for mentioning me all the time—in intros and like that. Appreciated, greatly."

I revile myself for so doing. It only set him up as the dragon to be slain. It only intensified the pressures on him. It only made him seem greater than a man, larger than life, Olympian in dimension. It was a selfish thing for me to do—an unconscious need on my part to reaffirm that greatness *can* come from speculative fiction. Using James Sallis as the judas goat.

As I write this, Jim Sallis is in retreat. He took over the administration of the Clarion Workshop from Robin Wilson, transferring it to his alma mater, Tulane University. He edited an anthology. He half-finished two novels for which he had been contracted some time before. The pressures built, and he went into retreat.

This open letter, then, is waiting for his return. It says to Jim, take care. Go slowly and try to ignore the demands put upon you by an anxious audience, half waiting for your success, half hoping you fail—as streetgawkers hope the suicide will take the dive. And to his audience it says, let the man alone. Let him move at his own pace, in his own time; let him become what he will become without having to play to the gallery. It says, do not kill this writer. He may well be one of the significant ones.

James Sallis was born in the South in 1944. He attended Tulane University, then lived in London for a year editing the prestigious experimental sf magazine *New Worlds*, with Michael Moorcock. He lived in Iowa, and he lived in New York. His work has appeared widely in such publications as *The Prairie Schooner, Transatlantic Review, Orbit* (five of the eight volumes as this is written), *Quark*, and many anthologies. When he was married, he lived in Boston. He has a son, Dylan, 6 years old.

Jim prepared two Afterwords to his stories. The one I chose of the pair submitted appears at the end of the Sallis dual entry. The other, which should not be lost, appears here, precisely as he instructed it be printed:

Box 5, Milford,
17 Mar 70.

Harlan,

Sorry as hell that this is late. But when you called I'd just been asleep about three hours: foggy as hell, hardly knew what you were saying, took me a couple of hours to shake the cotton out of my head and at least an hour more to move my body around. Also sorry if this is not exactly what you want. But if I'd been awake, I'd have warned you that I have a thing, *very* strong, about 'editorialising' on my own work: I refuse to do it. But, for you, I tried. Though perhaps somewhat obliquely?

I'm enclosing, in fact, two different afterwords. I like the first—begins, It's March 16, 1970, goes on to my leaving NY. I don't care much for the second at all. (But send it to cover eventualities.) Hope the first is acceptable, and that you like it at least a bit. [It's really a lot closer to the story than it first appears, by the way.]

Two points: Please note the setting, as marked. I want it just that way, okay? (Flush left, one line space between grafs, the poem dropped on to the next line and spaced three, etc.) Second: *Please* take care that the Polish words are printed *exactly* as they appear herein; this is *most* important!!!

To check . . . I hope you've remembered to cut the last line (which is also the last paragraph) of "53rd american dream". (So that the story ends: '. . . and the children loved her.') The last sentence (beginning 'Genevieve') is to be dropped, and becomes the last paragraph . . . *IS THAT CLEAR?* Please let me know. Again, most terribly important!

ALSO: the two stories, their titles that is, are to be in lower case, as I wrote earlier. Okay?

And do I get to see the Introduction you write? Hope so. (I trust you'll make it obvious how brilliant, incomparable, etc. I am, of course.) And while I'm at it, I should thank you for mentioning me all the time—in intros, and like that. Appreciated, greatly.

Sorry, incidentally, to blow my image by not having a girl with me. But as you'll see from the afterword, she had to go to work at seven. (Which is in turn *why* I'd had only 3 hours of sleep, naturally.)

Again, sorry to be late. Let me hear from you and meanwhile, do good things. Or great ones.

MUCH LOVE,

à les étrangers

I don't like to talk about my stories: they must stand, or fall, on their own, and as they will; and the very act of having written them obliterates, for me, any necessity they may once have had, or that I may have had, to speak—which is to say, that their existence precludes, at least in part, the necessity *of* their existence. So there's only this, from Guillevic,

Toi, ce crêux
Et définitif.

Moi qui rêvais
De faire équilibre.

—which is, always, the impulse. And "Its material realisation—to use the correct expression—consists basically of a projection of reality, under favourable conditions, on to an irregularly tilting, and consequently distorting, plane of reference" (Boris Vian). And asked why they were written, why they exist, I should have to answer de même que Robbe-Grillet: that I wrote them to discover why I *wanted* to write them.

And now, they're yours.

James Sallis

TISSUE



1: at the fitting shop

Can I help you sir; you seem to have lost your way?

Why yes, thank you, I'm looking for the plumbing shop.

Certainly, sir. That would be, let's see, department fifteen-bee. Up this aisle, turn right, right again at Canned Goods, left and keep bearing left around Magazines till you get to Needlework, go through Hobbies and Crafts and take the corridor down through Exotic Foods, then aisle eighty-three—and you're there. Simple. You might want to pick up a compass at Sporting Goods—that's on your way, swing back right just past Suspenders, big stuffed bear, you'll know it when you're there. Makes things a little easier . . . You *do* have a map?

Uh yes. Yes, thank you very much.

Matson.

I beg your pardon?

Matson: my name. My card. Give me a ring if you need any further help. Number's down there, use one of the house phones.

Thank you very much.

No thanks necessary, son, it's my job.

Ah, pardon me. Is this the plumbing shop—down there?

Ha. Sorry, kid, you're in the wrong wing. Up that way. Garden Tools—next floor up. You can take the escalator at Stamp Redemption, elevator at Cosmetics, or walk up just past Archery. Me, I'd prefer the walk—takes you right smack through Tupperware, that'll put a smile on your face.

Sir . . . Sir? Could you tell me, is this how I get to Garden Tools?

Afraid not, Sonny. You're way off course. Look, you go down there and ask that guy in the pink shirt. He'll show you the way to Power Tools and from there you're okay, got a straight shot. Sure thing.

Ah . . . Sporting Goods? Can you tell me which way to go—right, or left?

Well, I'll tell you. You could take that right down into Tall-n-Slim, then come back around Canned Goods Imported till you get to Stationery and pull another right there. Or you could follow that left fork there on to Belts and Neckties, work your way over toward Lavatories and go down on the Autolift. But if *I* were you, I'd go back along this aisle till I got to Stamp Redemption, then I'd make straight for Lay-Away and cut across Carpets-and-Draperies to Complaints. That's the quickest way to get to Hardware, from here anyhow.

Hardware? That's what I want to ask for, then—fifteen-bee?

You bet.

Sorry, but you gave me a fright. You the new helper?

Ah, no. I'm looking for Hardware. Fifteen-bee.

I see . . . well, you're in the basement, you know.

No, I didn't.

Well, you are.

I see. Could you tell me how to get to Hardware, then?

That'd be fifteen-bee, right?

Yes sir.

Well son, I'm not sure; haven't been up there for months myself. Since last Christmas as a matter of fact. Had to go up for some shopping then, though. Waited till late at night 'fore I'd go up. Near as I can recall . . . you got a map?

Yes sir.

Let's have a look then . . . yeah, that's it. Look, somehow you gotta get back up to Coffeepots-n-Cannisters—that's on Level Four about halfway down Aisle twenty-eight-cee, next to Lingerie, see? You can find that by yourself now, can't you, just look for the nekid women. I mean, you can get there with the map?

Well, I *think* so.

Good boy! Sure you can, that's the spirit. I reckon you'll make out okay; you've got lots of spunk for a youngster, and that's what it takes.

Yes sir. Thank you very much, you've been very helpful.

Don't thank me, son—you'd do the same for me. We gotta help each other out, don't we. I mean, what else is there? Man can't help a guy that's in a jam, what else matters?

Won't you take a seat, son? You look a little tired. Here, this one, with the pink arms. Gives you a good view. Notice how the indirect lighting sparkles on all the chrome fittings—it took four engineers and two interior decorators ten weeks to get that effect. You really do look tired, you know. Shouldn't push yourself that way; there'll be time enough for that when you're older. Take care of yourself, enjoy your youth while you've still got it.

I'm sorry, thank you. I had some trouble getting here.

No wonder, either: that's last week's map you've got there.

O. But this *is* Hardware?

Right!

Department fifteen-bee?

You bet!

Where they sell the penises?

Sure thing!

Finally . . .

Ah, you'll pardon my asking, son, but you do have a certificate? From your parents, I mean, testifying to your age—and of course notes from your teacher and minister. I'm sorry: rabbi. The law requires it, you see, and . . . ah yes, that's right, everything seems to be in order. Now. Just what style did you have in mind?

Well, I really hadn't given it much thought. I don't know a great deal about all this, I'm afraid. Uh, what would *you* recommend?

Well sir. Of course it's difficult to form an *accurate* judgment without knowing the person, I mean *really* knowing him, if you get my meaning. That is to say, the *essential* him—all the little qualities and quirks that make up his whole, his personality. But judging from your *apparent* physique, and from certain mannerisms which I've noted already, I would go

so far as to suggest that one of our *Sassafras Tangles* would not be *too* terribly amiss. And it *is* one of our more *popular* models, quite a *serviceable* style . . . a hunch, of course—but intuition is often to be relied upon, especially when it comes of long experience, familiarity with the product. The shape of the face and buttocks is a particularly useful indication. And the hand of course.

I see. Uh, would it be too forward of me to ask a more, uh, *personal* recommendation?

Ahhhh. Of course, I understand. Well, *personally* I go for the *Polish Sausage*—quite stylish, never out of vogue, the upkeep isn't as demanding as some. Also, formally, I find it compelling: a certain purity of line, simplicity, an essential *honesty*. The floor manager would swear by the *Mushroom Arrow*, though, and that's one of the best recommendations you can get—I mean, from a man who really knows his trade, knows what is available. The *Arrow* particularly fits the jauntier, dashing sort, I feel.

Uh, could I, do you suppose . . .

Certainly sir!

Yes . . . that *is* very nice.

We have one of the finest fitters in the trade. It *is* exquisite, isn't it? Truly exquisite. A man feels proud, with a product like that, the result of a totally *committed* craftsman. Exquisite.

It certainly is. A *Polish Sausage* . . .

Shall I measure you for one then, sir?

Well, I'm not quite sure, I mean I haven't seen any others. Do you suppose I could see a few modeled? Perhaps that would help in the final decision?

Why certainly, sir. *Keiris:* the models!

You are most kind.

A fine choice, sir. The *Mandrake Special,* in red, with full attachments. Possibly the best-tooled model we make, and we make the best in the business. Each one finished by hand—an absolute *triumph* of craftsmanship. No: of *Art!*

I believe that I'll be very happy with it.

Yes sir, you'll be *most* happy with it. I can personally assure you of that. You'll find it quite durable, and with care it will bring you many years—even a lifetime!—of pleasure. Simply return it once a month for adjustment; and should anything go wrong—the least malfunction—we will repair it free of charge or, in more serious cases, replace it entirely. Just like a Zippo.

Zippo?

A cigarette lighter, sir. Like our *Mandrake Special,* the best available.

Ah. I'm too young to smoke, you know. Though perhaps I'll take it up now . . .

Yes sir, that might be nice. Well, I believe that's everything, then. You'll find lubricant, spare screws and washers—also instructions relating to cleaning, maintenance, minor repairs and adjustments—in the complimentary kit that comes along with the *Mandrake Special.* And the usual instructions on how to use it to full advantage, of course. Your parents will be billed to the sum of five dollars and eighty-seven cents; and if you don't mind, sir, I'd like to add that I think they'll be very proud of your choice, very proud indeed.

I hope so. Thank you very much, again, for your advice. You've been *most* helpful.

My job, sir. More than a job: my duty. *Keiris!* My assistant will show you out, sir: he knows a shortcut. And I believe you will be passing Wine Cellar and Smoke Shop on your way, should you like to stop in there for a quick purchase or two before we close.

Yes, perhaps I will.

It's been a pleasure to serve you, sir.

Yes, thank you. I believe you have made me a very happy man this afternoon.

I hope so, sir. We do our best.



2: 53rd american dream

Sunday and just like all the other Sundays: clouds hung in the sky like jowls or wattles, sky gobbled up air, its feet moved in the grass, it was going to rain. The children had already eaten by the time they got up.

In housecoat (brown check, Neiman Marcus) and slippers (gray plaid, Penneys) Mr. More walked into the living room (he looked like a Viking

departing his ship) kicking aside the scattered bones as he came, noticing on them the marks, the scrapings of teeth.

"Damn," he said at last, standing in the center of the room, shaking his great sleepy head. (He looked like a bulls-eye surrounded by the rings of furniture bones children.) "I wish you kids could understand how hard it is to get good help these days, then there wouldn't be any more of this. You're using them up at an awful rate, you know: do you realize this is the third time this month? Bedford Hills, Children, is running out of maids." And then, because the speech was over, because it was nine in the morning, because he'd run out of words, because he looked like a Viking, he said it again. "Damn."

"We're awful sorry, Pop," Tom, the oldest, said. A trickle of blood ran down the hinge of his chin and splashed onto Tonto's palomino. Always a slow eater, littleJim was crouched under the coffee table, gnawing at a knuckle-bone. "But we were hungry, awful hungry. And we got tired of waiting for you and Mom to get up."

Mr. More rubbed thoughtfully, sleepily, at the Brillo-stubble of his cheek and chin; his hand came away scratched to a red rash. "Well, I suppose that's understandable," he said. "But get this awful mess cleaned up before your mother sees it."

An exemplary team (one envisioned now the yapping pursuit, the bringingdown, the snarled devouring) the children set to work, piling bones onto a red wagon, mopping at the blood with Scottowels. Tim, the youngest, leaned in a corner with the towels jammed onto his arms, going *click-click* each time one of the others pulled one off.

Mr. More turned around three times and went back into the bedroom. The book she had been reading last night was lying open on the bed (stories Jewish and Zen, yang and yin, fat and thin) with a broken back, but his wife was nowhere to be found. He walked around the room, opening drawers and doors looking for her, climbed up on a chair to look down into the light fixture (king-of-the-hill on a pile of bodies and pieces of body, a single live cyclops fly stared back at him and waved one of its eyelash legs frantically: *j'accuse, j'accuse*). Finally, catching a glimpse of taffeta foot from his maple perch, he realized she was sleeping under the pillow. He jumped flat-foot over the foot rail—shouting *Hail* and *Hing!*—and came down in a crouch on the Beautyrest.

He reached down and lifted the pillow. "The children ate the maid," he said, and dropped the pillow back.

Minutes later it suddenly lurched and fell onto the floor. His wife stretched slowly and turned over (slowly). "Poor Griselda . . ." she said to the suspended ceiling with all its tiny sound-absorbent holes.

"No, Dear. They ate Griselda last week. This was Olga."

"Poor Olga . . ." She pulled the covers up over her and he could hear her sobbing down in her dark warm cavern. He dived headfirst onto the pillow, got up and went to the closet, which perforce *yawned* open. (A thin slice of darkness being closed on, now, by irregular white boxes ranked on the shelf above, the line of clothes anchored with clothespins to the adjustable bar below.) He thrust his hand, quickly, in and—quickly—out: jaws of clothespins snapped, a hanger fell rattling out of the bundle in his hand. (The closet was now in need of a new lower-left bicuspid.) His hand braved the depths of a box and emerged with a pearl-white shirt. He began dressing, diagonally, from the imported clockwork left sock to the hand-stitched right cuff and the tortoise-shell elephant.

He was standing at the mirror, filing down his teeth, when Tim came and stood in the doorway behind him. Tim was dressed in balls of bread which he had glued all over his body after slicing off the crusts. He looked like a renegade dandelion.

"Okay, Pop, it's all cleaned up," he said. "We saved some for you, though—it's in the frig."

"Right . . . look, I'm not too hungry. Why don't you kids have it later? You can make a sandwich or something." (Page 119: "Parents must sacrifice for their children.")

Tim looked dubious. "We got catsup?"

"Sure thing."

He tilted his head. "Pickles?"

"Big sweet ones." (Page 143: "Often the child is reluctant to accept this sacrifice; a careful air of nonchalance on the parent's part is the most satisfactory, and the most effective, response at these times.")

"It's a deal!" and he shot away, out into the living room to tell the others, leaving a trail of breadcrumbs to find his way back.

In the mirror Mr. More saw his wife bound out of Her bed (36x72: the covers flapped like brown bats), race across the cold Montina squares like a cowardly Queen, and dive like perhaps Ty Cobb beneath His (40x80: the floor was 3-D, no goggles required, sparkly pearls in yellow phlegm). "Kamikaze cantcatchme!" she yelled in transit. Then, sweetly, from under the bed: "You remember when the kids brought that puppy home last week . . . ?"

He opened a drawer and replaced his toothpick-file in the case among the rest, just below the rat's-tail and just above the camel-hair navel-lint brush, slipping it into its loop like a toe into Indian sandals. (His pride was the two-foot-long emery board he'd bought off an elephant manicurist when the circus was in town.)

"Sure do," he said. "And a sweet, soft little thing it was, too."

"Yes, it was, wasn't it?" Her hand crawled out from under the bed, crept across the linoleum—then went scuttling back sideways, back under the bed, leaving behind something that looked like a misanthropic butterfly: her rainbow bra. The games were beginning, the Sunday games. The games. "But they wouldn't eat a thing afterward, remember? They're just going to have to start eating regularly, Bruce." She always pronounced his name to rhyme with *cruise*. "Three meals a day, no snacks, get their vitamins, get their iron. Can't let them wreck their health." Again the hand came creeping out only to dash back to safety. But it left behind, this time, two sharp rubber cones with plastic warts on the ends. The warts, Mr. More thought, were like hard pink raisins. Or like, perhaps, Bing cherries impaled on the ends of ice-cream cones.

"I think you're right," he said to his wife. "I'll talk to them about it this evening." He opened the velvet-lined jade-and-ivory case which squatted with springy S legs on top of the dresser, as though it were about to hop off. He took out his Sunday eyes and put them on. They were made to resemble the eyes of a potato ("The potato is an innocent fruit") and were gold, 23 carats fine (the 24th part being constituted of tiny silver stars). They stuck out from his face like mutant, misshapen corkscrews. He turned his face from side to side, admiring himself in the mirror. "Yes-sir," he said, "first thing this evening." (Page 654: "The casual ease of early evening is the most propitious time for family conference, and the dinner table perhaps affords the most comfortable and accessible opportunity.")

This time the hand *rushed out* (nails clattering on the floor) and *crept back* (dragging its thumb). A *tempo* was being established. Smack in the center of one of the Montina squares now, floating in the phlegm, were two mounds of collapsing flesh. Two dimples with Scripto erasers inside, Mr. More thought. Or demitasse saucers with little prunes on them inside the darker cup-ring. Or a plastic dog dish. A pale smear of blood tracked back toward the bed, mixing already with the phlegm, thinning the fluid, which then overflowed into the room, bearing chunks of pearl that whirled and spun like leaves, clicking against the doors pipes bureau bed shoes.

"And they'll listen, too," Mr. More said. "Or no more TV." (Page 4: "The simplest punishment is often the most effective.") He removed hair eyebrows ears and put on his skullcap (*ibid.*). Then he stood staring in the mirror for several seconds. Finally, he reached up and removed his nose, moving it to the tip of his chin. Much better. *Much* better. A *timbre* to match the *tempo*.

Again the hand: the dash, the creeping retreat. So bold, so coy, so like a

Restoration lady. Lace pants this time: a small pile of cobwebs on the floor. As he watched they dampened, dissolved, joined the blood and phlegm, strings of stuff like seaweed. The floor was yellow going orange, of a starchy consistency. That is to say, *sticky*.

"I think that's enough, don't you, Dear?" Mr. More said. "Shouldn't you stop now?" He walked back to the mirror and, one by one, unsheathed his teeth. They clicked, one by one, into the porcelain sink, almost invisible. White. White.

"Are you ready then, Darling?" his wife said. And then the surrender, the sweet surrender, ahhh, as one by one her legs came sliding across the floor and bumped with soft thuds (like huge spaghettis) into the waterpipes, splashing the orange blood-phlegm up onto the base of the walls to water the orchids blooming there. Sucking sounds. A toe fell off, and the toenail off that. Mr. More picked the nail up and put it in his pocket; it would make a good pick when, later, he played his harp, plucking the strings one by one.

He kicked the legs aside.

"Yes, Darling, I'm ready," he said.

"Then call the children." (Page 456, right before the good parts: "Whenever and wherever possible, satisfy the children's curiosity as to what goes on behind closed, adult doors; at all costs, avoid deepening this curiosity, this wanting-to-belong.")

Mr. More called the children and together they hauled her body up onto the bed—it was covered with cobwebs—and he beat her with the olive branches and peeled willow wands he kept in the cupboard while the children watched and applauded. She screamed magnificently this time; her body oozed phlegm and later gave out great clouds of dust that looked like brown feathers.

Later he played the harp with his teeth and the children applauded again. And after that, with toothpicks and red wax off Gouda cheese, they put her back together again. However. That is to say, all but one hand and a toenail. Mr. More kept the toenail and had a ring made out of it. And they finally found the hand when, late that night, it crawled into bed with one of the children (Tom, the oldest).

That night at dinner (veal in ketchup and chowder in powdered milk) he gave them all a stern talking-to (*op. cit.*). And the next day, Monday (which was, incidentally, Columbus Day), he hired a new maid. She had white white teeth and flat nails, her hips were like a saddle, her nipples like chianti corks.

Genevieve was her name and the children loved her.

Afterword:

à les étrangers

It's March 16, 1970. Ten in the morning, three hours' sleep, the telephone rings. Harlan has somehow, how the hell, found out where I am. He's calling from the other side of the States, has to have this afterword, "Get to a typewriter somehow and get it to me tomorrow." And, Do you have a woman in bed with you; No, she had to go to work—and he's off the line. So I'm sitting there on the bed half-awake trying to remember what he said. I'm not used to being up before two or three, and New York mornings are worse than most. And they're all pretty horrible.

Now I'm at Port Authority on my way out of New York. Thinking about a poem by Tadeusz Różewicz,

I am twenty-four
led to slaughter
I survived

—and something Wallace Stevens said, that when belief in external reality collapses we must feed upon our own minds. But: how long will they last. I just called my agents. No news? No news. I'm on my way out of town again. Are you reachable?

It's two in the afternoon. I'm writing this on Algonquin stationery, which is where I was staying when Harlan found me; on a credit card because I've had no money for months now. The stationery's on a Mickey Spillane novel and there's a book of French poetry, Guillevic, under that. Friends came in from London (where these stories were finally written) yesterday. I'm leaving for the Continent, and Poland, in a few months but have to go to Nashville first, on business. On the way here I stopped off on 42nd Street to buy a new knife. A sign on the shop window read *Ici parlons Français* and the clerk and I spoke Spanish as he showed me the case of knives. An Italian stiletto; you can use the blade-lock to make it work like a switchblade, just as fast. New York terrifies me.

—And that, Harlan, is somehow what it's all about.

Pokój. Miłość.

James Sallis



Introduction to

ELOUISE AND THE DOCTORS OF THE PLANET PERGAMON :

As I have never met Josephine Saxton, author of the *most* remarkable story that follows, I can only report that she is agented (skillfully) by Ms. Virginia Kidd, to date she has had two books published (*The Hieros Gamos of Sam and An Smith* [Doubleday, 1969] and a collection, *Vector for Seven* [Doubleday, 1970]), and she is one of the most chillingly original writers I've ever read. I would tell you more, but I think Ms./Mr. Saxton (you'll understand my confusion momentarily) can say all that need be said of her/himself on her/his own. You see, I have at hand 4 count 'em 4 introductions. Also 4 Afterwords. I've become prudent in my declining years, and so, without further to-do, here is The Five Foot Shelf of Saxton Introductions.

[1] Josephine Saxton is really a man who asks us not to publish his real name. He took this nom-de-plume in order to get published in what he describes as "this Age of The Great Mother." The few details we can publish reveal that he keeps a grocery store, plays bowls at the weekends and is married with a teenage daughter who plans to be a secretary. He has done no other kind of work, having inherited the store, and goes to Blackpool for his holidays every year. His novel *The Hieros Gamos of Sam and An Smith* came out in August '69 from Doubleday, to be followed soon by *The Weltanschauung of Mrs. Amelia Mortimer and Friends.* He says he does not know where he gets his ideas from, they just come to him, as he weighs out dry goods.

[2] Josephine Saxton is the Grandma Moses of the new writers, having just celebrated her 77th birthday. She has been married nine times and has fifteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She has finally given up the idea of Marriage As A Way Of Life and has taken vows in the monastery of Kali-Lung-Gompoo in Tibetan Turkestan where she writes novels and stories in between meditating. She began writing only four years ago to fill in the winter evenings and to prevent herself from becoming a cabbage. She describes herself as "phenomenally ugly—four feet six inches in my naked bunions, bald as a melon—and I didn't get my figure back after the twins, which were the tenth." She writes to us

with fascinating hints of developing powers under her Teacher at the monastery, things like seeing life on other planets, killing yaks ten miles away by a *thought* and levitation.

Her favourite food is *tsampa* and her only ambition now is to get herself off the cycle of birth and rebirth.

She sends a special blessing to all her readers, and has written out a special ticket for them to attach to her prayer wheel.

[3] Josephine Saxton is thirty-four and married to a genius painter and has three children, one boy is going to be a TV comic, the second boy a poet and drag-stripper, and the girl a prima donna ballerina. She has done many of the things one reads of writers except travel, but this will be rectified in due course, a good start having been made with the trip to the States in August 1969. She is a native of Halifax in Yorkshire and identifies with Emily Bronte ever since visiting Haworth parsonage and feeling *haunted* at the age of thirteen. She bakes her own bread and likes eating honey and slices of raw lemon. She likes watching vegetables grow, lace curtains, and brochures for new electric cookers. She has a shocking past, a blissful present and a dark future full of dreams.

She had no higher education to speak of, and is very grateful for same; it has left her free to prefer Jung to Freud for one thing.

She is the kind of person who plants a few rose bushes, but arranges them in a symbolic pattern so they will grow well.

[4] *Josephine Saxton.*

Date of birth 11th June 1935. Born in Halifax Yorkshire, one of the last two towns to abolish the gibbet, and the town with the highest suicide rate in Great Britain, built in a hollow of the Pennines amidst wild moors, neighbouring Bronte country. Left school at age sixteen having arranged to meet my schoolfriends at age twenty-one, to celebrate my first book. Became: a solicitor's clerk; an inspector of woollen socks; a cashdesk assistant in a delicatessen; and then the cook and fish-filleter with the same firm. Then a brewer's clerk, learning to drink half a pint of undiluted rum with my morning coffee at age seventeen, unaccountably having a nervous breakdown, left to go and chalk-mark round patterns in a clothing factory whilst painting scenery for repertory at night. Went to another brewery, most Dickensian, sitting on high stool and bearing the brunt of wit of the sour old clerks; nothing to drink for juniors there. Spent a winter at the seaside being a chambermaid and reading Aleister Crowley, was followed everywhere by a baldheaded man with a hatchet, one kitchen porter. (I am not being facetious, just irrelevant.) Then I did eighteen months in Halifax Art School, got my exams and had a row about dirty paint brushes

and next day had become a bus conductress with a studio, which lasted for a year. I then married a painter, having had a spell as an artist's model at a rival art school, whilst trying to get further exams at night. Settled down in a cottage on a moor, wrote a play in between feeding the baby, and then "A Taste of Honey" came out, almost word for word what I had just written. Alas! Fell in love with an old friend and ran away with him one night and settled in a seventeenth century mansion and had two more babies, wrote some stories. Set up as a machine embroiderer, sold a few, decided it wasn't me.

I have omitted many other jobs: tailoress, shop assistant, lavatory cleaner in a cinema, mill-hand. I also got but did not pursue a job as cook in a Scottish Castle. Moved to Leicester because of Colin's job (he is a painter and lectures in Fine Art) and found myself in a battery of breeding huts known as suburban dwelling-houses. Still here but my endurance is running out. One day I said:

"I will write a novel;" and did so, but it wasn't much good, wrote another, then the third, which was published by Doubleday, followed by my fourth novel. So, fifteen years later than I thought, I have done what I wanted to do on leaving school. Things are going on from there, writing is it.

Interests.

All branches of psychology, favouring C. G. Jung.

All religions, favouring Eastern philosophies.

Cooking, sewing, gardening. Reading anything, biology, science, novels, anything.

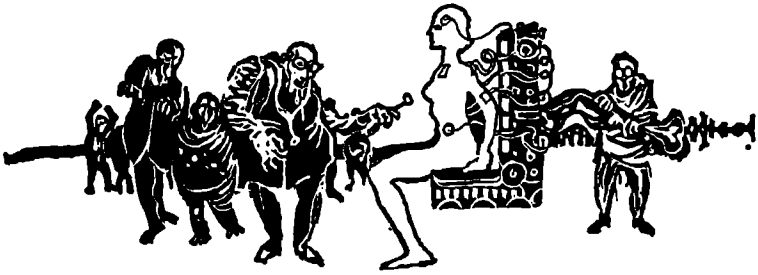
Occultism and esoterica, collecting books on these subjects.

Favourite authors include Patrick White, Iris Murdoch, C. F. Keppler, A. S. Byatt, Thomas Hinde, Mervyn Peake, C. S. Lewis. Hero figure is William Blake.

Recreations: Sunbathing, swimming, walking, being on mountains, by lakes, on cliffs. Never watch TV and hardly go to the cinema. Love dancing and music, especially Indian music and Messiaen and some pop. Never experimented with drugs and no longer like being drunk but enjoy parties, and entertaining.

Aspirations: To write better and more, to travel and find somewhere congenial to live in a warm climate where there are friendly natives.

To write good poetry. I have written stacks but I am too garrulous to be a good poet . . .



Josephine Saxton

ELOUISE AND THE DOCTORS OF THE PLANET PERGAMON

Elouise sat in the waiting room of the Out Patients of Central Theatre, dressed in a short white gown. She had been waiting for a long time and wished that someone would come to fetch her; she had read all the advertisements on the wall and found none of personal interest, all of them being for drugs with unusual side effects.

A nurse entered the room. He wore a scarlet mask that covered all his face except one eye, and Elouise knew that this signified infectious carcinoma of the skin. She did not shrink with fear or disgust; she had played with children years ago who had that disease and it seemed she had resistance to it.

"The doctors will see you now," said the nurse, so Elouise rose to follow.

He led her down the corridor past mysterious doors and flights of stairs until they came to thick drawn curtains over which shone a small red light. He pushed her through the curtains where she stood alone for a moment. "Escape!" occurred to her automatically. She decided that escape was not only impossible considering how important she was this day, but it was almost undesirable; curiosity made her stand her ground ready for the next experience, whatever it might be. She heard her name announced and felt herself led onto the stage of Central Theatre and then locked by force-field into the examination throne. Before her the theatre was filled with people. They were the Council of Doctors, and they numbered about a hundred; all experts.

She took out from her handbag her mirror, observed her glistening pale hair and shining dark eyes and golden silky skin. Then she turned the little mirror onto the audience and was satisfied that many gave out squeaks of pain at the flash of light. Unusual if none among them had suffered from some form of iritis.

The male nurse turned to Elouise and above the babble of voices he asked her if she had anything to say before the examinations began.

"I want you to release my mother from the prison hospital. She acted from the highest principles and best motives, considering the fact that she is deemed schizophrenic." Elouise felt very dutiful saying these words and also rather foolish. Mother was too mad to know where she was and since recent events had slipped completely out of reach of other minds. The only response she got to her hollow request was a ripple of amusement for in any case her mother had committed an unpardonable crime in allowing her only child to remain healthy until the age of twenty. It was almost unheard-of; supremely antisocial.

There was a shouted conversation about Elouise's radiography reports, blood tests, metabolic rates. Everyone was reassured that the pathologists were completing a list of test results containing information concerning the patient's haemoglobin, Erythrocyte sedimentation, haemotocrit reading, C.S.F., sputum, urine, feces, gall-bladder contents. Someone screamed hysterically that the patient had a fantastic renal function and someone else remarked loudly that he had never ever come across such a perfect specimen of marrow. Someone maintained that he still thought that the result of his test would reveal occult blood in the stool, but his colleagues were dubious. Silence was called for and then the formal examinations were announced. Elouise hoped that they would not be as unpleasant as some of the tests already performed on her, and then remembered the last coherent thing her mother had said to her before being taken away.

"Don't let them get you down. Never fear a thing." And Elouise simply sat and waited, quite relaxed. She took a good look around the theatre; great windows opened onto the surrounding forecourt, and inside row on row of doctors flopped down on padded seats. Behind her the backdrop, immediately before her the step that separated the rostrum from the auditorium, and in the ceiling very bright lights. No television equipment; this conclave was *in camera* although surely all Pergamon knew of her notorious self by now? She looked again through the windows across the flat land outside the forecourt. There were no other buildings to be seen but there were distant groups of people like herds of cattle browsing.

Matron bustled in from the wings. Immediate and profound silence ensued and Matron spoke. An efficient voice; a long-faced voice; a voice that was *we* not *I*.

"Who will examine the patient first?"

In the auditorium a man stood up, hand raised.

"Please Matron, I will."

"Very well then, proceed. And then take your turns in orderly fashion."

Matron left the stage and Elouise looked at her first doctor.

Like a poppy unfolding, uprose the thin hairy body with green pallor at the neck and a corolla of bright red hair; he waved towards her through the field of his friends, hypnotic and delicate. What wasting disease or chronic glandular disorder caused his appearance Elouise did not know and neither cared; he held no interest for her and inspired no fear.

"I got your lumbar puncture report," he simpered as he approached. She cringed at the memory; manometer, gallipot and syringe. Unpleasant. But that was past; what now?

"Cross your knees."

Elouise crossed her knees and he opened a large briefcase which was fitted out with a tray of instruments. He took a soft hammer and hit her gently just below her patella. Elouise's foot came up and kicked the doctor under the chin which caused a ripple of laughter and some perfunctory applause in the audience. The doctor slowly moved his head away but showed no other reaction to the blow. He turned his attention to the contents of his case, checking and counting. He had a camel-hair paintbrush number six, three test tubes containing mystery-substances, three small plastic envelopes, a sharp pin and a tuning fork. This tuning fork he twanged loudly and looked up into Elouise's face and coyly asked her if she thought it in tune.

"Sounded all right to me," she said.

"Good, good," he murmured professionally and without warning stabbed her in the calf with his sharp pin. Elouise yelped and the doctor laughed and so did his colleagues.

"One all," someone shouted.

He opened a test tube and wet his finger and dipped it in the powder therein.

"Taste that."

She tasted.

"It's salt."

"And this?"

"Sugar."

"Correct absolutely." He put the third tube back into his case.

He then opened one of the sealed envelopes and offered it to her beautiful nose.

"It smells of flowers," she breathed.

"And this?"

"Corruption."

"Too right it does," he whiffed and hastily put it away.

The doctor stretched out his thin pale hand and delicately lifted the

hem of her short white gown. He took his camel-hair brush number six and touched her buttock with it where it flattened out on the chair.

"What does that feel like?"

"You might say the delicate touch of the wing of a newly born moth at dusk or you might say you were tickling my arse."

"Precisely."

She looked at him closely; it seemed that his eyes were made of plastic and that they continued into his head in a solid mass rather than that they were globes in sockets as other eyes. And yet he saw.

"Close your eyes," he requested.

"Stretch out your arms sideways."

Elouise did as she was asked but tensed herself against an expected tickle beneath the arm.

"Bring your index fingers together rapidly." Elouise did.

The doctor stood up, putting away his toys. He turned toward the audience.

"She has nerves of steel and all her senses in working order!" And he surprised nobody with this information. Matron bustled onto the stage.

"Kindly leave the stage," she boomed at him. He floated away, defeated and disappointed.

"Next doctor please."

In the hush that fell on the spectators a wheezing could be heard, and the click of a gold pill-box as the next examining doctor took a dose of digitalis to stave off an acute heart attack. Purple-faced he fiddled with his stethoscope, his clubbed fingers having difficulty in grasping the rubber tube. He came to listen at her gently moving chest, tapped her sternum and ambled off, shaking his head. He drew no applause and little comment. Matron called the next doctor. Elouise looked out of the windows as she waited for the nurse to check a trolley of instruments. She noticed the small crowd of people drawing nearer.

"Swabs, vulsellum forceps, uterine sound, Cusco's vaginal speculum, bivalve and duckbill specula, obstetric cream." Elouise winced with distaste for all the metal looked cold and unfriendly. Surely her cervical smears had revealed all that was necessary about her reproductive organs? But of course, this occasion was a kind of ritual, a public showing of her amazing health. She relaxed and watched the doctor specializing in gynecology approach. A thickset, bull-necked fellow, he shuffled down the pink plastic steps and heaved himself up the step onto the stage. He scratched his arms constantly, setting his teeth together, flexing his chin against the sensations of extreme irritation and the pain of tearing skin. White flakes of epidermis and then dermis, blood-spotted, fell, floated conspicuously in the

bright light. And he muttered that at least his asthma had abated, the while psoriasis ate him up; he creamed his forearms from a little tube and looked around for his instruments and his patient. Elouise looked at his inflamed and oozing arms, and reminded herself that infection was not the cause of such sores. The doctor worked the lever at the side of the chair until it became a couch with Elouise lying on it. He took a clean folded sheet from the bottom shelf of the trolley and cast it across Elouise, then folded it back to cover all but that portion of her body from the naval down.

"Knees up. Let them fall apart."

Under the sheet Elouise examined her fingernails, gave a small sigh of impatience and boredom and cringed slightly as the cold metal speculum slid into her vagina. Painlessly she lay, ideas forming in her mind, stimulated by the cutting-off of visual impressions of any consequence. This was no way to live life, under a sterile sheet, with a lifeless instrument poking about inside one! There must be other better ways of existing!

The doctor pressed a heavy hand down flat on Elouise's belly and peered up his speculum with a curiosity more normally reserved for medical students taking their first look at a cervix. Nothing unusual met his eye excepting the moist and living glowing health of that smooth muscle. He turned a tiny wheel that opened her womb. Waiting walls, the perfect place to begin a life was all he saw. He left that place, too late for him, no business of his, there was nothing to cure. He packed his things and left it to musclely Matron to uncover Elouise, hoist the chair to an upright position. She saw through the windows that the crowd of people outside was now at the great doors, and at that moment someone banged to be let in. A murmur of annoyed disturbance came from the doctors who already knew the diagnosis of their patient and were anxious to get all the formal examinations over with quickly, so that they could go and play golf. Once it had been decided what was to be done with the illegally healthy girl, life could go on as usual. And now there was a disturbance at the door. Someone went to open the door, someone shouted that the examinations were *in camera*, someone else said, "Oh what the Hell."

The doctors groaned aloud at the sight that met their eyes as the doors swung open. The Congenitals again! And marching on the Theatre, of all things. Oh dear!

Gibbering and murmuring, there they stood, the Congenitals' delegation, the annual bid for attention and help. Swaying and twitching, wheeling and crutching, there they helplessly stood, demanding. Slobbering and jerking, moaning and hiccuping, leering and dragging, they had come once more for a subject to sacrifice to Good Luck, their only hope in life. They

had heard of Elouise, and wanted her. Only the sacrifice of this perfect body could do anything for them, they had become convinced.

Elouise listened to the arguments going on at the door and began to realize what fate might be in store for her. She returned to her new idea, making efforts all the time not to become involved with fear. She did not know exactly what they would do with her, even if they got her; therefore she decided not to dwell on the subject. But there were drops of sweat between her eyebrows, and they shone like glass beads in the bright light. Poppy-head the nerve-specialist noticed them and marvelled. He had thought her steadier than that, although sweating was far from abnormal under the circumstances!

At the door the Congenitals were led by a man with a head almost as big as his own thorax, the skin on his face having the appearance of severe scalding. A woman came to stand by him, her method of locomotion consisting of sidewise leaps accompanied by upthrown arms and a glottal cry. Next to her came a blind man dragging a child on a wheeled trolley. The child howled constantly from ulcers caused by its own unceasing streams of urine and feces, and a quivering patch of spinal cord that grew outside its body. A youth with a cleft palate and hare-lip carried an infant girl whose spine continued joined to her flesh down to the backs of her knees, and that ended in a naked pink tail that bent out like a hook. Behind them a woman lay twitching and foaming in the throes of a severe epileptic fit and close by knelt an emaciated youth with a cyanotic complexion and vacant eyes who clutched a hairless dwarf of uncertain age and sex. Deaf-mutes, blind, partially paralyzed, deformed and mentally deficient of every kind abounded. A man looking like a lemon on toothpicks, so thin his limbs so huge his trunk, stood there and stared in at Elouise, his dull eyes longing sadly for things he did not understand.

An officious looking doctor began to ask questions of the delegation, but Matron approached, pushed him behind her and began a formal interview.

"Why have you come?" she asked in a disapproving manner.

"We want you to give us the benefit of medical advances, comfort and money to live, not having had an answer to last year's question."

The words were spoken with little inflection as if learned by heart without understanding or hope.

"What *was* last year's question?" asked Matron impatiently.

"Why did you let us live?"

"Oh that! We told you before. It is our duty to preserve life."

"But our lives are useless seas of pain and endurance. We are neither use nor ornament."

"Well, everyone is sick on Pergamon, it's the law. Don't be so self-pitying."

"But we can't earn our livings, we are a neglected group."

Cries of "Sacrifice" began to rise from the Congenitals, although many of them had no wit to know what it was they demanded. They only knew they had demands, so demanded. Rights, rights!

Elouise was evolving a plan out of her ideas. The more she saw of the Congenitals, the less she wished to be given to them, whether they would kill her, make her Queen, or both. Elouise was lonely, she had always been lonely, even her mother had been too sick at times to communicate with properly; Elouise wanted to go and live in a place where there were other perfectly healthy beings.

She thought of the distant past of Pergamon's history, the time when everyone had perfect health through annual doses of Ananias McCallister's Elixir. Ananias McCallister, the Devil himself. His elixir had been the turning point in Pergamon's way of life, for the planet had become so full of long-living healthy people that they had stood almost shoulder to shoulder, feeding themselves on artificial protein that caused foul flatus that nevertheless their healthy bowels dealt with so efficiently that the outer atmosphere had eventually become a dense mass of floating sewer-gas, exploding mightily as meteors ran white-hot through it; the planet was even yet covered with massive circular marks like faery-rings where fire had come booming down out of the sky; inconsequential dragon-coughs turning people to potash and nitrogen: varoom varoom, uncandylike!

The new culture arisen out of those few remaining was disease-oriented; health led to death, obviously.

Elouise's mother had told stories of other planets where people managed to live healthy lives and provide real food for themselves and keep the air clean and pure. Neither did they quarrel or take advantage of each other. Elouise sighed and closed her eyes.

"I am a throwback to better times than these," she thought.

The Congenitals had been asked to wait outside until the examinations were over and an official decision reached. The doctors began to confer, shuffling reports in triplicate, glancing idly, knowing that each prognosis stated: "PERFECT HEALTH." Nurses brought in refreshments. Cocktail snacks and whiskey in cut-glass tumblers were passed round, the atmosphere relaxed somewhat and epic tales of golf began. But one doctor insisted that he had not had his turn; he demanded the right to examine the patient personally, so Matron succumbed and allowed him the stage.

"I shall need a lighting technician," said the doctor, an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist.

Elouise was not pleased at this interruption to her meditations. To accomplish her plan she needed to be left alone. But there would be no use in grumbling, she had best cooperate.

The doctor dragged behind him a wheeled trolley like a golf-bag, and this he proceeded to fiddle with, trying to undo the buckles as best he could, but he was hampered by an unusual spinal stiffness. Elouise thought he probably wore surgical corsets to support a slipped disc or some crumbling bone disease, for every time he tried to bend he winced, drawing in air through rotten teeth.

"Nurse!" he blared out and the nurse drifted onto the stage, dressed as if for an operation, masked and gowned and sexless. Between them the doctor and nurse set out all the instruments incongruously on the floor, and the audience chatted and drank. Elouise watched one doctor who was so twisted with arthritis that he had to lie on the floor every time he wished to refresh himself with whiskey; to put liquid in his mouth while standing was an impossibility. One of his colleagues rebuked him for drinking alcohol but the arthritic doctor said that while it worsened his disease it was a good analgesic. He countered also with the information that he never smoked tobacco as it was a carcinogen; the other doctor in a haze of pipe-smoke maintained it was not a carcinogen. Thus they made their heavy jokes and then the doctor on the stage called for the lights to be dimmed. The audience considered this to be an inconvenience but nurses came to draw blinds over the windows, and the Theatre lights went dim. Elouise saw the word "Exit" marked over a small door at the back of the auditorium, a door that she had never noticed before.

"Damn," said the doctor, unable to see anything at all. "Lights up." The lights came brighter, and between them the doctor and nurse fitted a new battery to his headlamp.

"Lights!" he called again, and in the cone of light that his own lamp shed he looked closely at Elouise.

"Open your mouth."

She opened her mouth only to find it clamped open with a Doyen's gag.

"Say 'Ah'."

"Aaaaaaggggghhhhh!"

Saliva dribbled down Elouise's chin and the nurse leapt forward to dab daintily with a bit of gauze. The doctor peered and poked around down Elouise's throat, and then, using a nasal speculum he performed a detailed anterior rhinoscopy.

"You've got a bogy up your nose," he announced.

"Aaaaaggggghhhh!"

He began chanting a quiet liturgy which the nurse took down in short-

hand on the areas of white starched linen and cotton available to him or her.

"No rhinitis, no sinusitis, no epistaxis, no polypi, no pharyngitis, no tonsillitis, no adenoidal hypertrophy." He stopped for a moment, hand to forehead. Then he picked up Eve's tonsil snare in one hand and Gottstein's adenoid curette in the other and threw them on the floor, turned stiffly around, bowed one inch to the audience and left the stage. The nurse unscrewed the clamp from Elouise's mouth and handed her a bunch of surgical gauze and scraped all the instruments into a heap and threw them into the wheeled bag. As the nurse left he or she turned to sneer at the patient from under the mask.

"Such beautiful instruments would be disused museum pieces if we were all like you." The whisper was bitter, the voice snagged up on negative emotion. Elouise rubbed her cheek where the clamp had bitten, blew her nose on the surgical gauze, disliking its scratchiness, and cleared her throat. She could now continue with her inner idea. Time was running short.

She relaxed every muscle, closed her eyes, mouth, ears. She began to say silently her newly invented formula.

"I want to be free. I want to go where there are others like me."

She repeated it slowly and rhythmically, this meaningful mantra, unperturbed by the sounds that came to her through her own wall of silence.

"Psychosomatic appeasement on a very high level," and much laughter.

"Well, stranger things have happened."

"Their luck might really improve if they got her . . ."

A cell in Elouise's head echoed with thoughts of what might happen if she was given.

Torn limb from limb and eaten.

Burnt alive.

Put out for wild dogs.

Left to starve on a guarded mountain.

Made Queen.

Put to breeding.

These thoughts disturbed her much and then she recalled her mother saying:

"Don't let them get you down. Never fear a thing."

But her mother had not known a situation such as this, it was not the same, this was desperate, urgent, terrible. Yes, the plan must go through, somehow.

She got on with her idea, acquainting herself intimately with everything happening in her body at that time. It was very noisy, what with thundering and rushing and squeaking and drumming, so that she hardly heard

the fresh banging at the door and the sounds of impatience from the doctors. A delegation of Starving had arrived, begging for money and food. Elouise had seen the Starving before; two large eyes, sometimes minus lenses, great belly with umbilical hernia from inward pressure of gas, sticks of arms and legs, ulcerated skin, blackpatched and grayflaky suppuration. There were many Starving and they lived in the dustbowls, scratching and whimpering day and night. The doctors and the normal sick gave charity quite often, but sometimes delegations came for more.

Elouise cut off her compassion, heard the doctors writing out checks and orders for food. If Ananias McCallister had been alive to see this scene . . .

In the forecourt.

The Congenitals and the Starving were mixing with each other, exchanging grief for grief, displaying their twisted and unfed children to one another, each father vying to be most deserving of sympathy for how little he could do to help his family. A wall was chosen for the banging of heads, and those that could not find a space used the floor. Those that could not bend down rent their hair, and wailing and whimpering and beating of the air and breasts began at first chaotically and then in rhythm. Feeling was running high. Even with charity checks, what kind of a life was it? The question went up into the fetid air of the forecourt, rising and falling, passed about, reiterated. The doctors would have worried at the atmosphere out there had it been caused by any other groups of people. But need they worry at enfeebled threats of people whose talents lay in basketwork and knitting, the making of felt pictures and the reading of Braille? Who among them could cast steel into sword, or spin a perfect gun-barrel? Which of them could lift a sword or aim straight?

Secure, the doctors drank their whiskey, argued lightly whether Elouise should be given to sacrifice or not, and aired their personal theories about what should happen to her otherwise.

Elouise heard nothing of what they said. She appeared to be asleep.

. . . . . .

Encapsulated, capable of saying *I*.

. . . . . .

The rays of the sun lit up the scene in the forecourt, making it seem as if a Spring Festival were in full swing. A doctor predicted that no good would ensue from the happenings that day and a big man with a face like a bird said:

"Don't lose your cool."

. . . . . .

Enclosed in the cavern of her own immaculate body, Elouise began to examine the walls. In a corridor of ridges there were waving plants, cilia

reaching and retracting, snatching at the short white gown, trying to thrust her out. They banged at her knees.

"Back! Turn back! Foreign body!" they screeched at her, but she with her newfound Will swept on, and the floor heaved but still she slid in the slime toward a division in the corridor. The left-hand fork would do fine, she decided. On and on. Into smaller passages she made her way and then stopped and fumbled in her handbag. Oh! Handbags! What a pest they were, one could never find anything. Paper and bottles and clips and mirrors and letters and make-up and manicure sets. She selected a nail file and a powder compact. Then, like many another freedom fighter before her she began her campaign by writing on the walls. Taking her nail file she scratched the words:

"I WANT TO BE FREE. I WANT TO GO WHERE THERE ARE OTHERS LIKE ME."

Mucus bubbled up around her feet, blood ran down the walls, she opened the powder compact and scattered the contents about in the air that blew first one way, then back. The walls closed in on her, there was a rush of wind echoing, and a mighty explosion.

.....

The doctors had finished the whiskey, had come to a provisional decision about the patient. A doctor handed some papers to Matron who prepared to announce.

Suddenly Elouise coughed a great racking, whooping, echoing cough. A triumphal arch of sputum and blood leapt from between her parted lips followed by a cloud of fine powder. She coughed again, clutching her throat and a dribble of blood marred her chin. Sweat poured from her pallid skin and she trembled as if in a fever.

There was a short and profound silence before an immense uproar broke out in the auditorium with clattering and screaming and the breaking of glass and the scraping of feet. A colostomy bag burst onto the pink plastic floor and was ground and spread by a gouty foot. The great doors opened and in swept a crowd of Starving and Congenitals. They saw the blood on the short white gown and became enraged, Starving and Congenital alike catching the mood, breaking and scrambling, beating and flailing with their skin and bone. Crutches made fine skull-breakers, glass eyes beneath the foot broke legs and hips, leg-calipers broke calcified teeth and a hearing-aid choked effectively and doubtless sonorously one who would soon have died from cirrhosis of the liver.

Elouise became suddenly panic-stricken; it seemed that the sight of her self-induced sickness did not procure the acceptance into normal society that she had hoped. How had she judged wrong? The urge to cough was

frightful but with all her strength she screamed out: "Someone release the force-field on this bloody chair!"

Poppy-head the nerve-specialist came wavering forward and threw the vital switch and she stood up to run but he stood grinning down at her, grotesquely pretty and obviously angered.

"You betrayed yourself!" he whinnied, lower teeth displayed in resentment.

"I don't know what you mean! I'm in mortal danger, can't you see?"

"But listen . . ."

She did not listen, saw only his face come near in earnest discourse; brought up her foot with force to his groin which made it seem that he fell beneath a blade, harvested along with the corn.

She ran breathless and retching across the stage and found herself in a small storeroom at the end of a corridor. Too late she saw that she should have made for the "Exit" door at the back of the Theatre. The shelves were stacked with rows of drugs and chemicals and cylinders and wads; she sorted blindly through them, shutting her ears to herself. Big action was what was called for; some sweeping, cleansing, final act!

Potassium cyanide capsules.

Oh! what a beautiful blue jar, what a fine decoration of skull and crossbones. She clutched up the heavy jar as if it were her baby and left the storeroom and soon found the steps she hoped for; those that led up to the gantry in the flies. Up there she had a fine view of both stage and auditorium. The chaos and mess and smell and everything down there were utterly disgusting.

She shook out the little glass bubbles so that they fell cracking onto the floor beneath, dropped the jar and ran as fast as her failing breath would allow, gown clutched over nose and mouth until she finally found her way outside into the pure fresh air, having banged the door shut, close, behind her. The last sounds she heard from that place were screams of mass-death and an accusation against herself that she was in league with Ananias McCallister.

"Superstition! Corruption! Plotters!" she countered raspingly as she ran. How different the evening from the morning. The day had started calm and golden; the evening descended triumphant and scarlet.

She passed the barren gravelly land and came to open fields where she lay down to rest; all her body was in pain and distress, every sensation of malfunctioning totally new so that much harder to bear. She was listening to her own confused thoughts of how perhaps she had done her job too well, scored the message too deep, and wondering what to do next and where to go; thinking that to rescue her mother and hide away would be

futile. Her mother would soon die anyway, and had she not bid for freedom? Someone approached and flopped down on the grass beside her, startling her into terror and convulsions of coughing. It was Poppy-head the nerve-specialist.

"But you were in the . . ."

"No I was not. I rose from your attack and left the place immediately. I thought you might do something horrible, I foresaw it."

She was too fatigued to move, lay back instead weeping and pleading, explaining herself pitifully.

He ignored what she was saying and spoke over her.

"You realize of course that you would have come to no harm if you had remained calm and waited?"

"No, no, they would have killed me . . ."

"Not at all. We had decided that you could act as a kind of living fetish for them, provided that they did you no harm. That way they would have been satisfied, you would have been accounted for. We decided that it was not your fault for being so damnably healthy, but your mother's."

The dew was falling, making everything damp and chill.

"What shall I do now? I am so lonely, there is no place for me."

"I suppose you feel like a special case," said Poppy-head, rising from the ground, fingering his damp backside dubiously.

"But I am, I am, I'm different . . ."

He turned away silently, making it plain he thought that no excuse for what she had shown herself capable of; self-betrayal, mass murder.

"But they were so disgusting," she murmured, knowing now that whatever she said was irrelevant.

She slept the night on the cold ground, disturbed by coughing and vomiting and dreams that she could not recall when she opened her eyes on the dawn. Her body was racked with sensations that she guessed to be pneumonia. She pressed her hot forehead into the cool herbs and then passed time watching a poppy unfold in the rising sun. She did not pick it but simply watched it.

"I only wanted to be free. I never meant to hurt anyone."

Her words were blown away on the airs of Pergamon.

Afterword:

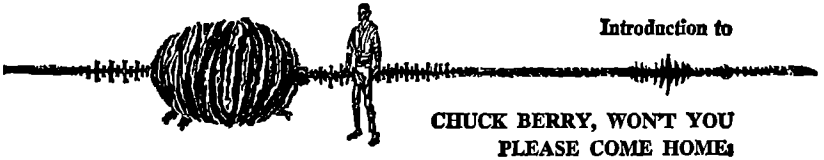
[1] Four fifths of human nature is submerged. It is time we discovered what it is that keeps us afloat and what it is drags us under.
[2] All you need is Love.

[3] Great ideologies are mass psychoses. To depart from the true Self brings disaster.

[4] Firstly I should say that I find it almost impossible to write about my writing, feeling that if there is anything needs saying about a story, then the story is a failure. But. This story was one of those that worked from the outside, in. The title came first, one morning I found myself saying it aloud, apropos nothing. Then episodes rose to mind, and were written down, I knew only that there was a story, not what it was, or why. I sorted from my thoughts those things I sensed to be part of the *Elouise* pattern, and when there were enough I rewrote, cut, expanded, put it away awhile, then rewrote again. The thing was then divorced from its origins in the unconscious mind, and had become discussable from a literary point of view. It was finally made into itself through the perspicacious promptings of an editor who knows about writing stories. It is only now that I can say I have written a story about the struggle for personal freedom, with a moral to the effect that *anything* gained at the expense of other people's discomfort will be invalid. On one level *Elouise* is the Nazi ideal of superman, and how that experiment went wrong by confusing politics with the means to freedom, which it can never be. It is also about acceptance of Self and the dangers both of egotism and identifying with any mass of people. But if that was what I had wanted to say, only, *per se,* I could perhaps have written a straight story on those lines. There is always something, which can not be said in any other way, by me, except in the story as it comes. The images are not symbols only of something else, they are symbols period. Which brings me much nearer to painting than writing, for this story. The words of a Sufi Master put very neatly what I always hope to achieve with this kind of work:

"Some of the stories are mere wonder-tales, but others . . . are of the strange type known by the Sufis as 'illustrative history': that is to say, a series of events are concocted to point a meaning connected with psychological processes."

If there is anything worth knowing in a story like *Elouise,* it will go straight into the reader's mind without necessarily being understood or analyzed in an intellectual manner.



Introduction to

CHUCK BERRY, WON'T YOU PLEASE COME HOME

For those too square to have any roots in American music, Chuck Berry was one of the germinal influences who, between 1955 and 1960, set the tone and meter for the rhythm & blues idiom. It is fairly safe to say that no one playing today—and that includes The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and whoever comes next this week—got to his sound without going by way of Chuck Berry. Blues were (and still *are*, but most importantly *were*) Chuck Berry's ultimate bag, and putting him alongside B. B. King, Otis Redding, Big Miller, Muddy Waters and Lightnin' Hopkins should draw nothing but nods of approval from students of the Greats. But it was with his upbeat compositions that he made his biggest splash. "Maybellene," "Johnny B. Goode," "Memphis," "Roll Over Beethoven," "Reelin' and Rockin'" and "Sweet Little Sixteen" created a Berry sound that between '55 and '58 made him the single biggest name in R&B. Even today Berry is fine to hear. Not just my opinion: when the Stones go on tour and take along music for their own pleasure, everything Chuck Berry ever recorded goes with them.

Once having been with Chuck Berry, it is impossible to give any credence to Bobby Sherman. Red beans and rice is a diet in no way enhanced by bubble gum.

But I digress.

The Chuck Berry of the story that follows is in no way related to the Chuck Berry of the amplified guitar. But the latter inspired the former in a deranged way that could only have been chronicled by a madman. Segue to Ken McCullough, on a rising note of hysteria.

McCullough I found at the University of Colorado in 1969. Poet, roustabout, esthete, musicologist, writer, madman. He came into my class and I made the error of quoting Herman Melville: "No great and enduring volume can ever be written on the flea, though many there be who have tried it."

Madman went back to his cubby and set out to prove me wrong. Well, Chuck Berry ain't a flea, but close enough. Herman may have been wrong.

McCullough, madman, strikes me as a likely bet for stardom. If he ever gets his head straight. He has a sense for fiction that is platinum-bound by the rigors of poetry; good poetry, muscular poetry. He turns the phrases just so, and his mind wanders down the metaphorical byways with considerable style and grace. The way McCullough treats prose reminds me

of a meaningful quotation from an otherwise undistinguished and fearsomely ponderous essay by Graham Greene on the work of Fielding and Sterne: ". . . prose used in fiction as Webster and other Jacobean playwrights used it, as a medium of equal dignity and intensity to poetry, indeed as poetry with the rhythm of ordinary speech."

As this will be McCullough's first wide-circulation publication, I suspect it would be presumptuous of me to gambol on through fields of verbiage, proclaiming his wondrousness. Rather would I back off and let you hear McCullough in his own voice, first as autobiographer, then as writer of cunning fixated fictions. I will merely add that if you savor this first taste of his work, that you somehow scrounge a copy of the Winter 1971 issue of *The Iowa Review*, wherein a delight titled "His Loneliness, the Winner" lies waiting for your attention. But till you can, or until McCullough shucks off the lamebrain dreams of Hollywood playacting and gets down to what he does fantastically well—writing mad things with the pen of a poet—here is a complete bio and biblio, and a creature named Chuck Berry.

"Born Staten Island, N.Y., July 18, 1943 at 9:38 A.M., the first of five children to a marathon runner father from Derma, Mississippi, and a Canadian mother from a long line of centenarians. My father was in the USAF during my formative years so travelled frequently to many podunk sooty places—the best of which was Newfoundland where we spent six years—maggoty folk songs, drunks pissing on your tricycle, the Portuguese fleet, icebergs, horsedrawn funerals, school blazers and school ties and a free bottle of codliveroil from the govt. each month. From this island in the past we returned to the U.S. of A. where there was the television we had missed and Elvis was at his peak. I went off to prep school (St. Andrew's) to get an education. During the year previous I had passed through the puberty rite of being saved, as a Southern Baptist. St. Andrew's is an Episcopal school. After initial hysteria, I was able to fuse these two styles in my peabrain in the best of all possible ways (?). At St. Andrew's I was one of the 'peasants', and had to cop labels from my father's suits during vacations to sew into my Robt. Hall threads. About the only way I could make my dent in this Frank Merriwell-fairytale scene was via athletics since I am no scholar. I became captain of the football and baseball teams. The peak of my career in prep school (except for losing a no-hitter) came when I got a ruptured kidney in a football scrimmage after our second game during the year of my captaincy, and I wrote the team a 'Win One For The Gipper' letter from my infirmary bed. It worked and those sons-of-bitches went on to a fantastic season inspired by my absence. They lost the conference championship game, however, because the coach didn't put me in as a punter (doctor's orders). I

was all set to run for the winning touchdown instead of punting. I was also active in plays—winning the Drama Award for my portrayal of the angriest man in 'Twelve Angry Men', and also active in pseudo-piety—punching out our best hitter for smoking during baseball season. I was also Warden of the Student Vestry. Don't get me wrong—I was very much a wiseass. Oh, I won the MVP Award in baseball, and the Eddie Stanky Shitty Award. My height went from 5'8" to 5'7¾" and I became asthmatic.

"This is the beginning of a new paragraph. Went to the University of Delaware, that bastion of softsqueeze lobotomy, where I addled my brain through more football and baseball (I once hit Floyd Little head-on in a scrimmage against Bordentown Friends as a Freshman), and acted in many of the dramatic productions—my favorite role being Dylan Thomas, eating up the vicarious notoriety and expecting a similar end. Oh, in the summers of all these years (except one when I worked as the social director of a resort hotel in Lake George, N.Y.—a glorious erotic fantasy from which I've never recovered) I worked construction and played semi-pro ball. The scouts always told me I was too short despite feats like striking out 17 batters in the first game of a twinbill and collecting five hits in the second game. At Delaware I compounded my nonessential dilemma by majoring in pre-Med, and by doing innocent cartoons for the school paper for which I got called into the Dean of Students office every week. But with the pre-Med, for a person who is so scared of numbers that a license number freaks him out, I had my difficulties. I say without reservation that I sincerely regret and am heartily sorry for every hour I spent in stinking Chemistry labs with all those pimpled slide-rule weirdos. All that formaldehyde and butyric acid did serve to aggravate my asthma, giving me an eventual 1-Y.

"During my last two years as an undergraduate I was an alcoholic, I think, killing a fifth of County Fair Bourbon a day. My twenty-first birthday, which I know about only second-hand because I was blacked out throughout the escapade, has become a legend with the Jet Set around D.C., a place through which I cut a swath like the time Sherman played Georgia. Speaking of the Jet Set, my prep school background did give me an opportunity of being 'in' with these people while still being 'out' in reality—like being a Roman citizen and a Christian, too. I wasted at the cotillion while inbred DuPont seedlings talked of F. Scott and the good life. I became inward, melancholic, misanthropic.

"After being suspended for a semester for swiping a library book (some shit by Kierkegaard I never read), and working a strange holy gig as a social worker during the interim, I came back and finished a B.A. because what else was there to do? During my last semester I tried my hands and feet at poetry and won the Academy of American Poets Award, my creditors making short work of the prize money. Knowing I would last

about a week at Med School I said well what now. Iowa they said. So in Iowa I lived in a $4/month sackcloth-panelled cave on a cliff overlooking the Iowa River with no plumbing no running water (except me off the back porch) and a Warm Morning No. 530 for heat. After two years of peace, more-or-less, in the woods, my melancholia tempered by bucolia. I got an M.F.A. in Poetry, equipping me to do exactly nothing. Worked construction for awhile as I am wont to do, and was ready to sail for the Far East (the Lord Jim trip) after getting my Z Card for the Merchant Marine, when I met Lady Kathryn, the Poet. She said stay so I did. That was two years ago. Under the Harrow. I have been a vegetable since then but am rapidly rehabilitating. Am presently sojourning in Bozeman, Montana with Lady K. and son Galway Django Ari Kamal Krishna—where I am poet-in-residence at Montana State University, hating (nearly) every minute of it, longing for the good life of wild irresponsibility. Re: the future—took a stab at film-making, but after two brilliant though abortive attempts I gave up the ghost, realizing that my ambition was not to make but to be in movies—as the star of Spaghetti Westerns. The character will be a hybrid of Paladin, Peter Sellers and Lon, Jr. all rolled into the form of a quart-size Haystacks Calhoun. If I can't do this, I'll have to write, I guess. But shit, Alan Ladd was short.

"Have published poems in thirty-five-or so magazines and anthologies of varying repute, and my first collection of poetry titled *The Easy Wreckage* came out in April of '71. Illustrated a book of Gary Snyder's poetry, *Three Worlds, Three Realms, Six Roads* (Griffin Press, Marlboro, Vt.), and am now working on drawings for a concoction of W. S. Merwin. Have just gotten my head above the uterine waters of speculative fiction, but, being a Cancer, have always been fatally attracted to said.

"My lucky number is 38, I am left-handed, and my favorite color is green. I have a distinguished scar on my forehead where I was bricked by vigilantes."

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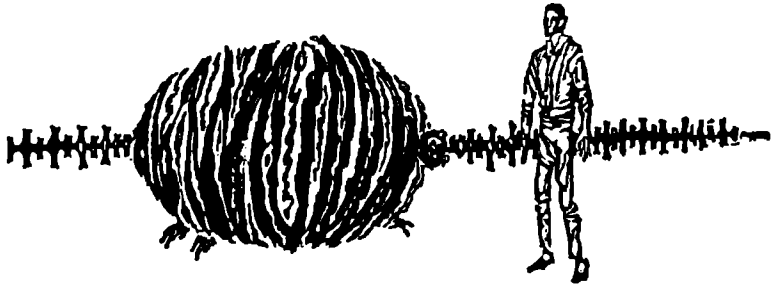


Ken McCullough

CHUCK BERRY, WON'T YOU PLEASE COME HOME

June morning 5 A.M. Orpheus comes wimping boing sprong onto the bed —me still drunk pissing Li Po fashion out the back window onto the feeding bullheads. Sweet Kate the possum and the false dawn. Behind him Morpheus ("Fatso") mudcaked carpstink and justplainfat. The usual—Orpheus luxurious sensual and stupid, Morpheus fat and guilty. But like the man said: "This day was to change my life"—Orpheus has this big gray tick on his ear twice the size of an M&M. Usually I'd ease the fuckers out and grind them into the floor, but I held back, watching. The Tick. He fell off and was crawling just as my chick Nancy came back from working the grave shift at the paraplegic ward of U. Hospital.

"Hey, Nano, what do we do with *that*, baby?"

"Feed it, ya douchebag, or it'll *die!*"

If ever there was a witch's tit, she was it. She always got me off my ass, tho. I'd been finished school a year and on the lam until she picked me up and decided to straighten out my head. Got me a job as a panhandler and

everything. Thanks, Nan. Well, this tick. Late to work myself. Threw him into my patching kit and split to work on my ten-geared Raleigh. On the way, thot "Lightbulb! *The Stiff*, in Serology." Almost creaming the Chairman of Otolaryngology I bashed into the cycle rack, grabbed the container and jugged into the Lab. "Stiff. . . . I need some blood."

The Stiff—6'2", 113 lbs, olivedrab skin and eyes as big and bad as oysters. *The Stiff* reaches slow like a robot turns with a test tube, slips it to me and sort of winks. Now what. Methinks "He needs skin thruwhich to drink this shit." So into the lab of my sometime chick, Large Marge. Pour the blood into evaporating dish, grab a surgical glove and stretch. Tight over the dish. The tick was getting kind of wrinkling-looking so I thot he might be getting ready to o.d. But I set him over the reservoir. And sat. After ten minutes I noticed he was pumping, eversoslightly, the way a cat nurses. And now he was back to his turgid self. "Wow, success!" I put him in an empty aquarium at the back of the lab and went to work really flying. He had enough to last him til lunch at least.

At lunchtime I checked on him. Unk! Bigger and better. I called home, my head wackoed with the possibilities . . . how big could he go, would *The Stiff* keep supplying . . . Johnny Carson, *Scientific American* . . . and strange bad fantasy flashes of *Them, The Beginning of the End, The Tick Who Sucked-Off Brooklyn,* Tomorrow the World!

Now it may sound weird that I'd go for a thing like this but it was nothing new to me. I started as a prepster. The first thing I got into was raising a herd of jumping spiders—that busted out one day in Bio Lab. "Bugeye" reaching and swatting and nothing there. Everyone reaching and swatting. Ten demerits. Then the wasps. They get so hard-up for grins around an all-male boarding school that when the other dudes saw me flying a wasp with a piece of thread around his thorax it became the thing to do. People nodding to each other in the hall, their wasps on leashes tugging them gently along. Wasps in guys' rooms at desklamp hitching-posts. After several accidents the school nurse ratted on me to "Cretin" the Headmaster. More demerits. In college, tho, I had privacy. Had a single in the dorm where I worked and finally got to the point where I successfully swapped left rear legs on two mice and the legs worked—on one of them. So I knew what I was doing; what I was up against.

After a few days of just freaking and watching the bugger I checked in the Med Library and found out what I suspected—that judging by his coloration he had only three more months before he'd croak of old age, and that he could only grow so big before he either exploded or o.d.'d from a coronary or something. Ticks have what they call chitinous exoskeletons—no bones on the inside, just a shell of sorts holding them in, like crabs

have, for instance. There is a law which states that an animal with an exoskeleton can have a surface area equal to no more than the cube of his volume. So this tick, *Dermacentor reticulatus,* a male, I named him Chuck Berry, *could* grow as big as a small dog, but he wouldn't be able to get around at all at that size. Like Haystacks Calhoun times three, frothing at the hypostome.

Nano and I started staying in alot, and keeping the dogs outside. *The Stiff* kept the blood coming. Quiet evenings at home—I'd get out the slide rule and work out the dose of whatever Nano and I were dropping or shooting and slip it to him. It was really a strange trip trying to pick up vibes from a beast like that, a real Charley Gordon gig, but he was ours to turn on with and we dug him.

After about a month it got to the point where there was a real rapport between us and Chuckbear. We'd sit with him between us on a stool—him as big as a pincushion now—and that feeling at the back of our necks would spread, grow into a diaphanous caul that hugged our heads, our arms, our chests . . . our fingers just touching, hovering over the beast, and something seemed to lock our elbows, our wrists, the joints of our fingers, and our eyes—as his body started to quaver—drifting, drifting—something out of him, felt it leaving him—felt it wisping in through the sutures of our skulls—spinning into the gunk of our brains and arching both our bodies off the floor. Something oppressive, but then my sight left me and I could feel only my body spiraling upwards through clouds of woolen light. And it still leaving him, but now soughing back . . . and leaving again: systole—diastole—systole . . .

There was no fear. I felt the rapport. And it was the time when I stood with a candle looking at the shadows on my face in the mirror, drunk, squinting my eyes and trying inside behind the eyes to change the features into some shrieking lupine monster and had to force myself to stop because it was not far away, because it started and was happening.

Now, my inner earbones jangled in a wind which knifed from out of nowhere. The air was filled with odors, heavy swamp odors, and huge shadows that made no sense at all. I fuzzed my vision but he brushed against my hand forcing a ringing through all my organs. It would go on—the ebb and flood—the shadows of the trees—the lakes of boiling muck—the thunder-wracks and the wails—the earth shifting—the rain—the crawling—the cacophony of wings in the lightning—the beaks splitting the eyes—and it was all happening. Swam in itchy waves of lava and my skin kept growing, growing and I spoke in words that I had never heard before. No eye games. No touching. It was like rapping with someone or something that had been around when there were still birds the size of DC-3's in the sky

and like way back in what there was of that brain was something he knew and would somehow pass between him and us. With Chuck Berry we were into something . . . precivilized—something we could lay on the world that would maybe straighten out some of the ugly machine shit that was coming down. No more bullshit—no more preachers teachers Indian chiefs—just cats sitting around vibrating with their eyes closed. And whatta gas to be tight with such a deep spiritual cat as Chuck Berry. Of course, he'd need bodyguards and a vet of his own. There'd be a fund to keep him going—hell with *that*—we'd start a clinic run off of subscriptions, with him in center ring. Man! it would be the *New Religion*—it would be quiet for once. And we'd be the ones back there calling the shots—or so we'd hope. (Trails of puckered white bodies in the gutters—break out the 60-foot bloodhounds, bring in the jr. birdmen with their napalm.) But shit, when you're messing in such heavy stuff you gotta take the chance of getting wiped out by what you done done.

Problems—*The Stiff* decided to take a job at the V.A. hospital in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. What a bummer! Not only that but I realized that in grooving on Chuckbear I'd forgotten we only had a red cunt-hair more than a month, by the book, before he croaked. We had to get the stud mated with something else big and keep working up. Nano, you hunk of vision! In she walks with *The Stiff* and says "Screw it, man . . . I've clued *The Stiff* in, and we need a vacation anyway." *The Stiff* floats over to Chuckbear. "Draw out some bread and let's head south." So we did. The four of us (Orph and Morph with the landlord). *The Stiff* with his blackened egg yolks bathing in the essence of Chuck Berry.

My Uncle Clifton had this place over in Mississippi just north of Vardaman about 50 miles from Tuscaloosa. He was senile—the tobacco oozing out the corners of his mouth, and his dog Twister bringing him the paper he couldn't or just never bothered to even look down at. Copping the place at the back of the property was nothing. The biggest cop of all—that I must've known all along—was Uncle C's pack of big beautiful tick-infested coon hounds.

Every three days I'd make a run to Tuscaloosa and *The Stiff* would lay some more blood on me and a few fresh gloves. *The Stiff* would come on weekends—he'd always bring a bag of the latest goodies from Pharmacy to keep Chuckbear fat and happy. The cat would just sit with his index finger on Chuckbear's back and nod. *The Stiff* had a pretty fierce smack habit. Well, one day he ups and says the only thing I can ever remember him saying. Looks at me and nods one eye and says "Like a rainbow pussy for a coffin." Everyone grooving.

But I just couldn't find a mate for Chuckbear—big enough, or even any-

thing he seemed to go for much, and I'd make the rounds of all the hounds twice a day. Spring—it was breeding season OK, and he seemed to be fairly horny, but he wrecked anything he mounted. We had a stable of about ten prime bitches we were fattening for him but we were running out of time. And then that motherfucking shiteating scrawny snailbrain *Stiff* goes and blows the whole scene.

Nan and me get back from the County Fair one Saturday just about sundown, and there they are in the bedroom like Dracula and his gay bride; Chuckbear, his stinking bulk bloated to the size of a gray flattened watermelon, with his mouth clapped to *The Stiff's* arm. I knew that was it for him. I kicked that cocksucking *Stiff* right in the head.

Chuck Berry died about two hours later. It could have been nothing but that bad blood running in *The Stiff's* veins that did it. I took him and the other ten one by one out to the funeral pyre I'd thrown together about a mile from the house, doused the lot of them with gasoline and made a trail of gas away from the scene, lit the stuff and ran like hell before the explosions started. I won't go into that. Man, when I got back to the house I just bawled my ass off. Yeah, over a tick.

We hung around for about a week, moping. I just sort of looked at the cows, listened to the sounds and thot about how short the whole thing was and whether anything had really happened at all. But things have been so much deeper for me since Chuck Berry. For Nano too. I heard from somebody, I don't remember who, that they put *The Stiff* away. He did nothing but sit around and laugh a low wheezing laugh. Never said another word.

I think it was Melville who said somewhere that nobody would ever write a decent story about a flea. Well, a tick is hardly better than a flea, and I know no one who reads this story would believe it, but sometimes you tell people things like this because, well, whatthehell else can you do?

Afterword:

This is the first story I've ever completed. I wrote it in one sitting, but I would never have written any of it at all if I hadn't been kicked in the ass by Harlan Ellison's story *A Boy and His Dog*. Thank the gods for stories like that—story vs. what they call with pursed lips and corncobs up their butts—"littriture." If more people could get it out of their literary pants the way Ellison and William Price Fox do, and tell a story the way it is, they would have fewer problems in writing what they consider to be high art (artifice?).

This particular story is not meant to have any moral or message—if it's

relevant to anything, that's incidental. The story comes out of a riff I hit people with when they are ripe for it. It turns out that a lot of people believe the story, the same way they get caught up in tall tales—so why not try it in print? The reason you can con your audience with a tall tale, "suspend their disbelief," is that there is quite a bit of fact via details woven in with the fantasy. I once heard Gore Vidal say that you can usually spot the successful novelist as a kid—he is such a pathological liar. If you're a good storyteller, a good sci-fi or fantasy writer, or a good poet or novelist, you're supernaturally gifted. Putting the spell on them is what counts, not the technique you use. THE FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT, says Robert Creeley. Without the story you're dead. Once the story starts to come, IT takes over for you and fills in the refinements that you'd never be hip to on an off day. The Greeks called this force "The Muse."

By the way, "Chuck Berry" *is* a true story.



Introduction to

EPIPHANY FOR ALIENS:

Though your editor has met ninety per cent of the writers he has included in this volume (and can call about sixty per cent of that ninety "friends"), there are those few whose stories came in unsolicited and with whom the editor has had only postal acquaintance. One of these is David Kerr.

However, even if I can't lay out deep and meaningful comments about the writers I haven't grown to know, I always try to say something deep and meaningful about the story appearing under that writer's name. Occasionally I'm stumped on even *that* approach. As George Ernsberger (a very fine editor) once pointed out, there is not something to be said for *every* story, and frequently not for the very best. I think that's the case for "Epiphany for Aliens." Save to note that of all the stories I've read for A,DV and *The Last Dangerous Visions,* accepted and rejected alike, this one touched me the most profoundly. I have a great warmth for this tale; it seems to have a quality that makes one's empathy flare up. I cannot explain it, nor do I care to try. I simply mention it by way of giving Mr. Kerr his due, and I look forward more to meeting him than any of the others I've never known.

I think "Epiphany for Aliens" is an extraordinarily fine piece of writing.

And, as has grown our custom through these pages, here is Mr. Kerr's statement of credentials and background:

"Born in Carlisle England (near the Scottish border) in 1942, the only son of a motor mechanic.

"I was educated in the State system until the age of 11, when I transferred to a Roman Catholic seminary, Ushaw College, Durham, considerably less horrifying than Joyce's but similarly traumatic. At the age of 18 I became disillusioned with the seminary, left it and shortly afterward the Catholic Church.

"At about this time I started writing poetry, infrequently but intensely.

"I read English at Newcastle University and took a B.A. degree. After graduation I travelled in Southern Europe in France, Spain, Italy, Egypt and Greece, mostly living rough. I was able to follow up an interest in archeology and antiquities. On my return to England I took odd labouring jobs for a time before settling down as a teacher at West Ham College of

Further Education, a Technical College in East London; I taught English and Liberal Studies.

"At about this time I started getting poetry published in small magazines.

"I became assistant editor of an East London Arts magazine called *Elam* and wrote editorials, reviews and poetry for the magazine, and helped organise the local arts festival associated with it. In 1968 *Elam* published a paperback collection of my poetry called FIRSTPRINT.

"During this period I have also given several readings of poetry in pubs and colleges in London.

"I have spent the last year doing a postgraduate course in social and cultural studies. At present I have just taken up the post of lecturer in English at the University of Malawi in East Africa."



David Kerr

EPIPHANY FOR ALIENS

Gavino offered them homemade wine in his cool stone hovel, and they looked out at the mountains, arid and dazzling in the sunlight. They listened to Gavino rambling about the attacks.

"Everybody's got theories about them. That reporter thinks they're brigands. D'y'ever hear of brigands stealing hens when there's all these tourists camping around with fat wallets and bare arses? Beg your pardon, marm. In St. Florent they think they're bears come down from the mountains. The police think they're Arab fanatics from Porto Vecchio."

"I still think they're wogs."

"Racist pig," Denise said, goading Piron, as she had all morning.

"The professor here thinks they're human beings. But I know the truth. They're ghosts, ghosts of the Muroni family, wiped out by my great grand-

father in Buonoparte's time. They come from Hell through a hole in Monte Robbia smelling of sulphur . . ."

Eventually Morrisot got Gavino to show them from the window, the direction to take to find the caves. They decided it would be better to observe from the mountain opposite before they approached the caves.

Sliding down steep screes, staggering along the dried-up Fiume Zente —the whole gorge a lake of trapped heat—they realized it was a mistake in full daylight. Piron was no mountain guide and they feared starting a landslide. Morrisot thought of tourists at Île Rousse, only 15 kilometres away sipping chilled anisette under cool shades.

They didn't need to reach the summit of Monte Genova. From the northeast slope they could see the signs of human habitation they were seeking, but hardly dared hope to find. Two-thirds up the mountain, beneath the steep cliff of the summit, there were three black holes, discernible through the binoculars as the entrances to caves. There was a rough track leading down to the Fiume Zente, and another spiraling round Monte Robbia to the summit. Slight wisps of smoke from a dead fire were the only signs of life.

Morrisot and Denise shook the sweat from their eyes and chattered like children, excitedly swapping deductions.

"One or two of the caves may only be a storehouse or stable."

"There doesn't seem to be any sign of cultivation, Pierre."

"No. I suppose it's possible they used to live largely on fishing, but they've been forced to hunt only at night in recent years, because of all these launches and fishing boats wandering about the coast."

"That would explain the attacks on the farms. This country's impossible to cultivate, apart from a few prickly pears and brambles. The poor creatures must be half-starving."

"I think maybe the regular shape to the right of the caves is some form of storage tank for water."

"The Fiume Zente must be full of water in the winter."

Piron mentioned that the sun was getting low, so they stopped talking and took some photographs before leaving. When they had finished, Piron led them back.

That evening Professor Morrisot recorded a brief talk for Provencal television news:

"If our conclusions are correct about their eating habits it all adds up to

a picture of a very simple, crude, small society of gatherers and hunters. We needn't pay too much attention to the fact that they live in caves. There are still plenty of peasants living in caves in Europe: in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Sardinia, even here in Corsica." (Denise had insisted on the poor peasants' plug.) "All the same, it's a very strange phenomenon, especially with tourists flocking the beaches so near. If the tribe is at a fairly primitive stage it would fit in with Giussepe Gavino's eyewitness account, allowing for narrative exaggeration. What we cannot assess until we have actually confronted the tribe, is the linguistic and cultural level of the group. It may well be that years of isolation and inbreeding have had deleterious physiological and psychological effects on the development of the phylum . . ."

Reporters tried to interview Morrisot, but he stayed in hiding with Denise in his hotel room.

"I managed to get permission for troops to patrol the road from St. Florent to Île Rousse to prevent reporters from doing their own field-work."

Denise was silent; she felt afraid for the innocent group of savages they were about to intrude on.

"Will you sleep with me tonight?" Morrisot asked.

"No. I'm going to my own room. Touch of the Electras tonight. Feel I'd shrivel and get sucked up into your balls to start again. I'd be too negative."

"Too frigid."

"Please yourself."

It was still dark by the time they reached the desert. They walked for a while under moonlight, then rested, waiting for the dawn, listening to the crickets in silence. Denise thought about the chubby brown businessmen sleeping on their launches nearby with their lovely, stupid, brown mistresses. She thought about the workers and their families in caravans despoiling the Corsican coastline, duped into affluence and the pursuit of brainless pleasure. She remembered black-robed beggar women, hunched on the pavements of Tehran, suckling their babies and clutching at the trouser legs of passersby. She felt disgust at all mankind, mushrooming demographically and technologically, reaching for the moon, but spiritually degenerate, and a wave of tenderness filled her for the tribe of poor creatures who'd survived here in ignorance of the dialectic to destruction going on around them. Then she laughed aloud at her own pomposity and said: "It's Déscarte's fault."

Morrisot laughed too and said, "Not Rousseau?"

He was with her, but she still loathed him, intellectual sugardaddy.

As the dawn started to break Piron led them off towards Monte Robbia.

They heard a regular tapping noise long before they saw anything. Even Piron was excited; their mouths felt dry, their legs shivery as they approached the caves. At last they sweated over the top of an escarpment and stumbled 50,000 years into the past.

In the middle of the blazing desert they felt suddenly cold and frightened.

Just as Giussepe Gavino had described, a hairy terrifying beast of a man sat hunched on the ground, chipping a stone axe-head.

"Quite unbelievable," Morrisot whispered.

"Look at the foramen magnum."

"It must be."

It was Neanderthal man, identical to the models in the Natural History Museum of Chicago, only living and moving. At the dozenth look through the binoculars they knew it wasn't a heat-fantasy. Like a crazed audience stepping through the screen into the film, they started to walk closer.

The Neanderthaloid heard them and looked up. He jumped up in the air and rushed back to the central cave and chattered. Another younger savage dashed out. They both started to throw rocks and pebbles with vicious force and accuracy. Piron, Morrisot and Denise took cover behind a rock.

A pebble had hit Piron on the knee but he was unhurt. He fingered his holster nervously.

"Mme. Blondel," he said, "you ought not to look. He's naked. I should arrest him; it's against the law."

The shower of pebbles stopped. Denise peeped over the top of the rock. The two Neanderthaloids were a lot closer.

Without warning the others Denise undid her shirt, took off her bra, stood up and walked out from the cover of the rock. Morrisot told her to come back. She walked slowly up the scree, body erect, eyes fixed on the savages. They made no movement, but allowed her to approach. She stood about a yard away from the older savage and they looked at each other for about two minutes, without a gesture or noise. The savage at last raised his long, powerful arm and touched one of the girl's white breasts momentarily, then lowered his arm. Denise turned round and walked back to the rock. She buttoned up her shirt and told Morrisot and Piron to go with her down to the gorge. The three of them descended slowly, in terror.

"What other way was there of proving I was a mammal? Our clothes must be quite scaring."

"Fellow mammal! I'd sooner trust you with an ape. It's too dangerous. We should wait till we've built up a team."

"We're too short of time, Pierre. Piron obviously can't keep his mouth shut. He wanted to arrest them for indecent exposure. There'll be photographers and doctors and God knows who else there soon. Anyway, a big team, full of petty interdisciplinary strife, it would only put them off. You know I could make contact on my own. That . . . creature trusts me."

"I don't."

"Field-work's my strong point. Remember Persia—*Taboos and Authority in Tribes of the Arajon River*. Brilliant you said."

"I remember you nearly stirred up another Kurdish war."

"We must find out everything. What happened to the incest taboo? Levi-Strauss would shit a brick. What's their linguistic level? What's their system of socialization?"

"I know, I know. Has there been any physiological evolution at all? Did the nicks on the Krapina fragment really suggest cannibalism? Was Leroi-Gourham's burial-rights theory correct? Religions. Mythology. Everything. I go mad thinking about it."

"You must let me have a try."

"I wish I knew what was best."

That evening Morrisot gave an even longer talk on television:

"What Mme. Blondel, Chief-Constable Piron and myself saw today on Monte Robbia is of staggering importance to the entire world. It will change the whole of man's knowledge and conception of himself. I myself can still scarcely credit it. If our observation is correct these creatures are identical with Neanderthal man, a separate species of 'homo sapiens' which became extinct about 40,000 years ago. 40,000! That was during the last Ice Age, the Wurm Glaciation, when Sardinia and Corsica were still joined to the mainland. Their skulls have been found all over Europe—Italy, France, Turkey, Gibraltar. And somehow, how we don't know yet, this tiny splinter has managed to survive in the Desert des Agriates, apparently without evolving. Such freaks have been known to occur in the world of reptiles and fishes—but never with mammals, let alone primates . . ."

Meanwhile the whole desert was being cordoned off by the army and navy, with some emergency help from the Foreign Legion.

As the news spread, charter flights brought biologists, zoologists, ecol-

ogists, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, journalists, and hopeful voyeurs from all over the world.

Denise refused to talk further with Morrisot that night. He wished she would let him touch her. Her eyes were fanatical and kept him at a distance.

Was it the air-conditioned hotel room or the cave entrance in the desert which was the dream?

The early morning freshness had already evaporated. A detachment of troops under Major Sauvage faced the caves from an escarpment on the flank of the mountain. Dr. Morrisot, Professor Marmoutier, a zoologist, and other privileged intellectuals stood close to the troops, scanning the face of the mountain with binoculars. Two cameramen from French television were attaching their cameras to tripods, and a sound engineer fiddled with his tape recorder.

Denise made a final adjustment to her walkie-talkie, and without looking at Morrisot or the packed onlookers, started a solitary walk toward the caves. Lizards flicked their tails at her and the sunlight shattered itself on the bare white rocks. She felt inhuman, like a mad priestess. The Neanderthaloids had torn the belly out of man's complacency—lord of creation, superman, smasher of atoms—man wasn't God. These creatures were more than a cul-de-sac, cornered here, they'd survived, fishing, stealing sheep and hens, passionate, incestuous, underground men, a living alternative to Homo Technologicus.

Sweat began to drip down her neck, the rocks were hard through her gym-shoes, and she felt guilty at being human.

Morrisot watched her dejectedly through binoculars. His passion had carried her around in a little moral lecture theatre. She was on her own now. She had become separate, reified through the binoculars. It was finished; she no longer needed him—pseudo-radical, inhibited egghead.

Denise broke radio silence with dramatic intensity:

"I may now be walking to my death and I want the world to hear my thoughts about the discovery of this family, while I make my attempt to contact them.

"The creatures are ugly, hairy and ferocious. I am beautiful and intelligent. They are free. I am enslaved to civilization.

"The contact that we make will be an epiphany of the history of the world. Angel and beast shall be one.

"Already the creatures are losing their freedom. The Desert des Agriates has become a zoo; the reporters, and cranks, and intellectuals, and tourists are flocking to see the show. In a few weeks' time, my creatures will be clothed for decency's sake, examined by physicians, psychiatrists, linguists, X-rayed, inoculated, measurements made of their teeth and occipital protuberances. They'll die of boredom and confusion. They are doomed already. Like Cuvier prodding the buttocks of the Hottentot Venus and measuring her labia minora, we'll annihilate the Neanderthaloids with our insatiable curiosity. Like the Yamana tribesmen, decimated by English diseases in the wake of puritan missionary zeal, my creatures will be slaves to the imperialism of modern progress, hygiene, enlightenment, civilization and repression.

"To propitiate for the sins of mankind, and to make symbolic contact with the life we have rejected, I intend to let the ugly monster I met yesterday fuck me in full view of the eyes of the world. May the gods of darkness be with me."

"What the hell's she talking about?" Major Sauvage shouted to Morrisot. "Can't we stop her? She's mad."

"No, leave her." Morrisot's mouth felt bitter and dehydrated. He had been here before in some nightmare.

Denise stopped walking and switched off the radio. There was a darker shape against the darkness of the cave. The shadow leapt out and stood facing her in the sunlight. It was the Neanderthaloid who had touched her the previous day. He stood still, grinding his bared teeth.

Denise carefully placed the radio on the ground, took off her clothes with deliberation, wrapped them in her jeans and placed them on a rock.

Morrisot could hardly look at her white skin exposed to the full morning sunlight. He was sweating profusely. He accepted a cigarette off Marmoutier. The cameras whirred impassively.

The Neanderthaloid flicked into life. He was upon her in three gigantic cat-leaps. He picked her up, hoisted her over his shoulder fireman-style, and started running up to the summit of Monte Robbia by the easy slope.

He smelled of urine and his body felt like coconut matting, but Denise made no resistance. She was in a trance, anesthetized—a passive sacrifice.

"We must go and rescue her," Major Sauvage burst out at last, half-embarrassed.

"No, he might kill her," said Morrisot, unsure of his motives. Major Sauvage swore and told his men to be ready to fire. Morrisot and Marmoutier begged the Major not to shoot. The Major refused to listen.

The grunting savage, salivating slightly, placed Denise on the topmost rock, an altarlike slab, and mounted her quickly and brutally. Denise, her back pressed into the sharp rock shouted out in pain and ecstasy.

The cry echoed over the valley. Morrisot dropped the glasses to his chest and felt a warm, involuntary spurt of diarrhea trickle down his leg.

Major Sauvage told the troops to take aim. Marmoutier murmured a feeble protest, his eyes fixed on the mountain. The cameras continued whirring.

Within seconds it was over, but Denise's legs still clung to the Neanderthaloid. He raised the rest of her body up by the hair, freed himself of her legs, and lifted her high above his shaggy head; where she lolled, naked and unconscious. He held her there for about half a minute, then let out a deep-throated scream and hurled her over the cliff to the rocks two hundred feet below.

Morrisot whispered, "Thank God!" The Major ordered his troops to fire. Marmoutier protested incoherently. The shots rang out like a triple thunderclap.

The Neanderthaloid spun round on the mountain top and fell over the cliff spectacularly.

The cameramen fingered their zoom-lenses, while Morrisot retched quietly.

The troops found the two bodies dead at the foot of the cliff, and carried them back to the escarpment. The Major, vindictive over the insult to French womanhood, ordered the troops to fire light mortars into the caves.

When the smoke had cleared they entered the caves and found all the Neanderthaloids dead (three male adults, four females, and one female child) except for one male three-year-old, wounded in the belly, clinging to his mother.

They carried him by stretcher to the road, and from there by car to Ajaccio Hospital.

The unedited film was shown on television from the Nice studios, that evening, and carried by satellite all over the world. There was a long program featuring interviews with politicians, military experts, psychologists, friends of Denise, and scientists from many disciplines.

Major Sauvage was forbidden by his Field Marshal to take part in the discussion. Professor Marmoutier stressed the ritual nature of the coitus, and compared the fourteen or fifteen pelvic thrusts of the Neanderthaloid to those of a baboon. Chief-Constable Piron testified to the mental instability of Mme. Blondel. Psychologists speculated obscurely about her motives. Morrisot could only say: "Greedy bitch—just wanted them for herself," before bursting into tears and dashing out of the studio.

Later in the evening it was announced that the surviving male child had died in hospital and that the carcasses of the Neanderthaloids, or what remained of them, had been frozen, and sent by plane to the Musee de l'Homme for examination, dissection and analysis.

Afterword:

"Epiphany for Aliens" fits into the general category of stories about nice but destructive monsters. The genre has a pedigree at least as old as Frankenstein, though the main influence on me has been 1950's, Hollywood, B-feature, monster films (you know, frozen prehistoric monster awakened by A-bomb test in the North Pole, wreaks vengeance on the hubris of scientists before capitulating to human technology in the final holocaust in the last reel).

I've always had a sneaking feeling that in the Darwinian battle between Neanderthal man and Homo Sapiens the best man lost. The idea of a group of Neanderthaloids surviving satisfies a personal fantasy for me—like the teenagers who believed in the immortality of James Dean after his crash. For me, Neanderthal man provides a useful symbol of the ecological disruption of this planet caused by man's technology (plenty of animal species really have been wiped out).

The story is set near a Mediterranean holiday locale because I like the irony of the prehistoric Neanderthaloids being discovered close to the ersatz, back-to-the-sea primitivism of holiday makers.

I have set the story in present-day France because a concern with man's position in his whole environment is very much part of the French political and philosophical mentality. Rousseau was perhaps as influential as Marx for a source of ideas in the May 1968 rising in France. Denise Blondel was, of course, active in May 1968, but the discovery of the Neanderthaloids enables her to crystalize far more completely all her feelings about the underdog. She overcompensates grotesquely, (hitherto, she had to make do with Negroes and red Indians). Needless to say her identification with the Neanderthaloids is partly sexual—the murky id at last incarnate.

I'm attracted to Speculative Fiction because it is possible to write about moral or philosophical problems without sounding too pompous. But I think Speculative Fiction is the most difficult form to write; it is hard to conjure up a fantastic situation without giving the reader a long, boring descriptive introduction to explain the situation. Speculative Fiction is personally satisfying to me because it is therapeutic; I can explore my own fantasies. In "Epiphany for Aliens" I was able to explore the fascist, the priggish radical, the soggy liberal and the Neanderthaloid in myself. I suspect the Neanderthaloid predominates.



Though I've spent at least two weeks in Burt Filer's company, he is one of the most enigmatic men I have ever met. I know he was married to Ann, I know they are now separated and perhaps divorced, and the last I heard of him he was in Philadelphia. Beyond that I know only that he grew up in upstate New York, received a degree in 1961 in Mechanical Engineering at Cornell, he is an inventor—having devised among other items a new type of motor, transmission and coupling—and has published speculative fiction in such magazines as *If*, *Galaxy* and *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*. His short story "Backtracked" is one of the finest short pieces I have ever read, and it should have won the Nebula in 1968. (For those curious enough to seek it out, it appeared in *F&SF* for June of that year.) (Ann's excellent story "Settle" appeared in the same issue.)

"Eye of the Beholder" raises some pointed questions about the nature of art and the nature of the human condition, and does it in terms fresh to speculative fiction.

In many ways it is as enigmatic a piece of work as its author.

If you are out there, Burt, get in touch.



Burt K. Filer

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

THE NEW YORK TIMES, Section 2, Sunday, June 3, by Audrey Keyes —Peter Lukas' long-awaited show opened at the Guggenheim today, and may have shaken confidence in the oldest tenet of art itself: that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Reactions to his work were uncannily uniform, as if the subjective element had been removed. Mr. Lukas tends to purify and distill his art, and there is no arguing with him. The uniform reaction for every piece in the show was one of spellbound appreciation.

Of the six pieces shown, his "Nereid" is the most striking. Basically an abstract woman carrying within her a star (see inset), she seems to be swimming among the galaxies. The effect is eerily successful, not only in the direct hologram as shown on the main floor, but in the Bolger-formed miniatures which make up the stabile of the second mezzanine. Usually the Bolger process—electroplating directly into a hologram—leaves an aura of heaviness about a piece, but not so "Nereid."

In the stabile, the effect of lightness is further heightened by the almost total lack of supporting framework or wires among its parts. It is as if the massive nickel abstracts do indeed weigh nothing. When asked about this eerie lightness, Mr. Lukas' reaction was a shrug and a statement to the effect that he just let himself go—and what came out was as much a surprise to him as to anyone.

* * *

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, June, Book Review: "Gravity Null, Discovery and Early Work," by Catherine D. Osborn, Ph.D.—When Dr. Osborn reported the existence of a partial gravity null in solid objects last year, the scientific community was widely split in its reaction. Recom-

mendations for the Nobel Prize were balanced by charges of outright fraud. Supporters and skeptics alike have been waiting a more complete report of her work.

This book is that report. There is no longer room for skepticism. She has produced laboratory objects with masses of up to twenty kilograms, whose recorded weight is under eighteen kilos.

While Dr. Osborn indicates that a causal relation between weightlessness and Steininger's Shape Factor exists, no rigorous proof is given. Whether this is due to censorship by NASA—who support the project—or whether a mathematical expression simply doesn't exist, is a matter of conjecture.

Included in the early chapters are photographs of several "test objects," Bolger-plated holograms. Subjectively, all have remarkable beauty. Dr. Osborn herself points out their similarity to contemporary sculpture, but makes no further comment. While there are innumerable applications for gravity-insensitive masses, Dr. Osborn has directed her efforts exclusively toward the making of an interstellar drive . . .

* * *

Cidi (from her initials) Osborn didn't like the shape developing in the tank, and her thin face showed it. She could swear the lasers weren't going where she aimed them, and without thinking she called over her shoulder, "Z-axis is out again, Max. Check it?"

But Max wasn't there, nor would he be. Paul Stoner had decreed she'd work alone now. Typical CIA attitude. Hamstring efficiency for security's sake. She shut down the tank and got up to fix the beam herself.

Crawling under the tank, she found nothing wrong with the lasers themselves, and slid back out. Cidi had a temper and was getting madder by the minute. She lifted off the back of the console. After half an hour's fuming, she found the bug: a burnt-out diode. What disturbed her even more was that they were *all* getting a little brown-looking. She was wearing out the equipment.

She replaced the panel, went around to the front, sat down. Wearing out the Bolger gear, and maybe herself too. The last six months had been murder. She'd lost weight. Cidi hated to look scraggly. Everyone thought women scientists should look scraggly.

With a sigh, she typed in the equation for a sphere. The tank across the room lit up, and in thirty seconds a transparent blue ball assembled itself in the mist. Three-dimensional, coherent light interferometry.

Cidi checked her notes. It needed to be bigger. She typed in a different constant, and the ball grew.

Next, a rambling series of careful pecks bent the sphere into a saddle-shaped curve, with a sort of orange-peel bottom. Getting there. She bent closer to the keyboard, poking her glasses back up the bridge of her thin straight nose. Getting there . . .

She heard Paul Stoner come in behind her, knowing it was he even without turning around. Two reasons: one, he was the only one allowed in the lab—his own rule. And two, he had asthma and his nose whistled.

"Cidi, look."

Now she turned. The rumpled middle-aged man held out a rumpled middle-sized package. "Good," she said. "How'd you get him to part with it?"

Paul came across the room, put the bundle on the steel-topped lab table, took out a Kleenex and blew his nose. "Well, first I told him I was with *International Review,* a photographer. He said no soap, that he has a show in Brussels next month, and doesn't want any advance releases to spoil his impact.

"So then I said, actually, I was an amateur sculptor myself, and wanted to study him. Bad move, he got furious. Apparently every time he lends things out, they either get copied or stolen. He said so many people had broken into his apartment that he had to move out to the country, and almost live in hiding.

"So I leveled with him, showed him my CIA card and some other stuff. He was skeptical. I told him a little about your work. He said okay then, but wasn't above socking me for a hundred dollars rental." Paul was untying the string. "Which is a waste, Cidi. You'd have to see this guy. An animal. Believe me, any resemblance between his work and yours is superficial."

Cidi nodded. "Probably. Still, I'm glad we can check it out."

As she spoke the final wrappings fell away. Amid the wrinkled paper, a miniature of *Nereid* lay exposed.

Cidi took a long breath, then let it out. She went to the thing, touched it. "I've seen the pictures. They're right, you know. *Inarguably* beautiful. The most—"

"Until Lukas carves something better," Paul said, hefting it speculatively. "Hollow, I think. At least that internal figure."

Cidi guessed he was right, put it on the X-ray table anyway. It was not hollow. It was solid. She felt the sort of bright shock that comes with just missing a truck. "He's so far ahead of me it's unbelievable. This thing is inches from totally ignoring gravity!"

Nereid had been made from thirty pounds of electrolytic nickel. *Nereid* weighed eight pounds.

"Paul, we've got to get hold of the equations he used. Every curve, every plane on this thing."

"Equations? Lukas never finished high school. He wouldn't know a polynomial from a dirty word."

Cidi's face got blotchy. She was not pretty when angry. "It's so *unfair.* I sit here turning into a hag for six years, and then this idiot comes along. Damn!"

Paul, who didn't understand women who got mad instead of crying, wisely shut up. She calmed down quickly.

"Okay. What sort of equipment does he use?"

"Bolger tank, like yours."

"Input too? He can't use a console if he doesn't know math."

Paul blew his nose, apologizing with his eyes. "He talks to it."

"He *talks* to it. Beautiful. No permanent records." She actually groaned. "That leaves just one approach: the hologram projector itself. If you could get hold of the thing, I could analyze it."

Paul began wrapping up *Nereid.* "Okay, I'll get it." The pudgy CIA man left, and Cidi Osborn returned to her work. Not that she expected to get much done.

Paul Stoner's devious mind was not too devious to try the direct approach. First, anyway. When he returned the statue to Peter Lukas, he asked if he might have a look at the holoprojector that had been used to make it.

They were at the Guggenheim, where the shaggy sculptor had just opened his show. The museum is a big echoing funnel of a place. Peter Lukas' single-worded answer filled it. Paul smiled wanly and left.

He could understand, of course, why he'd been refused. Anyone having the projector could duplicate the sculpture. And there's no such thing as copyrights for Bolger-projections. There was also, he thought, the fear of an artist being analyzed by a scientist.

But Paul Stoner had the interests of the nation at heart, which justified a lot of things. To him, anyway. Peter Lukas had friends. Paul Stoner found two of them. They were young artists like Lukas himself, but nowhere nearly as successful. They were poor and a little jealous, and they could be bought.

He set them up to rob Lukas' house one night about a week later. Theoretically Lukas would be away in town, hosting patrons and the press at his show. Even if Stoner's two proteges should get caught, it would look as if a pair of artists were just copping an idea from another. No one would

suspect that the CIA was quietly trying to procure an interstellar drive from a man who didn't know he even had it.

Yes, it was a good plan. If all went well, Cidi Osborn could find out what she needed, the sculpture could be returned, NASA would have their drive—and that idiot Lukas would probably live his life out without ever knowing what he'd invented.

All did not go well.

Lukas was home early.

When he threw the light switch on in the garage, something was wrong. The switch worked harder than it should have, and up at the house, something went beep. Someone after *Nereid!*

He sprinted across the garage floor, out the side door, and up the stone steps to the cottage. Only a fragment of the moon lit his way, but there was enough animal in him to make it on instinct. And enough to put a sour taste in his mouth and make his neck itchy and his armpits tight.

He shoved at the kitchen door, found it bolted. Lukas knew how to take down doors; you could tell just by looking. Backing up two steps, dropping to his palms, he kicked himself through the weathered pine planks in a bony ram.

Up the stairs. Clump, clump, lunge, and rattle round the landing. He could hear them now, scuttling across the studio floor overhead. Like rats. Up the second flight. The studio door was ajar and he could smell the Bolger tank. So they'd turned it on, had they?

He swung through the door to see Pete Santini's blue-jeaned backside drop out of sight over the window ledge. Well, now he knew who. Couldn't trust anyone. He rushed over to the window.

Out on the hummocky lawn a girl ran. Herkie Albright. Long hair streaming behind, a little cup of moonlight at her forehead, all good. Lukas wished it wasn't her.

Immediately below him Santini was just getting up after oofing. He had the projector for *Nereid* in one hand, while two filters still spun in the grass near the other.

"Pete!"

No answer. All right, have it your way. I can catch your lardy ass. Lukas vaulted lightly over the sill, saw fifteen feet of night sky slide by, and sank to his ankles in the pine needles by the back door. Santini was halfway down the hill, running and falling and sucking wind, but moving. Lukas sprinted after him.

Herkie had Pete's old Healey revved up, and as Pete heaved his loot into the back and himself into the front, she popped the clutch. There was

a whorkk of bald tires in gravel and rubber stink, and Lukas knew he'd have to jump—now.

It was a flat dive from the bank of soft dirt that edged the road. Nothing as orderly as a Hertz ad. Arms out, flying low, he landed spread-eagled across the cockpit, as if making love to the car. His belly took most of the shock, from the top of the windshield. It left stars and stripes and no breath. By the time he'd grabbed the fender mirror, the rest of him was sliding forward so that the only thing left for his other hand to hold was the bumper. Still sliding forward.

The dirt and rocks of the mountain road whipped by six inches from his chin as Herkie pushed the rusty blue bomb as high as it would go in low and speed-shifted. The car lunged. At that precise instant, Santini got hold of Lukas' ankles and pitched them over the side.

Lukas was flying again, whipping in helpless cartwheels beside the car and then behind it. Then all it was was sound, and a hot exhaust glowing between two little taillights, and then not even that.

He didn't stop to consider that in leaping to his feet he was taking a lot for granted. But no bones gave, and he was running back up the drive. The garage door stood half open as he'd left it. Two minutes ago. The Beezer sat there glowing black, rocked up on the center stand, still warm.

Lukas threw a leg over, brought his weight down hard on the starter pedal, and got noise for an answer. Wheeling to face down the hill, Lukas wound it on.

He knew that road by Braille. He'd been up and down it a hundred times and always on this bike. Shift to second and bank for the hard right-hander; hang out that foot and slide, baby, or eat trees.

But did Herkie know where she was going? Hardly. She'd only been up here a few times. Always with Pete and Pete always drove. No, he'd catch them, probably before they hit the county road.

Lukas went up to third for the long straight, braked lightly, banked and cut it off for the gravel esses. Up ahead he saw the two little taillights again, heard the Healey howling, mercilessly overrevved. Oh, he'd get them.

But then what? Force them to stop? A four-hundred-pound bike against a ton of car? Still, he might scare her into it. Nothing else to do, anyway. Try it.

The Healey burned oil. Lukas could smell it; he was that close. Only fifty yards separated them now, which opened on the straights and closed on the curves. Way down the mountain, ahead of them both, occasional headlights slid down Eighty-seven.

He was gaining fast. Good, because they were running out of his kind of

road—the car could outrun him on the highway. Just one hard right-hander to go, which brought his driveway parallel to Eighty-seven before angling down the face of a thirty-foot bank to meet it.

Herkie was still in second from the sound of it. But no, as they approached the final corner she shifted—and missed. Gears grinding, louder. Engine wailing, dropping, wailing. Taillights weaving but not turning, then dropping out of sight. Human voice, male, high. A crash, a sliding sound, a car horn, and another crash. And now one steady, skyward headlight beam and silence.

Lukas paused at the corner, looking straight down the muddy bank they'd gone over. The Healey had hit the road, slid across, gone through the rails, dropped another fifteen feet into the creekbed on the other side. Just where she'd turned over he couldn't guess. A car had stopped, another was stopping. He left the bike and walked down.

Troopers swarmed in from both directions. He'd never seen so many so fast; it was as if they were expecting something. And—what the hell?—that CIA guy Stoner who'd rented *Nereid* last week, with some woman. They came over, stood beside him, all watching the troopers.

The bodies were dragged out. Lukas was sick, seeing what had happened to Herkie. But Pete Santini was all in one piece, except for the lack of an ear and a hole underneath it.

The woman at his elbow whispered, "God!" and Stoner nodded.

* * *

"You ran them off the road!"

"They robbed me, I chased them. But I was behind when—hell. Are you sure you called my lawyer?" As Lukas spoke, the trooper's face swung out of the 500-watt glare, to get its forehead wiped. Nothing subtle about these guys. Bare bulbs, handcuffs, and threats.

The jowly face came back. "Robbed, hell. We found no stolen goods in the car."

"Then look again. A hologram projector and two filters. Burned maybe." Hadn't all this sort of stuff gone out with Jack Webb?

"Who'd bother with *those?*"

"Read the papers much?"

"Don't get wise, kid."

"Look, my name's Peter Lukas. I'm all over Section Two of last Sunday's *Times. Read* the goddam thing and leave me alone."

Whap. They even had nerve enough to hit him. Everything had a phony ring. Should they be working him over before Jack Adams got here? Or at

all? And what were Stoner and that skinny bitch doing, watching from the back of the room?

"What sort of blowup is this? You guys act like a Grade B movie."

Whap, again.

Lukas was getting mad, which was not good; not with his temper. They might wring some sort of incriminating statement out of him if he blew. Or he might just get up out of his chair and kick that big bastard in the teeth, and get shot for it. These guys were out to *get* him. Why, he didn't know. Better shut up, shut up, shut up until Jack Adams gets here. *If they'd even called him.*

"Look kid. You admit you were chasing them when they went over. You admit they were friends, so why would they rob you? I say you all got gassed and were screwing around and started racing and you got serious and ran them off. It reads like manslaughter. Unless you—"

The trooper was about to go on, but glanced up frowning against the glare, nodded and backed away. Bootsteps retreating, scuffling in the room, door opening, figures going out, door closing. Two people were left. Stoner and the woman.

She came over, stretched to reach the spotlight rather than walking to it, turned it off, backed away.

"What's the matter, honey? Afraid of the big bad killer?"

"Yes, frankly." Not a glimmer of expression in her voice, or on her face. Ice.

Stoner shuffled over with two chairs, put one facing Lukas and one facing away. He straddled the backward one, rested his chin on it, took off his hat and smiled. The woman sat in the other, legs tightly crossed.

"I sort of got you into this," Paul Stoner said. "I can get you out. If you cooperate. I had a better scheme but you messed me up."

"I was wondering where you figured in this. So you put Pete and Herkie up to—?"

"Yes."

"Baby, you're lucky I've got these cuffs on."

"I suppose so." Stoner's eyes were watering. He fumbled in his coat, drew out a bottleful of white pills. "All Dr. Osborn here wants is a look at *Nereid's* projector."

Lukas' control was slipping again. "Who do you think you are? Rob a guy, frame him, blackmail him? And get people killed."

Stoner gulped, replaced the cap, replaced the bottle. "I *am* the CIA, looking after the best interests of the country."

"Screw the CIA." Stoner smiled that sleepy smile of his, while the angular Dr. Osborn only blinked.

Lukas waited for the man to say something more, but no. He just sat and looked. He was done, it seemed. "So I do what you say or I'm up for manslaughter?"

"*Now* you've got it." Stoner stretched over to the desk, picked up the key to Lukas' handcuffs.

* * *

Only the three of them went up to the studio. Two of the crewcut German Shepherdy-looking men waited downstairs, two more outside. It was the next morning.

Cidi Osborn walked to the middle of the room, hands on hips, and looked around bleakly. The studio was twenty by fifteen, the entire upper story of Lukas' cottage. It was old, wooden, creaky, and poorly lit. It stank of plating solutions and fried onions. It was a mess. The back third of the room was more or less filled with Bolger equipment, which stood out to her like a diamond in a toilet bowl. Lukas, his world, his manners—were all things she actively hated. And he knew it.

A step away, arms folded across his chest, Lukas was thinking the same sort of thoughts about her. And she knew it.

Paul Stoner, whose mind ran to generalities from time to time, saw them as art versus science, fire versus water, everything versus everything else. It made him uncomfortable. He would be more than happy when this job was done.

"All right. *Nereid.*" Lukas stepped to the back of the room, picked a labeled hatbox from two dozen like it, carried it to the tank, opened it. He took out the projector and snapped it into place.

Then he stepped to the console, brought up power, and they waited while the thing warmed up. In two or three minutes, *Nereid* took shape within the tank. "Shall I plate it?"

"No, thank you. This is all I need. For now. Thank you."

Lukas went over to the side of the room, his face a stone. The CIA man took a seat on the bench opposite. Cidi worked.

There was no loudly ticking clock in the room, so Lukas had to suppose he was making it up. Time and more time. He felt like a patient in surgery. She even looked like a doctor, as she bent over the holotank with her optical micrometer, measuring *Nereid.* And *Nereid* was him. He imagined her dispassionately measuring his fingernails with that mike, weighing the dirt underneath, learning more about him than even he knew—or would ever know.

There was no loudly ticking clock in the room, so Cidi imagined it was

her pulse. She felt like a thief. Like someone copying homework. While he stood there watching. She kept telling herself that you can't rob an animal, but it wasn't working.

Other things weren't working. Even while measuring the hologram she knew it wouldn't be enough. Sure, she could duplicate this particular shape, complex though it was. She could see all the internal curves now, and trace them back to their source geometries. But everything was so random. She doubted any correlations would come out of this.

After four pages of notes and measurements, she no longer doubted, she knew. "Paul."

"Ah?" He came over, stretching a sleepy knee between paces.

"It's not going to work. I know what but not how. I've got to see him work."

Lukas laughed; the room rang. So they *couldn't* reduce him to a punched card, after all. And somehow he didn't think watching him sculpt would help that skinny broad much either. So when Stoner asked him, he consented. He shouldn't have.

Lukas sat in the leather armchair facing the tank, a microphone in his hand, a vocoder in his lap. A cord ran from it to the TST that filled one wall. "Heyyy . . ." sung not said, brought a sheet of fire dancing into the Bolger tank. He chuckled. "Just warming up." The words flickered through the tank, like bubbles in an animated beer sign.

"Roouunnnd," he codeworded. He got his sphere. Then, "Woomb," and the sphere went flaccid and hollow. "We need wings. Wings, are like—aaarms that are—flat. Dig? Tankie, do you dig?" Little green light. "Okay. Winngs. Good. Now, biig wiings. Clooverleeaf, at the bottom. And—damn." He waited for the green light. "And a faace right. And—another face left."

The tank was warming up, the light went green almost as soon as the words left his lips. Inside, a totem of monstrosities grew, a three-dimensional doodle. It got more and more complicated, more and more grotesque. And bigger. Now it had arms and legs, a sausage man of little things and shapes.

It was hard to look at the thing. Lukas must have had thirty percent of the tank's volume supporting an image. That's a lot of light, a lot of power. It dazzled. The room grew hot. The tank's fans speeded up.

He kept on going, his words coming faster and faster. Some were sung, some said, some whispered. He was sweating, oblivious to Stoner and the woman. The room began to smell: of insulation, old wooden house, food, of Peter Lukas.

He was chattering now. There was danger of blowing the breakers and

losing the whole thing. They didn't know it but Lukas had long since put jumpers around them.

He stopped. In the glow of the monstrous shape of shapes, his own face was fanatically outlined, eyes wide, lips parted, pressed right against the mike. He strained forward in the chair. Then he said, "Aaand noowww," and heaved himself from the chair.

He walked over to the tank, stared into the dazzle. "That bubble should come off," he muttered to the mike, "on the upper left limb. Just the bubble. There's—something underneath. Only it's hidden. Take off the next, too. Make it lighter, lighter. Level off between and keep that twist, that's probably her hand. Her hand. But make it lighter. Just run from point to point . . ." He never stopped talking.

Cidi watched, fascinated. This was sculpture, the art of paring away. Lukas had merely been making his raw material before. What he did now was what counted. But the very idea of just "paring away" overshadowed everything he did. Like *derivation,* she thought, wasn't it the physical equivalent of mathematical derivation?

The convolutions smoothed under his hands, his pleadings to let the shape out, uncover it, make it lighter. Hours came and went.

He was reeling before the tank, eyes glazed, clothes sweat-soaked. She stood beside him, listening, watching. Paul Stoner stood at the back of the room feeling nauseated, afraid of what was going on. The shape in the tank—the thing in the tank was Cidi Osborn.

Peter Lukas passed out at four-thirty in the afternoon. His eyes were so bloodshot and dry that the lids would not slide down to cover them. The tip of his nose was blistered. There was dried blood on his lips, a spray from a throat that hadn't been silent for eight hours straight.

While Paul Stoner repaired the man, Cidi Osborn pumped thirty pounds of electrolytic nickel into the tank's hopper, and plated out a permanent cast of her own effigy. She tried not to look at it. Even though she'd seen it coming at her for hours, she tried not to look at it.

It was the most beautiful thing she'd ever seen. It stimulated odd thoughts about God and mathematics. Cidi Osborn was a Madonna, but in her arms she carried not a Christ but a void. She knew what it meant but didn't care. She was shattered but didn't care. She would never be the same, but it didn't matter. Because Cidi Osborn knew how. She knew how he did it.

Paul Stoner woke Lukas up around nine o'clock, and offered him a badly made sandwich. "Do you go through this every time?" he asked.

"Yes." They were downstairs in his bedroom.

"She got what she wanted, you know. She worked over that thing you made. She got that statue to *float*. It's completely insensitive to gravity." Stoner had his jacket off, was looking paunchy, tired, ready to go home.

Overhead, Lukas could hear the tank humming, cooling off, and an occasional footstep. He sighed, got up. "Let's go see."

Cidi was sitting in his chair. She had not used the microphone or vocoder, but had substituted her own keyboard. It lay on the floor beside her now. Floating in the middle of the room, tethered by a piece of clothesline, was a solid nickel statue. It was the same that Lukas had left.

But it was better.

The thing was esthetically blinding. It wasn't anything as *crude* as a Madonna embracing a void, but it was that idea, distilled, quantified, purified.

She waved him over with her notebook, nodding to the half-filled page where she'd been working. In her absorption she had forgotten who Lukas was, or how he'd feel. "Start with any basic contour," she said, "and take successive derivatives of all points on its surface until it resembles a Steininger Series. Any point that doesn't fit—well, just remove it. See? That's what you were doing, Lukas, only you didn't know it, by paring away. Your instincts must be mathematical."

But he ignored the notebook, her voice, herself. He walked slowly around the statue. There was simply nothing else to do, she'd said the last word. It was perfect. No one who disagreed could be right: beauty was no longer in the eyes of the beholder. The most elusive thing in the world had been quantified.

He said, "I suppose you could start with anything else, and make it perfect too. *Nereid* even."

"Perfect?"

"Esthetically."

"Oh." A shrug. "I could null it to gravity, yes. And, as a side effect I suppose—"

"Side effect," Lukas murmured.

Cidi bit a lip. After all, she wasn't completely insensitive. "It's a high price to pay," she said slowly, "even for an interstellar drive."

Peter Lukas shuffled out of the studio like a tired old man. No, not the studio, the laboratory. There weren't any studios, anymore. He went down to the kitchen, opened a beer, leaned against the sink.

When every new idea is born an old one dies. But dies hard.

As they came down past the kitchen, Paul Stoner saw him there, staring at the floor. He said goodbye but Lukas didn't look up. Paul shrugged

and went on. He'd have been more sympathetic if it wasn't so late. He felt a little foolish as he loaded Cidi, her statue, and all four of his agents into the Plymouth. Four professional protectors. He should have known better than to expect Lukas to react with his usual violence. Shattered men aren't violent.

"Everybody in?" A mumbled chorus of assent. He poked the engine to life and they started down the mountain.

They were almost out to Eighty-seven when one of the German Shepherd types in the back seat said, "Paul?"

"What?" He was irritated, busy, trying to keep the bulky sedan somewhere near the center of Lukas' impossible drive.

"I think he's coming after us."

In the rearview mirror a single light came charging. Paul Stoner tried to stop. The brakes weren't equal to it; not on this grade, not with this load. Paul licked his lips. What was that maniac going to do, ram them? The slightest nudge would put the underpowered sedan over the edge. But on a bike? He'd kill himself. No. They'd killed him already; he wouldn't care. So Paul said, "Shoot him!"

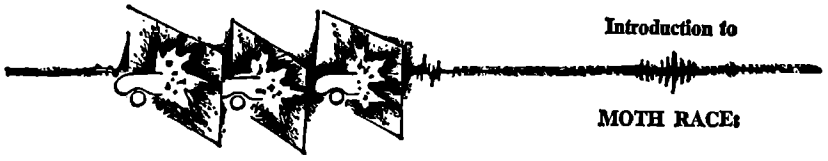
They tried. But the cycle leaped down at them like a wild animal, and was just as hard to hit. There were one or two shots at first, carefully aimed. As the avenging headlight grew brighter the shooting deteriorated into a panicked volley. The car filled with the stink and sound of pistols.

Ahead was the final turn. Behind was Lukas. In the back seat, hugging the weightless, Christless Madonna in her lap, Cidi Osborn began to laugh.

Afterword:

If you want to build something really nice, what blocks do you use; dreams or facts? Could genuine effort with either lead you to the same place? It's certain that no living painter has escaped the influence of the photograph; nor any sculptor the handiness of power tools or the pervasive rectangularity of the machine age. But could someone like Cidi actually work the thing backwards and discover something of the universe in a statue?

Yes, I think it's going to happen. For a while the romantics among us will run these people over cliffs and such, but how long can you hold something like weightlessness down?



With pants legs rolled up, I was standing calf-deep in shark-dotted waters off the coast of Florida watching a pre-Armageddon electrical storm ripping apart the horizon where the Gulf of Mexico met the night sky.

Madeira Beach, 1969.

Somewhere off to my left I could see the vague shapes of Damon, Ejler, Ben and Joanna—still bathing-suited from the day—standing in the slowly rising tide. The indistinct shadowy sounds of their conversation came blurred through the darkness. Lightning cracked the window of the sky.

I realized someone was standing near my right side, had been for some time. "It's the death of the sky," he said. I turned to look at him but he was in darkness. "Damned thing about it is, every morning it gets born again; and there aren't even any scars."

That was how I met Richard Hill.

We became friends, then he went away, then he came back and we were friends again, then he went away again and when he returned the next time we were not friends. Now it's on the mend. These things take time. Rationality doesn't help.

But all through it, there was never any doubt: it was as Damon said, "Richard Hill is a fine writer."

A brief autobiography of Richard Hill, touching high spots, reads:

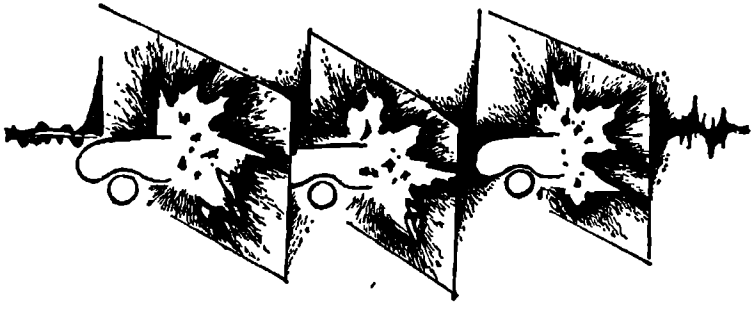
"I am twenty-nine years old, divorced, father of two sons. I was born in St. Petersburg, Florida, and live now in Los Angeles.

"I have been variously employed, as bus boy, shoe salesman, lake cleaner, lawn mower mechanic, pop corn concessionaire, ambulance driver, bread truck driver, Navy journalist, radio announcer, pizza cook, television newsman, Coast Guard reserve officer, teacher of English and humanities in high school and college, and swimming pool manager. I regret very much never having been a lumberjack or merchant seaman—those staples of writers' biographies—but it just never worked out that way. I am presently earning a meager living as a substitute teacher and free lance writer.

"I've sold two novels, the first of which, *Ghost Story,* appeared as a Live-right hardcover in September of 1971. The second, *Brave Salt,* will at-

tempt to predict the future of Haiti. I'm also working on an autobiographical novel to be entitled *Flight of the Bolo-Bat.* I've sold stories to several sf anthologies, such as *Orbit, Quark, Worlds of Tomorrow,* and this one; to little magazines like *New Campus Review, Florida Quarterly,* and *South Florida Review;* to men's magazines including *Knight, Adam,* and *Swank;* and some places I'd rather not mention. One of my stories appeared in a freshman English text and my M.A. thesis on John Dos Passos was published in the *University Bookman* and is being distributed by the USIA. I've published a couple of poems in magazines nobody ever heard of, and I've done a lot of journalism for periodicals ranging from Sunday magazines to the *L.A. Free Press* and *Rolling Stone.* I'd like eventually to write some screenplays.

"I've spent the last year or so trucking from Florida to New Orleans to California to Florida, etc., in a series of escape attempts from some unpleasant realities. I'm weary of that now. If I have any control over what happens next, I'm going to grow here in California like a barnacle."



Richard Hill

MOTH RACE

Most of them came early, flowing smoothly into the stadium and finding their seats as if by some miracle, then blinking at each other as they thought, *I'm really here at last, and it's so easy.* It was unheard-of to sit in the direct sunlight this way and they marveled at the look, feel, and smell of perspiration on themselves. There was no weather control here and some of them were actually uncomfortable for the first time in their lives. Of course they had all experienced some of the heat and smell and crowd noise through the medium in past years, but it was not the same as being here.

Although the Race would not begin for an hour or more, the stadium was nearly full. John Van Dorn had ridden the pedwalk from the transporter platform outside almost directly to his seat. He was not certain just how he had managed it and was still amazed at his accomplishment. The few people he knew who had been outside Johannesburg had told him how easy it was and now he had to admit they were right—Johannesburg to Chicago in thirty minutes. A ticket to the Race was the only way a man like John could travel, unless, of course, he won the Race. And only one man had ever done that.

More people together than he had ever seen before, and John felt the excitement they generated, at once stimulated and disturbed by it. He saw medium cameras perched around the stadium ring and around the track below, and he knew that dwellings all over the world were full of the recreated sensations of the stadium. Even those who could not go, he knew, were synched-in, hours before the Race, waiting. Those who had been before knew they could never go again. Those who hadn't hoped for a ticket next year, wondered what they could do to improve their chances. Only They—The Government—understood why some got tickets and others didn't. This year there had been a ticket for John; he did not know why.

It was the one day of the year that nobody used easypills, and John loved the unaccustomed wildness he felt in his blood. Probably They knew this would not work as well if you used easypills. But because nobody used them, there was anxiety—in dwellings where screens glowed and people sat and in the stadium itself where the lucky ones gathered. There were even a few fights; impossible any other day of the year. They were brief, chiefly because the men fighting were not used to it and were frightened by their own violence. John saw one such fight. When one man's nose began to bleed both men stopped, stared at each other in surprise for a moment, then sat down.

There was also the wine—something you could only get in the stadium —and everyone took advantage of the chance to drink it. Synthetic, of course; only the Champion, as far as John knew, got to drink real wine. It came from dispensers at the end of each row and people passed it down to others with comradely cheer. John raised his pouch and shot a stream of the delicious red stuff into his mouth. He was at the end of the row, next to the dispenser, and had only to reach for more. He was also almost directly below the dignitaries' box and would be able to see what went on there. He filled his mouth again and thought, as he slowly swallowed, about those outside, watching him drink and wondering how it tasted; or watching him and knowing they would never taste it again. He didn't know

why, but the taste and effect of the wine was never broadcast over the medium.

John turned and looked at the dignitaries' box and saw the Champion. He must have just come and, as the murmur of acknowledgement passed through the crowd, John thought, *How close he is, I could walk five feet and touch him.*

Gray-haired and imposing, with lined face, the Champion looked fixedly at the track, ignoring the chatter of the unknown dignitaries seated around him. Some complained he was an unsatisfactory Champion—too quiet or egotistical and reluctant to talk about himself. After all, they argued, was it not part of a Champion's duties to share his experiences with others? At least that was the theory; but since there had never been another Champion, comparisons were impossible.

John could remember when there was no Champion at all and, very dimly, the times before the Races. The Race had been held for five years before there was a Champion, and people whispered that They were thinking of stopping them because it appeared no one could win. Then the Champion came and the rumors stopped.

Like everyone else in the world, John had followed him on the medium. For seven years now they had watched him hunt lions, fish for marlin, climb mountains—all in off-limits areas where none of them could go. They had shared his romance with Rita Landers, the medium star and the only one in the world whose fame approached his. Of course there were Government officials, some of them in the dignitaries' box with him now, but nobody knew or cared about them. They were not the real Government anyway, only its physical representatives. Or so, at least, John suspected, though he never spoke of it with anyone. He had once seen the Champion on an iceberg, and thought the Government must be like that—mostly out of sight and different from what it appeared.

There was a rumor that Rita Landers—every man's idea of perfect beauty—was the result of an experiment in genetics which They had abandoned after creating her. Since They had her, the rumor went, They decided to make her the only medium star, a receptacle of men's desires. It was shortly after her rise to fame that the Champion won.

The people had all seen the Champion make love to other women—an endless string of them chosen from all over the world. They were not Rita Landers, but they were the best that accidental breeding could produce. And the people had *experienced* as well as seen the Champion's conquests through the medium. They had sex themselves, but never with such variety. And they had dined, through him, on food none of them could ever have. They took their vitamin-enriched yeast and algaepills three times a

day and waited to experience his meals--shiny red lobsters with plump, white meat, succulent roasts and steaks, chickens with shiny brown crusts from roasting, and much more. All this was only part of the winner's prize. It was one of the reasons men raced.

John would never race, although as a member of the audience he was eligible. Probably some of the men around him would try, lured by the possibility of a life like the Champion's. Some always did.

"What do you think?" a man beside him asked.

"About what?"

"About the race. What do you think I'm talking about?"

His accent was difficult to identify. There were still many dialects of English, despite the influence of the medium. Remnants, John guessed, of the days before Language Unification, influence of the original tongue on English. John hadn't heard many other dialects; he didn't think of his own speech as dialect.

"Of course it's exciting," he said.

"Will you race?"

"Not me, I'm on the list to be married."

"Who isn't?" the man laughed. "But we got about as much chance of marrying as we do of winning this race." The man jabbed him in the ribs as he laughed. A local custom, maybe, but that was how the fights started.

"I still have hope," John said. "I want a child."

"The world has enough children," said the man, looking up, "but we could use another champion."

"Don't you like him?"

"Sure I admire him," said the man, "but why can't he loosen up? Hell, it's undemocratic. What's a champion for if not to tell us what it's like to stick it in old Rita Landers and those other chunks, huh?"

"But we all had it on the medium," John said, remembering how aroused he and Betty had been afterward.

"Okay, good but not good enough. You remember what he said afterward when reporters asked him? 'You saw for yourselves.' If that isn't arrogance for you! I want to hear him *talk* about it."

"He did seem excited about that African girl," John said, remembering how strangely the Champion had behaved in that interview. "She must have been something. Sometimes it doesn't come across on the medium."

"Yeah, yeah, true love. Too bad they wouldn't let him stay with her. Poor, poor man. But how about the rest? Imagine having all the ass in the world, being moved from one choice cunt to another and having nothing more to say than that." He glanced, almost fearfully, at the Champion again. "Besides, I don't like the idea of him preferring that black."

"Did you take your pills today?" John asked him.

"Of course not. Damn you, nobody does on the day of the . . ." He realized what John was asking him and looked embarrassed. It was the first prejudice John had seen in years. The easypills usually took care of that.

"I wouldn't be that way," said a voice to John's left. He was younger than John, really only a boy. "I'd be a good champion."

"Hah," said the other man. "You wouldn't know what to do with Rita Landers."

The boy was on his feet. "Take that back," he said, trembling.

The man hesitated, then dropped his eyes. "What the hell," he said finally, "you won't race anyway."

"But I will," said the boy, as if he'd just made up his mind. "I'm going now."

The boy began walking down the ramp. John had an impulse to stop him, but didn't. After all, without racers there could be no Race. Perhaps he would make it. After all, the Champion had.

"Well, what do you think of that?" asked the man. "He's really going to do it."

John looked away and didn't answer.

There were six racers on the track now, one more than last year. Perhaps there would be others, although it was rare for others to volunteer after the Race had begun.

A boy like this one who had just gone down might have been expected to live another eighty or ninety years before he failed his physical. He would never be ill, never hungry, never anxious, neither too hot nor too cold, never without a sexual partner. If he wanted a child, he could get on the list like everyone else and maybe before he was too old he could get permission to have one. If he were exceptional, he might even go to college and do something really important, like work in the undersea food farms or in a moon lab. He might be selected for one of the colonies or join the Government if his tests indicated such an aptitude. Then he could have a travel permit, at least on a need basis, and would not have to wait, like the shop people, for the Race and hope for a ticket just to leave his city.

Yet he and others did it, risked everything just to be heroes. If being a hero was all you wanted, that was the way. Even those who lost the Race became famous, had their pictures all over the world for a year. But it had never made sense to John. He had his moments of foolishness when it occurred to him, but then he would think of Betty's warmth and softness, and smile. Why should he risk losing that? Or he would think again of how hopeless it was to win, that the Race was rigged, and the thought would

frighten him. There was something about the spectacle that disturbed him; though he would never admit it to anyone.

The six below presented their info cassettes to the recorder so that everything about them could be digested before the Race. They waited as the computer worked. He saw the boy move his feet nervously. Once the computer had your cassette you had to go.

The cars were lined up at the starting gate. They seemed smaller than in years past when he'd seen them on the medium. They were bright-colored aluminum machines with room for only the driver.

The gates were buried in the track now, apparently under the control of the track computer. John realized with surprise that he was already sunburned and that the wine was working on him. He looked around the crowd, noticing that the noise level had risen and that the others, too, were affected. It was a strange feeling, something like power and something like courage, as though those words were just beginning to have meaning. The track was clear now and the crane stood ominously in the infield. The sight of it sobered John somewhat.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the Race will begin in five minutes."

The announcer's voice surprised him. He hadn't realized Race time was so close. Tension was heavy in the air and the crowd noise was suddenly hushed.

The language of the program was simple, low key, nothing to detract from the serious purpose of the day. They would never have allowed this, John thought vaguely, if it were not serious and important. He didn't know where the idea had come from, though there had been rumors about that too. One was that the social engineers or whoever controlled them were worried about the easypills. They were not sure that undesirable behavior would not somehow come to the surface despite the easypills. Nor were they certain that everyone could be trusted to take them. Strict enforcement was possible but not desirable. They wanted some way to release the tension the pills merely covered up. Someone had come up with the Race.

"The events here today," said the announcer, "are serious and of great magnitude for the world. We have gathered to admire the courage of those who race today, and to praise once again our great Champion."

The crowd was immediately on its feet, despite the earlier grumbling, applauding wildly as the grizzled Champion stood. All the wine-reddened and sunburnt faces grinned, and there was even more noise. Wine skins plopped to the floor. The other dignitaries with the Champion were clapping and trying to shake his hand, trying to draw some of his glory to themselves. John realized that Rita Landers had arrived and was now standing

beside the Champion. As though true to some ancient ritual, she had arrived at the last minute.

"Champ," the crowd screamed, "Rita, Champ, Rita, Champ, Rita." John was caught up in their emotion. Surely there had never been two more desirable and admirable people, he thought, and his eyes were wet with tears of pride. Yet somehow the Champion seemed untouched by the crowd, almost sad and bored. John chanted louder, as though that would break the Champion from his dark mood, and the tears streamed down his sun-reddened cheeks. He yelled until he grew dizzy and had to sit down.

Finally the crowd's noise began to subside, but not completely. There was now that frenzied undertone he remembered hearing from the medium at other Races. This was what they had come for.

The announcer knew it and moved them expertly. "Our first racer," he said before they could begin their chant again, "is Sadakichi Muramoto from Tokyo. He is twenty-five years old and works in Shop Thirteen." The announcer went on, using the computer-organized biography. By the time he had finished, John felt he knew the man from Tokyo—no, felt he *was* the man from Tokyo.

Then it was time for the first Race. Sadakichi climbed into his car, a red one, and was pushed the few feet to the starting line. An official stood by a button with his hand raised. There was, as everyone knew, no controlling the speed. It was 60 miles an hour, calculated to round the track in two minutes—if the driver could avoid the gates. The gates would rise as the computer determined, at various places along the five lanes. At that speed, it was unrealistic to try to avoid them; indeed, by the time the car reached one it might well have snapped back into the track. It was all simply a matter of chance. There was no controlling one's fate on the track. Yet almost every driver tried.

Muramoto got almost a mile, weaving from lane to lane, before a gate rose in front of him. He swerved to avoid it and ran into another which had risen where a moment before no gate had been. The gate he had swerved to avoid was already back in place by the time his car impacted. The car crumpled, as it was designed to do, like an accordion.

"Oh," breathed the crowd as one. Then individual shouts of, "Oh no," and, "He's hit it."

All around him people were crying and John felt tears again in his own eyes. It was difficult to remember from year to year what it was like. The easypills probably prevented that. But this was it, all right, and much stronger than what you got through the medium. His head throbbed with the wine as he let his emotions be purged with the others. "He was such a promising young man," a woman near him moaned. "Why couldn't he

make it?" She was comforted by a man sitting next to her. "It's all right," he said sadly. "You know they have to try." "But you can't beat the gates," she said.

"The Champion did," the man said, without much conviction.

The crane moved smoothly to the place on the track where the car had struck and lifted it. The gate snapped back into place unharmed and the crane deposited crumpled car and driver into a vehicle waiting on the infield. There would be a collective burial of drivers in their cars after the Race.

"Our next racer," said the announcer, his own voice full of emotion, "is a man from . . ."

And so it continued. John knew why it was better to be here at the stadium than to experience it at home. The crowd was as one, sharing its collective sorrow and strength. There was no more hatred, no more separation. After the third racer—a woman named Consuela from Buenos Aires who barely got away from the starting line before a gate crushed her like a moth against a moving transport window—he saw the man who had shown bigotry earlier, walk down three rows to put his hand on a weeping black woman's shoulder. Everyone was crying now, except the Champion. John saw him above, sitting impassively while Rita wept on his shoulder.

The boy was last. They saw him hesitate, then climb into a yellow car. The official's hand came down and he was off, attaining top speed almost immediately. He too chose to dodge from lane to lane. The second-hand moved on the stadium clock as he got farther around the track. *You're from Jacksonville,* John thought as the tiny car moved. *You work in Shop Thirty-six. Your name is Henry Matthews. All of that must count. Make it count.*

Then a gate caught him too.

You can't beat the gates.

It was the last Race, so the crowd released its pity and relaxed its fear for all the racers. The stadium was filled with it. The Race was over now and they mourned their heroes well. But in the process they prepared themselves to carry on. *We did not race,* they thought. *We must go on living.* They felt a load had been lifted from them. They felt almost lighthearted.

But suddenly there was a commotion. People turned to look. It was the wrong time for a disturbance and they resented it.

"The Champion," someone said.

John, too, looked behind and saw the Champion standing. His expression had not changed. He still looked bored.

The Champion did beat the gates, they remembered together.

Was he going to speak? John wondered. He had never spoken voluntarily before. John stood and turned around to see better. Then he noticed Rita pulling on the Champion's arm.

"No, no!" she screamed. Dignitaries tried to hold him back, and were shrugged off. The Champion began to walk down the ramp.

John still did not understand until someone screamed, "He's going to race!" Yes, he thought as he watched the Champion come down the ramp toward him, it could only mean that.

But why? John wondered, and heard voices in the crowd echo his question. He had everything in the world he could want. He had travel and women and food and adventure and fame. He had earned it already and did not have to earn it again.

The Champion looked at some in the crowd as he passed. John was one of those whose eyes met his—for long minutes it seemed—and he felt drowned in sadness. He felt the Champion was trying to tell him something.

Was that it? Could the Champion be tired of his life? Was there something about it none of them knew—something to confirm John's nagging doubts—that could make him do this? The wine had his head so hot, so confused. It was a terrifying idea and John fought to put it from his mind. Surely that wasn't what the Champion had tried to tell him. But the way he had *looked* at him.

Then the Champion was walking onto the field. He spoke briefly with the announcer, who appeared not to know what to do. The announcer disappeared for a few minutes, then reappeared at the microphone.

"The Champion will defend his title," he said softly.

A silver-gray car, the color of the Champion's hair, was rolled onto the track. With no hesitation he climbed in and allowed it to be pushed to the line.

The crowd was becoming hysterical. "No, don't let him," John heard, and turned to see Rita struggling with two of the dignitaries. But the crowd picked it up. "Don't let him," they began to chant. "Don't let him," John chanted with them. But when he looked back the Race had begun.

The Champion had won the first time by driving straight down the center lane. He knew the odds and didn't try to outmaneuver the gates. Others had tried his system without success. But there was no doubt it had worked for him and he was using it again this time. Already he was beginning the second mile and still moving. Did he have some special charm? *The Champion made it.* Would the luck that brought him through the first time bring him through again?

Then suddenly the Champion was gone, an unseen but felt red explo-

sion inside a silver-gray lump of aluminum. The crane did not move, as though it could not believe its next task.

There was a deep and long silence.

Then there was a growing noise in the stadium. John realized part of it was coming from him. At first it was inarticulate, like the cries of animals, then it found words. "He's gone," someone screamed. "There's no more Champion." "We've lost him." *The Champion didn't make it.*

A pounding grew in John's head and became a refrain with which he led the crowd. "We need a Champion. We need a Champion."

He did not know its origin, not even, really, its meaning. But it was there, throbbing in his head, overwhelming him completely. It had now been communicated to the others and the whole stadium shook with the sound. "We need a Champion! We need a Champion! We need a Champion!"

Then suddenly it was, "I will be the Champion! I will be the Champion! I will be the Champion!"

Then he was running, down the ramp, toward the track, waving his arms and shouting, "I will, I will, I will!"

And behind him came others.

Afterword:

Sometimes it seems to me the modern world can only be viewed as conspiracy. The Right tends to credit communism with planning race riots and campus disorders. SDS believes the military-industrial complex conspires to keep the Viet Nam war alive and deadly. And how difficult it is to believe it was Oswald alone, or James Earl Ray alone, or even Sirhan alone. Having no faith that God is alive, let alone in control, we credit men with the most prodigious powers of conspiring to make us unhappy.

There's a nice paradox here. We need to have faith in the ability of our fellow men to conspire against us. Even those of us who reject most conspiratorial theories find them fascinating and somehow reassuring. Because if we can't believe that a god planned our troubles, and if we don't believe men planned them, then we come face to face with the unplanned event, the random twitch, chaos and the void.

The writer must impose some sort of order on the chaos of experience, and writers have, it seems to me, relied more and more on the idea of conspiracy as a pattern of organization. Such different novels as Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light* and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* are built around conspiracies. In the case of the latter, as with many of the black humorists, an absurd universe requires an absurd conspiracy. We

see, in Barth, Burroughs and others, a protagonist who creeps behind the proscenium arch of the puppet show for a look at those pulling the strings. He may find the controllers as mad as the puppets, or he may find that they too have strings, connected to others with strings, connected to . . . Despite the release of dark laughter at such knowledge, it is not a pleasant experience.

This is another conspiracy story and it is not pleasant. It was most unpleasant to write, and I usually enjoy writing. It began with the image of a race rigged against any possibility of winning, of men going down to fling themselves like moths against steel gates because someone has learned to manipulate some of their best qualities to keep them enslaved. Usually I let an idea gestate, but I pushed this one, I think because I didn't want to understand it too well. I wanted to share the ignorance and terror of my protagonist as he groped for understanding.

He never sees behind the curtains, though he suspects—because he is something of a misfit in his beehive world—that all is not for the best. He wonders, in a rare use of metaphor, what is at the bottom of the iceberg, but he never finds out. Nor do you, except as you use what I've given you from his limited point of view to extrapolate.

So you build your own conspiracy. And you decide why the Champion went down and whether his act liberated or further enslaved the world he abandoned. And you make up your mind what Aristotle and Hugh Hefner have to do with the story. And you tell me whether it could ever happen or not.



Along with such great unsolved mysteries of the universe as a) Who was Kaspar Hauser? b) What significance did the Easter Island statues originally have? c) Did Pancho Villa really shoot Ambrose Bierce d) What was Jack the Ripper's real identity? and e) How did Erich Segal ever become a popular writer? two things have long puzzled me:

1. Why, though there are numerous sf writers who are Jewish, has there been so little Hebraically-based sf or fantasy? The background is certainly rich enough.

2. Why, though it is certainly ripe for being poked fun at, has there been so little memorable humorous sf and fantasy? God knows much of what's written is laughable without intentionally being meant to evoke laughter.

With the exceptions of a few Avram Davidson stories, an extraordinary new novel from Ballantine by Isidore Haiblum titled *The Tsaddik of the Seven Wonders,* an occasional *dybbuk* or *golem,* a marvelous Carol Carr short in *Orbit 5* titled "Look, You Think You've Got Troubles," some of the early Fredric Brown cavorts, Harry Harrison's *Bill, the Galactic Hero,* some Sheckley, some Goulart and most of Larry Eisenberg's stuff (remember "What Happened to Auguste Clarot?" in DV?), there's neither very much *yiddishe* sf or very much funny sf. If it weren't for Isaac Bashevis Singer, where would we be?

Though these two conundrums will never be satisfactorily solved, every once in a while we get some lunatic in our midst—like Lafferty—who does that dandy little rigadoon and we naively believe the balance will at last be corrected. But it's only one story, by one writer, and when it has faded into the past, we wonder again.

Wonder no more.

Both questions are answered, at least temporarily, with Leonard Tushnet.

The mad M.D. from Maplewood, New Jersey—who piously refuses to impart any personal information on himself—here whips off an hilarious vision that includes among its many dangers, the possibility of having one's heart attack oneself, from laughter. With the Vonnegut and the Wilson and the McCullough and the Blish stories, it helps bring things more into balance, proving that we of the sf world are not such humorless bastards as we may seem to the outside world.

(On the other hand, any genre that can contain Asimov, without blushing, can hardly be said to be humorless.)

(Dr. A. indeed!)

And while we have no further specs for the private life of Dr. Tushnet, here are publication *vitae* that may tell you almost more than you wanted to know about where more Tushnet can be located.

Nonetheless, there is no questioning that the Tushnet terpsichore is a *mitzvah.*

Short Stories (* indicates science fiction)

Ball State Forum	A Goodly Apple
	Bobby Booby
The Christian	Cards
Cimarron Review	Dangerous Books
De Kalb Literary Arts Quarterly	Poire Helene
Diagnostica	The Dance of Justice
	The Barred Hut
Discourse	Thanks
Fantasy & Science Fiction Magazine	In the Calendar of Saints*
	The Chelmlins*
	Gifts from the Universe**, ***
	The Worm Shamir*
	Lord of Sensation*
	Matchmaker, Matchmaker*
	Aunt Jennie's Tonic*
Forum	A Little Fatherly Advice
	The Rod of Aesculapius
Four Quarters	The Nearest Field
	Obituary
	Bandiera Rossa
Jewish Currents	The Ban
	The Gastric Jews
	The Yellow Passport
Jewish Frontier	The Sewing Machine***
	The Culture Vulture
	The View Depends on Where You Sit
	Benefit of Clergy
	A Jewish Heart
Journal of the A.M.A.	The Weight of Evidence
Maelstrom	Lotte

** Included in anthology, *Best from Fantasy & Science Fiction,* Doubleday, 1969
*** Dramatized and produced (1964, 1966)

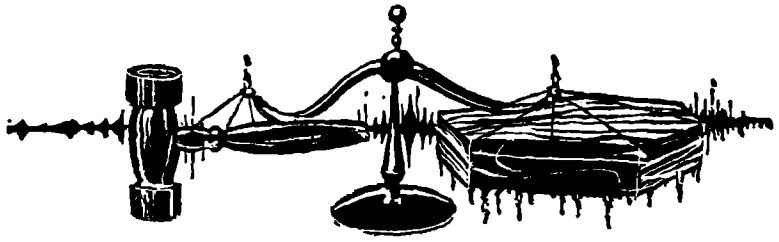
Medical Opinion & Review	A Cynical Fable
Midwestern University Quarterly	Summer Job
Modern Age	New York Is Full of Lonely People
Mosaic	Adoshem*
National Jewish Monthly	The Non-Resister
New Dimensions	A Plague of Cars
New Frontiers	Supper on the Table
New Mexico Quarterly	The Logic of Magic
Nimrod	Balaam
Penman	The Integration of DeWitt Manor
Per Se	The Discount Store
Prairie Schooner	A Pious Old Man with a Beard
	A Week with Lilith
	Raisins in the Cabbage
	The Klausners****
	The Village Priest
Reconstructionist	Experiment in Paradise*
	A Joyful Noise
Reign of the Sacred Heart	A Minor Miracle
Roanoke Review	Some Pounds of Flesh
Today Magazine	For Which the First
Twigs	The Red Dress
University Review	Mother of the Gracchi
	I'm Not a Snob
	A Short Flight into the Invisible
Wind	When Fond Recollection

Books (non-fiction)
To Die With Honor (Citadel Press, 1965)
The Medicine Men (St. Martin's Press, 1971)
The Uses of Adversity (Thomas Yoseloff, 1966)

Articles

Chicago Jewish Forum	King Chaim Rumkowski
Eucharist	A Priest at the Bedside
Jewish Currents	The Little Doctor*
Journal of History of Medicine	The Ghetto of Lodz
	Murder by Disease

**** Included in anthology, *Best American Short Stories of 1971*, Houghton Mifflin, 1971
* Included in anthology, *They Fought Back*, ed. Yuri Suhl, (Crown, 1967)



Leonard Tushnet

IN RE GLOVER

In re Glover finally reached the Supreme Court. The nine Justices, in their Friday conference, were unanimous that a writ of certiorari be granted and that the case be heard. Unanimous on those points, they had already made up their separate minds about various phases of the case and each of them was already preparing a memorandum for his opinion. *In re Glover* would set landmarks in law, in a new field of law as well as in the laws of wills, mortmain, trusts, and homicide, with overtones to be subtly discussed in *obiter dicta* bearing on euthanasia and medical and legal malpractice.

It looked, on the surface, like a simple case of merely determining the facts, ordinarily not in the purview of such an august body as the Supreme Court of the United States. Ralph Glover, the brilliant and dynamic founder of the many-sided business empire bearing his name had died—or had he? If he were dead, his four sons by his first wife and his two daughters by his second (both wives having predeceased him, if that term could be used without prejudice) were due to inherit the entire estate, share and share alike, after a number of relatively minor bequests had been paid; the great Glover Foundation, the internationally known medical research institution, was to get nothing, having been the recipient of munificent gifts during its founder's lifetime; the Federal government and the states of residence of the heirs were eargerly anticipating the considerable inheritance taxes. If he were not dead, the trustees of the tax-free Glover Foundation would continue to receive, as they had for five years now, all revenues from the many corporations constituting the Glover enterprises; the children were to fend for themselves, meaning that the sons and sons-in-law would have to find jobs; and the Federal and State governments would have to wait until Glover's actual demise to collect.

Mr. Allen Freundlich, J., in the succinct manner for which he was noted, summarized the scientific background thus: (1) When living tissues are frozen, the ice crystals formed by the frozen intracellular water

occupy a larger space than liquid water; hence the cell walls are ruptured and tissue death ensues. (2) The chemical, dimethylsulfoxide, commonly know as DMSO, had the remarkable property of being able to bind to itself intracellular water, so that below 0° Centigrade no ice crystals are formed and cell structure, except for its physical state, remains unchanged. (3) When DMSO is injected intravenously into the body of a small mammal, that mammal by a quick-freezing process could withstand the lowering of its body temperature to well below the freezing point of water and could then remain in that frozen state, like packaged meat in a supermarket, without tissue damage and with suspension of all vital functions. (4) It could then be slowly returned to its normal temperature and those functions would return, including resumption of activity in the higher cerebral centers. Rats, so frozen and later thawed out, ate and drank and copulated and ran easily through the paths of mazes they had previously learned, just as they had before the artificially induced hibernation or state of suspended animation. Experiments had demonstrated that such hibernation was without harm for at least ten years and probably longer, but it was only ten years ago that the first batch of animals had been frozen. (5) What was true of rats was true of larger mammals, including primates. Rhesus monkeys, a gibbon, and two chimpanzees had successfully survived the process; the chimpanzees had thereafter been mated and been shown to be fertile. (6) The procedure had no ill effects on the animals other than that they developed cataracts, opacification of the lenses of the eyes, a condition easily correctible by surgery. (7) Once thawed out, however, re-freezing could not take place without damage to vital organs; why this should occur was not known.

Mr. Henry Gibson, J., gave the stipulated facts: Mr. Ralph Glover, aged sixty-two, in full possession of his faculties, suffering from an inoperable cancer of the pancreas which had spread to his liver, had had DMSO injected and had been artificially frozen. He (or his body) was now lying in the freezer vaults of the Abby C. Glover Memorial Hospital in New York City; the vaults ordinarily were used to preserve cadavers for dissection. The injection and the subsequent freezing had been done by a medical team headed by Doctors Green and Hankey, who assumed full responsibility for their actions. They had acted under instructions of Mr. Ralph Glover himself. The letter of instructions was in the exhibits; it had been carefully drawn up by the highly reputable firm of Shires, Band, and Jarvis, and Mr. Glover's signature had been witnessed by the senior partners. The letter, in the form of a contract between Doctors Green and Hankey and Ralph Glover, gave full and free permission to carry out the procedure, its purpose being the maintenance of Glover's life; he (or his

body) was to remain in suspended animation until such time as a cure for cancer was discovered; he was then to be thawed out and restored to activity (or life?). During the period of hibernation Doctors Green and Hankey or successors appointed by them were to be joint agents with full powers of attorney to act for Ralph Glover in any and all capacities and were to use the net profits of all the Glover enterprises for intensive cancer research.

The case had first been brought up in Surrogate's Court in New York, where Adolf Brun, Glover's chauffeur, had sued for a declaration that his employer was dead and had demanded that his will be admitted to probate so that he could receive the $1000 bequest his (ex-?) employer had informed him he was to have. Then the complications started. The Glover Foundation said that Ralph Glover was still alive and that to probate the will was premature, to say the least. Three of the heirs (?) sued in a lower Federal court (because of the diversity of citizenship) for distribution of the assets of the estate of their deceased (?) father. Doctors Green and Hankey were indicted and found guilty of wilful homicide in that they knowingly caused death by the injection of a noxious drug. They appealed their convictions on the ground that error had been committed by the trial judge when he admitted evidence (?) that Ralph Glover was indeed dead when he was not, that evidence having consisted of the inspection by the medical examiner of the body (?) in the freezer vault. The five man Court of Appeals, sitting *en banc*, upheld the conviction, but Judge Minglin dissented strongly, saying that the supposed decedent was *in posse* alive and that no *corpus delicti* was produced.

The ordinance requiring an autopsy to be performed on all persons suspected of having died by violence was invoked by Archibald Smythe, a son-in-law, but a temporary injunction against such an autopsy was granted on petition of Luke Glover, a son. He challenged the city's right to order the mutilation of a corpse (?) without permission of the near relatives, especially since such a corpse (?) was not available, as Judge Minglin had pointed out.

The heirs (?), in addition, brought suit for medical malpractice against Doctors Green and Hankey and the Abby C. Glover Memorial Hospital, where the procedure was carried out. They won a very large award, which was being contested by the Caducean Medical Liability Insurance Company, which said that the heirs (?) had no substantive right to sue on the behalf of an adult individual who was alive and who was capable, when he was restored to full consciousness, of saying whether or not he had been injured by the procedure.

Certain members of the New York State Bar Associaion had asked for

a vote of censure of the firm of Shires, Band, and Jarvis for violation of ethical standards of the bar, in that the firm participated in the drawing up of a contract that was grossly immoral and fraudulent. By a very narrow margin the vote was held up pending the report of an *ad hoc* committee. The committee was seeking from the courts an opinion whether the contract was fraudulent in its statement of purpose, which implied human immortality, a state inconsistent with fact and contrary to the Blasphemy Act passed during the early days of the sovereign State of New York and never repealed. The Society for the Advancement of Atheism asked leave to submit a brief *amicus curiae* to show that the Act contravened the First Amendment to the Constitution.

Furthermore, the firm of Shires, Band, and Jarvis was being charged by the Attorney General of the State of New York with entering into a conspiracy against public policy, that policy being that no man had a right to commit suicide. The doctors, as well, were accused of spreading a vile and pernicious doctrine, one that had been condemned in the American courts in *Wiggins v. Moore* and internationally in the Nuremberg trials, to wit, that the lives of hopelessly ill patients could be taken without impunity under the guise of easing their suffering and pain.

The State Tax Commissions of the sovereign states of California, New York, Ohio, and Florida also sued for distribution of the assets of the Glover estate because acceptance of the continued existence of Ralph Glover in his present state (alive or dead) would be a novel evasion of the laws regarding mortmain, in that a corporation controlling land and property was preventing the just payment of taxes due to the states.

The Federal government brought action to void the tax-exempt status of the Glover Foundation on the basis that it existed solely for the purpose of keeping a man alive (?), a laudable goal but not one covered by existing tax laws regarding charitable trusts.

The Glover Foundation itself, through motion by a majority of its trustees, sought to have Doctors Green and Hankey removed from their posts because they were convicted felons and hence had no legal right to act as agents for Ralph Glover. In this they were supported by the directors of General Diatronics and Magnolia Consolidated, Glover subsidiaries, who refused to obey a court order to turn over the net profits of the companies to the doctors.

Doctors Green and Hankey, furthermore, sued to set aside the ruling of the New York State Board of Health that the body (?) of Ralph Glover be buried or cremated according to local ordinances and state law, five years being too long and too repugnant to good taste and morals to keep a corpse (?) on ice, so to speak.

The doctors also sought a declaratory judgment from the Food and Drug Administration that DMSO was a harmless drug incapable of causing death in the dosage used on Glover; the judgment was refused on the tenuous ground that the Administration, as a branch of the Executive, never intervened in a matter before the judicial arm of the government.

An injunction was sought and obtained by Agnes Litinsky, one of the minor legatees, against any attempt at thawing out, on the ground that she had a vested interest in the estate and until final adjudication should be made she was not to be disturbed in that right. The injunction was put aside on petition of Countess de Croix, one of Glover's daughters. She, in turn, wanted a legal guardian appointed for her father, he being incapable and incompetent in his present state of health of managing his own affairs; that plea was fought by two of her brothers and one sister, whose lawyers argued that it was absurd to appoint a guardian for a dead man.

The tangled web was now before the Court. By agreement of the parties concerned, all the cases were consolidated for final judgment, hinging as they did on the question of the quick or dead status of Ralph Glover. To the voluminous briefs of the pleaders were appended those of the organizations given leave to participate as *amici curiae*, the most important of which were the Society of Experimental Biologists and the American Cryologic Association. The former argued that judgment adverse to the doctors would set back developments in organ transplantation techniques because of the fear physicians would then have were there untoward results. The latter protested that to characterize freezing of living persons as murder was to invade the liberty of an individual to do with his body as he pleased.

The Chief Justice ordered the Gordian knot to be cut. He was proud of his suggestion: that the body (?) of Ralph Glover be inspected by a special master who would then give his opinion whether Ralph Glover was dead. He was chagrined at the report of the special master, who had taken a team of medical forensic experts with him for the inspection. The special master said that the electroencephalograms were equivocal; they showed none of the brain waves normally present in living persons, nor did the electrocardiograms show any evidence of electrical current in the heart muscle; however, he pointed out, at the very low temperature at which the body (?) was maintained, electrical conductivity was expected to be minimal, if present at all. No pulse nor heart beat nor respiratory movements were found. Those findings were of equally little value because, as had been shown in the famous Warsaw Hunger Project, the time when life departed was difficult to ascertain when metabolism was close to zero. Blood, because it was frozen, could not be drawn for oxygen level deter-

mination. Examination of the eye grounds to see the state of the blood vessels was impossible because of the clouding of the lenses and the opacification of the aqueous and vitreous humors. No lividity of the dependent tissues was found, a condition which should have occurred a few hours after death, not to say five years. To further confuse the picture, a small section of skin was taken for biopsy (or autopsy); when thawed out its microscopic detail showed cloudy swelling of the cells, a common sign of death but also, alas! present in cachectic or wasting states such as advanced cancer.

The Justices read the report and looked at each other glumly. Mr. Robert Gordon, J., an irascible old man who refused to retire and who had no use for newfangled ideas, snorted, "Well, that gets us nowhere. All right, let's issue a writ of habeas corpus. Let the body be brought into court." He chuckled. "That way it'll have to be unfrozen. If the man's alive, all the cases fall out. If he's permanently dead—what an expression!—judgment will be easy in every case."

Mr. William Cluney, J., the most junior member of the Bench, pursed his lips and said, "I wish to remind my learned brother that we cannot issue the writ as an original matter except in the sharply delimited areas within our jurisdiction. Also, even as an appellate court, we can issue it only to determine if the corpus is detained by an inferior court that has acted without jurisdiction or in excess of authority. To do otherwise would require an act of Congress extending our power. Can you imagine the uproar if we asked for that after our segregation and civil rights decisions?"

The Chief Justice nodded. "I agree. That we cannot do. But my brother's suggestion has merit. Let us order that the corpus be thawed out for the purpose of determining his (or its) intentions in the letter of instructions. We have an out there. Glover said that the purpose of the procedure was to maintain his life until a cure for cancer was found. That is too indeterminate a date. It is the equivalent of the establishment of a trust in perpetuity. We can say a term must be put to the period of refrigeration and that term must be stated *viva voce* or by sworn affidavit by Glover himself."

Justice Freundlich shook his head. "That won't do. If we order the thawing out we shall be interfering with the terms of the contract with the doctors. He cannot be refrozen. We can order the contract broken only if it is contrary to public policy or to a specific statute. Otherwise we are in effect condemning Glover to a real death—if he's not dead already."

"Furthermore," Justice Gibson broke in, "we cannot order the doctors, who have been found guilty of homicide, to carry out the thawing process

without the tacit assumption that they are not guilty and that the corpus is revivable. That is the same as our finding that Glover is indeed alive without any evidence to prove our belief. And, if we feel that he is alive, then there is no need for the thawing out. Something else. If we issue such an order we are returning to trial by ordeal. If the man's alive, the doctors are free of the homicide charge but exposed to suits for enormous damages by the Glover Foundation and by Glover himself for breach of contract. If the man is dead, they are incriminating themselves by their failure to—to—to resurrect him."

The meeting was adjourned without a decision. To put on a show to indicate that they knew what they were doing, they assigned their bright young law clerks to the preparation of memoranda on the nature of contracts made in anticipation of death, on the responsibility of lunatics (specifically those with a pathologic *horror mortis*) in the making of agreements, and on the laws concerning the duties of physicians to their patients in the presence of certain death.

On the following Monday the union of stationary firemen and operating engineers went on strike in New York City. It was an inopportune time for hospitals and other institutions depending on auxiliary generators in an emergency, for on Wednesday came the tremendous lightning storm on the upper East coast that blew down power lines and knocked out electrical grids. New York City had no electricity for fourteen hours.

Naturally, all refrigerating systems were affected. No ice was available for highballs, meat spoiled in food lockers, and vaccines and other biological supplies were ruined.

The Abby C. Glover Memorial Hospital and its freezing vaults did not escape the effects of the power failure. All the animals in suspended animation died. So finally did Ralph Glover, as Doctors Hankey and Green sadly reported to their attorneys, who promptly telegraphed the news to Washington.

On Friday the Justices met again. The Chief Justice heaved a sigh of relief when his very brief opinion *In re Glover* was read and when for the first time in six years the Court was unanimous in supporting him. They agreed, 9–0, to accept as their judgment, "This Court finds that Ralph Glover died by an act of God on an indeterminable date." Thereby they sidestepped all issues raised in the pleadings before the Court. There followed a series of orders remanding the disputed cases back to the lower courts for final disposition.

The Countess de Croix, out of a sense of filial duty and to take advantage of loopholes in the tax regulations, organized a non-profit corpora-

tion, called the DMSO-Cryobiologic Institute, under the laws of the State of Delaware. Its stated purpose was to repeat the same procedure as was used for her father on human volunteers. A permanent injunction against such experimentation was sought by the Anti-Vivisection Society in spite of the fact that to date no one has yet volunteered, an indication of lack of faith in the American power industry.

Afterword:

Determining the exact time of death (or birth) is very important in forensic medicine. When I was an intern, the first squawk of the baby was registered by the assisting nurse as the time it was born. For twins this is obviously necessary but for single births the time is also material. Consider—if two sisters give birth in the same hour (as has happened in my practice) and the grandfather has left a sum of money to the oldest grandchild, who came first is of decided moment.

As for the time of death, every doctor can testify it is a pain (physically and emotionally) to "pronounce" a patient dead, especially when death occurs at three A.M. or another time equally inconvenient for the attending physician. And yet—*when* the patient died is important, and not only in detective stories. Did he predecease his wife in a common accident or a mutual suicide pact? Was he alive at the time of death of another person who left him money?

Today, in the sanguinary era of cardiac transplants, the exact time of death is of extreme importance. Already malpractice suits and charges of willful homicide have been brought against doctors who participated in a cardiac transplant operation. Furthermore, now it is possible to maintain the semblance of life (if a vegetable is considered alive) by various artificial measures. A delicate problem in medical ethics has arisen. Is it the duty of the doctor "officiously to keep alive" the hopelessly ill patient? But then who will be the callous judge who will take on himself the responsibility of stopping the intravenouses, the cardiac stimulation, the artificial respiration? A papal statement has decried the unnecessary and meaningless prolongation of what is called life when recovery is hopeless. The Swedish medical authorities have permitted the ending of supportive measures in the same type of cases. Think now—was the patient alive when those measures were instituted or was he dead?

And now we have cryobiologics. Cold-blooded animals have been quick-frozen and have been revived. And lately, a Cuban stowaway successfully survived oxygen deprivation and a temperature hitherto believed to be too low for the maintenance of life.

Maybe the above story isn't too far out. *If* human volunteers can be found who will be willing to be frozen and *if* scientists can be discovered who will experiment on the *corpore vili* and *if* the freezing techniques will not be dependent on our present power supply, well, then—



Writing introductions to the stories of strangers or casual acquaintances, even close friends, is relatively easy. Just rap, that's all. Start somewhere near or far, and go with it. I enjoy it. But when I am confronted with the prospect of writing an introduction to someone I love, of a sudden I get typer-tied.

It happened in *Dangerous Visions* with Silverberg, with whom I've been very close friends through most of my adult life. God only knows what I'd do if Isaac had submitted a story--I simply wouldn't know how to do an intro for Asimov (though the sensuous dirty old man had no difficulty doing one on me).

What I'm trying to fumble toward, is that I just don't know where to begin, talking about Ben Bova.

Maybe it's that, like Joe Hensley and Lester del Rey and Henry Slesar and Bob Bloch and Phil Farmer and Norman Spinrad and Roger Zelazny, he means so much to me, is so fixed and substantial a part of my world, that I could no more casually introduce him and his work than I could rap about air or the way my eyes perceive color or the taste of special foods. (And I pause. My God, I'm the luckiest fool in the world, to have friends like these.)

I met Ben maybe ten years ago, at one of Damon Knight's Milford Writers' Workshops. We became friends almost instantly. Even though his wife at the time, Rosa, was compelled to give me a crack in the mouth that starts a headache even today, when I think about it.

When I needed to know everything there was to know about lasers, it was Ben I called long distance. It was Ben who gave me the best Christmas present of my life, when he called to say John Campbell had bought "Brillo," my first sale to *Analog* and the culmination of a twenty year dream. It was Ben who kept me from running amuck during the most boring week of my life. And it was Ben Bova whom I called on the ugliest night of my life when I was so far down I thought I'd never crawl up again.

Ben Bova is so commanding of respect, on every possible level one might conceive, that introducing him is like talking about one's father, or big brother, or blood brother.

It is simply, friends, a task beyond me.

I ask you excuse me on this one.

And Ben, to make up for my shorting you, next time Avco Everett Research Labs send you to LA on business, I'll run through not only the Loonie Tunes routine about the vaudeville frog in the cornerstone, but the Daffy Duck number, as well.

Ben reports:

"I was born on the day Franklin Roosevelt was first elected. Got interested in science fiction, astronomy, and rockets all at the same time . . . when I saw the first issue of *Action Comics,* with the opening illustration showing the infant Superman leaving the exploding planet Krypton on a rocket.

"Worked on newspapers and magazines in the Philadelphia area before, during, and after attending Temple University, where I got a degree in journalism in 1954. By 1956, my real loves came to the fore, and I went to work for the Martin Company in Baltimore, as technical editor for Project Vanguard. Moved to New England in 1958 (after orbiting a Vanguard satellite, with help from a few engineers). Wrote movie scripts for a renowned bunch of physicists who were building a new course in physics for high school kids. Then joined Avco Everett Research Laboratory, first as science writer, now as manager of marketing. Duties consist of telling science fiction stories to the Government, which shells out money to make the stories come true. And they do, very frequently! The Laboratory works on ABM problems, lasers, magnetohydrodynamics (MHD, for short), and artificial hearts. Among other things." In November 1971, I became editor of *Analog;* nobody was more surprised than I.

And a reasonably complete bibliography of Bova books reads as below. (One point should be made, however: for those who've shelled out cash for the Paperback Library novelization of THX 1138 that Ben wrote, the clever publisher left off the last page or so of the original manuscript. Blame them, not Ben.)

Science Fiction
The Star Conquerors, 1959
Star Watchman, 1964
The Weathermakers, 1967
Out of the Sun, 1968
The Dueling Machine, 1969
Escape! 1970
Exiled from Earth, 1971
THX 1138, 1971

Science Fact
The Milky Way Galaxy, 1961
Giants of the Animal World, 1962
The Story of Reptiles, 1964
The Uses of Space, 1965
In Quest of Quasars, 1969
Planets, Life and LGM, 1970
The Fourth State of Matter, 1971



Ben Bova

ZERO GEE

Joe Tenny looked like a middle linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Sitting in the cool shadows of the Astro Motel's bar, swarthy, barrel-built, scowling face clamped on a smoldering cigar, he would never be taken for that rarest of all birds: a good engineer who is also a good military officer.

"Afternoon, Major."

Tenny turned on his stool to see old Cy Calder, the dean of the press service reporters covering the base.

"Hi. Whatcha drinking?"

"I'm working," Calder answered with dignity. But he settled his once-lanky frame onto the next stool.

"Double scotch," Tenny called to the bartender. "And refill mine."

"An officer and a gentleman," murmured Calder. His voice was gravelly, matching his face.

As the bartender slid the drinks to them, Tenny said, "You wanna know who got the assignment."

"I told you I'm working."

Tenny grinned. "Keep your mouth shut 'til tomorrow? Murdock'll make the official announcement then, at his press conference."

"If you can save me the tedium of listening to the good Colonel for two hours to get a single name out of him, I'll buy the next round, shine your shoes for a month, and arrange to lose an occasional poker pot to you."

"The hell you will!"

Calder shrugged. Tenny took a long pull on his drink. Calder did likewise.

"Okay. You'll find out anyway. But keep it quiet until Murdock's announcement. It's going to be Kinsman."

Calder put his glass down on the bar carefully. "Chester A. Kinsman, the pride of the Air Force? That's hard to believe."

"Murdock picked him."

"I know this mission is strictly for publicity," Calder said, "but Kinsman? In orbit for three days with *Life* magazine's prettiest female? Does Murdock want publicity or a paternity suit?"

"Come on, Chet's not that bad . . ."

"Oh no? From the stories I hear about your few weeks up at the NASA Ames center, Kinsman cut a swath from Berkeley to North Beach."

Tenny countered, "He's young and good-looking. And the girls haven't had many single astronauts to play with. NASA's gang is a bunch of old farts compared to my kids. But Chet's the best of the bunch, no fooling."

Calder looked unconvinced.

"Listen. When we were training at Edwards, know what Kinsman did? Built a biplane, an honest-to-God replica of a Spad fighter. From the ground up. He's a solid citizen."

"Yes, and then he played Red Baron for six weeks. Didn't he get into trouble for buzzing an airliner?"

Tenny's reply was cut off by a burst of talk and laughter. Half a dozen lean, lithe young men in Air Force blues—captains, all of them—trotted down the carpeted stairs that led into the bar.

"There they are," said Tenny. "You can ask Chet about it yourself."

Kinsman looked no different from the other Air Force astronauts. Slightly under six feet tall, thin with the leanness of youth, dark hair cut in the short flat military style, blue-gray eyes, long bony face. He was grinning broadly at the moment, as he and the other five astronauts grabbed chairs in one corner of the bar and called their orders to the lone bartender.

Calder took his drink and headed for their table, followed by Major Tenny.

"Hold it," one of the captains called out. "Here comes the press."

"Tight security."

"Why boys," Calder tried to make his rasping voice sound hurt, "don't you trust me?"

Tenny pushed a chair toward the newsman and took another one for himself. Straddling it, he told the captains, "It's okay. I spilled it to him."

"How much he pay you, boss?"

"That's between him and me."

As the bartender brought the tray of drinks, Calder said, "Let the Fourth Estate pay for this round, gentlemen. I want to pump some information out of you."

"That might take a lot of rounds."

To Kinsman, Calder said, "Congratulations, my boy. Colonel Murdock must think very highly of you."

Kinsman burst out laughing. "Murdock? You should've seen his face when he told me it was going to be me."

"Looked like he was sucking on lemons."

Tenny explained: "The choice for this flight was made mostly by computer. Murdock wanted to be absolutely fair, so he put everybody's performance ratings into the computer and out came Kinsman's name. If he hadn't made so much noise about being impartial, he could've reshuffled the cards and tried again. But I was right there when the machine finished its run, so he couldn't back out of it."

Calder grinned. "All right then, the computer thinks highly of you, Chet. I suppose that's still something of an honor."

"More like a privilege. I've been watching that *Life* chick all through her training. She's ripe."

"She'll look even better up in orbit."

"Once she takes off the pressure suit . . . et cetera."

"Hey, y'know, nobody's ever done it in orbit."

"Yeah . . . free fall, zero gravity."

Kinsman looked thoughtful. "Adds a new dimension to the problem, doesn't it?"

"Three-dimensional." Tenny took the cigar butt from his mouth and laughed.

Calder got up slowly from his chair and silenced the others. Looking down fondly on Kinsman, he said:

"My boy—back in 1915, in London, I became a charter member of the Mile High Club. At an altitude of exactly 5280 feet, while circling St. Paul's, I successfully penetrated an Army nurse in an open cockpit . . . despite fogged goggles, cramped working quarters, and a severe case of windburn.

"Since then, there's been damned little to look forward to. The skin-divers claimed a new frontier, but in fact they are retrogressing. Any silly-ass dolphin can do it in the water.

"But you've got something new going for you: weightlessness. Floating around in free fall, chasing tail in three dimensions. It beggars the imagination!

"Kinsman, I pass the torch to you. To the founder of the Zero Gee Club!"

As one man, they rose and solemnly toasted Captain Kinsman.

As they sat down again, Major Tenny burst the balloon. "You guys

haven't given Murdock credit for much brains. You don't think he's gonna let Chet go up with that broad all alone, do you?"

Kinsman's face fell, but the others lit up.

"It'll be a three-man mission!"

"Two men and the chick."

Tenny warned, "Now don't start drooling. Murdock wants a chaperon, not an assistant rapist."

It was Kinsman who got it first. Slouching back in his chair, chin sinking to his chest, he muttered, "Sonofabitch . . . he's sending Jill along."

A collective groan.

"Murdock made up his mind an hour ago," Tenny said. "He was stuck with you, Chet, so he hit on the chaperon idea. He's also giving you some real chores to do, to keep you busy. Like mating the power pod."

"Jill Meyers," said one of the captains disgustedly.

"She's qualified, and she's been taking the *Life* girl through her training. I'll bet she knows more about the mission than any of you guys do."

"She would."

"In fact," Tenny added maliciously, "I think she's the senior captain among you satellite-jockeys."

Kinsman had only one comment: "Shit."

The bone-rattling roar and vibration of liftoff suddenly died away. Sitting in his contour seat, scanning the banks of dials and gauges a few centimeters before his eyes, Kinsman could feel the pressure and tension slacken. Not back to normal. To zero. He was no longer plastered up against his seat, but touching it only lightly, almost floating in it, restrained only by his harness.

It was the fourth time he had felt weightlessness. It still made him smile inside the cumbersome helmet.

Without thinking about it, he touched a control stud on the chair's armrest. A maneuvering jet fired briefly and the ponderous, lovely bulk of planet Earth slid into view through the port in front of Kinsman. It curved huge and serene, blue mostly but tightly wrapped in the purest dazzling white of clouds, beautiful, peaceful, shining.

Kinsman could have watched it forever, but he heard sounds of motion in his earphones. The two girls were sitting behind him, side by side. The spacecraft cabin made a submarine look roomy: the three seats were shoehorned in among racks of instruments and equipment.

Jill Meyers, who came to the astronaut program from the Aerospace Medical Division, was officially second pilot and biomedical officer. *And*

chaperon, Kinsman knew. The photographer, Linda Symmes, was simply a passenger.

Kinsman's earphones crackled with a disembodied link from Earth. "AF-9, this is ground control. We have you confirmed in orbit. Trajectory nominal. All systems go."

"Check," Kinsman said into his helmet mike.

The voice, already starting to fade, switched to ordinary conversational speech. "Looks like you're right on the money, Chet. We'll get the orbital parameters out of the computer and have 'em for you by the time you pass Ascension. You probably won't need much maneuvering to make rendezvous with the lab."

"Good. Everything here on the board looks green."

"Okay. Ground control out." Faintly. "And hey . . . good luck, Founding Father."

Kinsman grinned at that. He slid his faceplate up, loosened his harness and turned in his seat. "Okay girls, you can take off your helmets if you want to."

Jill Meyers snapped her faceplate open and started unlocking the helmet's neck seal.

"I'll go first," she said, "and then I can help Linda with hers."

"Sure you won't need any help?" Kinsman offered.

Jill pulled her helmet off. "I've had more time in orbit than you. And shouldn't you be paying attention to the instruments?"

So this is how it's going to be, Kinsman thought.

Jill's face was round and plain and bright as a new penny. Snub nose, wide mouth, short hair of undistinguished brown. Kinsman knew that under the pressure suit was a figure that could most charitably be described as ordinary.

Linda Symmes was entirely another matter. She had lifted her faceplate and was staring out at him with wide blue eyes that combined feminine curiosity with a hint of helplessness. She was tall, nearly Kinsman's own height, with thick honey-colored hair and a body that he had already memorized down to the last curve.

In her sweet, high voice she said, "I think I'm going to be sick."

"Oh for . . ."

Jill reached into the compartment between their two seats. "I'll take care of this. You stick to the controls." And she whipped a white plastic bag open and stuck it over Linda's face.

Shuddering at the thought of what could happen in zero gravity, Kinsman turned back to the control panel. He pulled his faceplate shut and

turned up the air blower in his suit, trying to cut off the obscene sound of Linda's struggles.

"For Chrissake," he yelled, "unplug her radio! You want me chucking all over, too?"

"AF-9, this is Ascension."

Trying to blank his mind to what was going on behind him, Kinsman thumbed the switch on his communications panel. "Go ahead, Ascension."

For the next hour Kinsman thanked the gods that he had plenty of work to do. He matched the orbit of their three-man spacecraft to that of the Air Force orbiting laboratory, which had been up for more than a year now, and intermittently occupied by two- or three-man crews.

The lab was a fat cylindrical shape, silhouetted against the brilliant white of the cloud-decked Earth. As he pulled the spacecraft close, Kinsman could see the antennas and airlock and other odd pieces of gear that had accumulated on it. *Looking more like a junkheap every trip.* Riding behind it, unconnected in any way, was the massive cone of the new power pod.

Kinsman circled the lab once, using judicious squeezes of his maneuvering jets. He touched a command signal switch, and the lab's rendezvous radar beacon came to life, announced by a light on his control panel.

"All systems green," he said to ground control. "Everything looks okay."

"Roger, Niner. You are cleared for docking."

This was a bit more delicate. *Be helpful if Jill could read off the computer . . .*

"Distance, eighty-eight meters," Jill's voice pronounced firmly in his earphones. "Approach angle . . ."

Kinsman instinctively turned, but his helmet cut off any possible sight of her. "Hey, how's your patient?"

"Empty. I gave her a sedative. She's out."

"Okay," Kinsman said. "Let's get docked."

He inched the spacecraft into the docking collar on one end of the lab, locked on and saw the panel lights confirm that the docking was secure.

"Better get Sleeping Beauty zippered up," he told Jill as he touched the buttons that extended the flexible access tunnel from the hatch over their heads to the main hatch of the lab. The lights on the panel turned from amber to green when the tunnel locked its fittings around the lab's hatch.

Jill said, "I'm supposed to check the tunnel."

"Stay put. I'll do it." Sealing his faceplate shut, Kinsman unbuckled and rose effortlessly out of the seat to bump his helmet lightly against the overhead hatch.

"You two both buttoned tight?"

"Yes."

"Keep an eye on the air gauge." He cracked the hatch open a few millimeters.

"Pressure's okay. No red lights."

Nodding, Kinsman pushed the hatch open all the way. He pulled himself easily up and into the shoulder-wide tunnel, propelling himself down its curving length by a few flicks of his fingers against the ribbed walls.

Light and easy, he reminded himself. *No big motions, no sudden moves.*

When he reached the laboratory hatch he slowly rotated, like a swimmer doing a lazy rollover, and inspected every inch of the tunnel seal in the light of his helmet lamp. Satisfied that it was locked in place, he opened the lab hatch and pushed himself inside. Carefully, he touched his slightly adhesive boots to the plastic flooring and stood upright. His arms tended to float out, but they touched the equipment racks on either side of the narrow central passageway. Kinsman turned on the lab's interior lights, checked the air supply, pressure and temperature gauges, then shuffled back to the hatch and pushed himself through the tunnel again.

He reentered the spacecraft upside-down and had to contort himself in slow motion around the pilot's seat to regain a "normal" attitude.

"Lab's okay," he said finally. "Now how the hell do we get her through the tunnel?"

Jill had already unbuckled the harness over Linda's shoulders. "You pull, I'll push. She ought to bend around the corners all right."

And she did.

The laboratory was about the size and shape of the interior of a small transport plane. On one side, nearly its entire length was taken up by instrument racks, control equipment and the computer, humming almost inaudibly behind light plastic panels. Across the narrow separating aisle were the crew stations: control desk, two observation ports, biology and astrophysics benches. At the far end, behind a discreet curtain, was the head and a single hammock.

Kinsman sat at the control desk, in his fatigues now, one leg hooked around the webbed chair's single supporting column to keep him from floating off. He was running through a formal check of all the lab's life systems: air, water, heat, electrical power. All green lights on the main panel. Communications gear. Green. The radar screen to his left showed a single large blip close by—the power pod.

He looked up as Jill came through the curtain from the bunkroom. She was still in her pressure suit, with only the helmet removed.

"How is she?"

Looking tired, Jill answered, "Okay. Still sleeping. I think she'll be all right when she wakes up."

"She'd better be. I'm not going to have a wilting flower around here. I'll abort the mission."

"Give her a chance, Chet. She just lost her cookies when free-fall hit her. All the training in the world can't prepare you for those first few minutes."

Kinsman recalled his first orbital flight. *It doesn't shut off. You're falling. Like skiing, or sky-diving. Only better.*

Jill shuffled toward him, keeping a firm grip on the chairs in front of the work benches and the handholds set into the equipment racks.

Kinsman got up and pushed toward her. "Here, let me help you out of the suit."

"I can do it myself."

"Shut up."

After several minutes, Jill was free of the bulky suit and sitting in one of the webbed chairs in her coverall fatigues. Ducking slightly because of the curving overhead, Kinsman glided into the galley. It was about half the width of a phone booth, and not as deep nor as tall.

"Coffee, tea or milk?"

Jill grinned at him. "Orange juice."

He reached for a concentrate bag. "You're a hard girl to satisfy."

"No I'm not. I'm easy to get along with. Just one of the fellas."

Feeling slightly puzzled, Kinsman handed her the orange juice container.

For the next couple of hours they checked out the lab's equipment in detail. Kinsman was reassembling a high resolution camera after cleaning it, parts hanging in mid-air all around him as he sat intently working, while Jill was nursing a straggly looking philodendron that had been smuggled aboard and was inching from the biology bench toward the ceiling light panels. Linda pushed back the curtain from the sleeping area and stepped uncertainly into the main compartment.

Jill noticed her first. "Hi; how're you feeling?"

Kinsman looked up. She was in tight-fitting coveralls. He bounced out of his webchair toward her, scattering camera parts in every direction.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

Smiling sheepishly, "I think so. I'm rather embarrassed . . ." Her voice was high and soft.

"Oh, that's all right," Kinsman said eagerly. "It happens to practically everybody. I got sick myself my first time in orbit."

"That," said Jill as she dodged a slowly tumbling lens that ricocheted

gently off the ceiling, "is a little white lie, meant to make you feel at home."

Kinsman forced himself not to frown. *Why'd Jill want to cross me?*

Jill said, "Chet, you'd better pick up those camera pieces before they get so scattered you won't be able to find them all."

He wanted to snap an answer, thought better of it, and replied simply, "Right."

As he finished the job on the camera, he took a good look at Linda. The color was back in her face. She looked steady, clear-eyed, not frightened or upset. *Maybe she'll be okay after all.* Jill made her a cup of tea, which she sipped from the lid's plastic spout.

Kinsman went to the control desk and scanned the mission schedule sheet.

"Hey Jill, it's past your bedtime."

"I'm not really very sleepy," she said.

"Maybe. But you've had a busy day, little girl. And tomorrow will be busier. Now you get your four hours, and then I'll get mine. Got to be fresh for the mating."

"Mating?" Linda asked from her seat at the far end of the aisle, a good five strides from Kinsman. Then she remembered, "Oh . . . you mean linking the pod to the laboratory."

Suppressing a half-dozen possible jokes, Kinsman nodded. "Extra-vehicular activity."

Jill reluctantly drifted off her webchair. "Okay, I'll sack in. I am tired, but I never seem to get really sleepy up here."

Wonder how much Murdock's told her? She's sure acting like a chaperon.

Jill shuffled into the sleeping area and pulled the curtain firmly shut. After a few moments of silence, Kinsman turned to Linda.

"Alone at last."

She smiled back.

"Uh, you just happen to be sitting where I've got to install this camera." He nudged the finished hardware so that it floated gently toward her.

She got up slowly, carefully, and stood behind the chair, holding its back with both hands as if she were afraid of falling. Kinsman slid into the webchair and stopped the camera's slow-motion flight with one hand. Working on the fixture in the bulkhead that it fit into, he asked:

"You really feel okay?"

"Yes, honestly."

"Think you'll be up to EVA tomorrow?"

"I hope so . . . I want to go outside with you."

I'd rather be inside with you. Kinsman grinned as he worked.

An hour later they were sitting side by side in front of one of the observation ports, looking out at the curving bulk of Earth, the blue and white splendor of the cloud-spangled Pacific. Kinsman had just reported to the Hawaii ground station. The mission flight plan was floating on a clipboard between the two of them. He was trying to study it, comparing the time when Jill would be sleeping with the long stretches between ground stations, when there would be no possibility of being interrupted.

"Is that land?" Linda asked, pointing to a thick band of clouds wrapping the horizon.

Looking up from the clipboard, Kinsman said, "South American coast. Chile."

"There's another tracking station there."

"NASA station. Not part of our network. We only use Air Force stations."

"Why is that?"

He felt his face frowning. "Murdock's playing soldier. This is supposed to be a strictly military operation. Not that we do anything warlike. But we run as though there weren't any civilian stations around to help us. The usual hup-two-three crap."

She laughed. "You don't agree with the Colonel?"

"There's only one thing he's done lately that I'm in complete agreement with."

"What's that?"

"Bringing you up here."

The smile stayed on her face but her eyes moved away from him. "Now you sound like a soldier."

"Not an officer and a gentleman?"

She looked straight at him again. "Let's change the subject."

Kinsman shrugged. "Sure. Okay. You're here to get a story. Murdock wants to get the Air Force as much publicity as NASA gets. And the Pentagon wants to show the world that we don't have any weapons on board. We're military, all right, but *nice* military."

"And you?" Linda asked, serious now. "What do you want? How does an Air Force captain get into the space cadets?"

"The same way everything happens—you're in a certain place at a certain time. They told me I was going to be an astronaut. It was all part of the job . . . until my first orbital flight. Now it's a way of life."

"Really? Why is that?"

Grinning, he answered, "Wait'll we go outside. You'll find out."

Jill came back into the main cabin precisely on schedule, and it was Kinsman's turn to sleep. He seldom had difficulty sleeping on Earth, never

in orbit. But he wondered about Linda's reaction to being outside while he strapped on the pressure cuffs to his arms and legs. The medics insisted on them, claimed they exercised the cardiovascular system while you slept.

Damned stupid nuisance, Kinsman grumbled to himself. *Some ground-based MD's idea of how to make a name for himself.*

Finally he zippered himself into the gossamer cocoonlike hammock and shut his eyes. He could feel the cuffs pumping gently. His last conscious thought was a nagging worry that Linda would be terrified of EVA.

When he awoke, and Linda took her turn in the hammock, he talked it over with Jill.

"I think she'll be all right, Chet. Don't hold that first few minutes against her."

"I don't know. There're only two kinds of people up here: you either love it or you're scared sh . . . witless. And you can't fake it. If she goes ape outside . . ."

"She won't," Jill said firmly. "And anyway, you'll be there to help her. I've told her that she won't be going outside until you're finished with the mating job. She wanted to get pictures of you actually at work, but she'll settle for a few posed shots."

Kinsman nodded. But the worry persisted. *I wonder if Calder's Army nurse was scared of flying?*

He was pulling on his boots, wedging his free foot against an equipment rack to keep from floating off, when Linda returned from her sleep.

"Ready for a walk around the block?" he asked her.

She smiled and nodded without the slightest hesitation. "I'm looking forward to it. Can I get a few shots of you while you zipper up your suit?"

Maybe she'll be okay.

At last he was sealed into the pressure suit. Linda and Jill stood back as Kinsman shuffled to the airlock hatch. It was set into the floor at the end of the cabin where the spacecraft was docked. With Jill helping him, he eased down into the airlock and shut the hatch. The airlock chamber itself was coffin-sized. Kinsman had to half-bend to move around in it. He checked out his suit, then pumped the air out of the chamber. Then he was ready to open the outer hatch.

It was beneath his feet, but as it slid open to reveal the stars, Kinsman's weightless orientation flip-flopped, like an optical illusion, and he suddenly felt that he was standing on his head and looking up.

"Going out now," he said into the helmet mike.

"Okay," Jill's voice responded.

Carefully he eased himself through the open hatch, holding onto its edge with one gloved hand once he was fully outside, the way a swimmer

holds the rail for a moment when he first slides into the deep water. Outside. Swinging his body around slowly, he took in the immense beauty of Earth, dazzlingly bright even through his tinted visor. Beyond its curving limb was the darkness of infinity, with the beckoning stars watching him in unblinking solemnity.

Alone now. His own tight, self-contained universe, independent of everything and everybody. He could cut the life-giving umbilical line that linked him with the laboratory and float off by himself forever. And be dead in two minutes. *Ay, there's the rub.*

Instead, he unhooked the tiny gas gun from his waist and, trailing the umbilical, squirted himself over toward the power pod. It was riding smoothly behind the lab, a squat truncated cone, shorter but fatter than the lab itself, one edge brilliantly lit by the sun, the rest of it bathed in the softer light reflected from the dayside of Earth below.

Kinsman's job was to inspect the power pod, check its equipment, and then mate it to the electrical system of the laboratory. There was no need to physically connect the two bodies, except to link a pair of power lines between them. Everything necessary for the task—tools, power lines, checkout instruments—had been built into the pod, waiting for a man to use them.

It would have been simple work on Earth. In zero gee, it was complicated. The slightest motion of any part of your body started you drifting. You had to fight against all the built-in mannerisms of a lifetime; had to work constantly to keep in place. It was easy to get exhausted in zero gee.

Kinsman accepted all this with hardly a conscious thought. He worked slowly, methodically, using as little motion as possible, letting himself drift slightly until a more-or-less natural body motion counteracted and pulled him back in the opposite direction. *Ride the waves, slow and easy.* There was a rhythm to his work, the natural dreamlike rhythm of weightlessness.

His earphones were silent, he said nothing. All he heard was the purring of the suit's air blowers and his own steady breathing. All he saw was his work.

Finally he jetted back to the laboratory, towing the pair of thick cables. He found the connectors waiting for them on the sidewall of the lab and inserted the cable plugs. *I pronounce you lab and power source.* He inspected the checkout lights alongside the connectors. All green. *May you produce many kilowatts.*

Swinging from handhold to handhold along the length of the lab, he made his way back toward the airlock.

"Okay, it's finished. How's Linda doing?"

Jill answered, "She's all set."

"Send her out."

She came out slowly, uncertain wavering feet sliding out first from the bulbous airlock. It reminded Kinsman of a film he had seen of a whale giving birth.

"Welcome to the real world," he said when her head cleared the airlock hatch.

She turned to answer him and he heard her gasp and he knew that now he liked her.

"It's . . . it's . . ."

"Staggering," Kinsman suggested. "And look at you—no hands."

She was floating freely, pressure suit laden with camera gear, umbilical flexing easily behind her. Kinsman couldn't see her face through the tinted visor, but he could hear the awe in her voice, even in her breathing.

"I've never seen anything so absolutely overwhelming . . ."

And then suddenly she was all business, reaching for a camera, snapping away at the Earth and stars and distant Moon, rapid fire. She moved too fast and started to tumble. Kinsman jetted over and steadied her, holding her by the shoulders.

"Hey, take it easy. They're not going away. You've got lots of time."

"I want to get some shots of you, and the lab. Can you get over by the pod and go through some of the motions of your work on it?"

Kinsman posed for her, answered her questions, rescued a camera when she fumbled it out of her hands and couldn't reach it as it drifted away from her.

"Judging distances gets a little whacky out here," he said, handing the camera back to her.

Jill called them twice and ordered them back inside. "Chet, you're already fifteen minutes over the limit!"

"There's plenty slop in the schedule; we can stay out awhile longer."

"You're going to get her exhausted."

"I really feel fine," Linda said, her voice lyrical.

"How much more film do you have?" Kinsman asked her.

She peered at the camera. "Six more shots."

"Okay; we'll be in when the film runs out, Jill."

"You're going to be in darkness in another five minutes!"

Turning to Linda, who was floating upside-down with the cloud-laced Earth behind her, he said, "Save your film for the sunset, then shoot like hell when it comes."

"The sunset? What'll I focus on?"

"You'll know when it happens. Just watch."

It came fast, but Linda was equal to it. As the lab swung in its orbit to-

ward the Earth's night shadow, the sun dropped to the horizon and shot off a spectacular few moments of the purest reds and oranges and finally a heart-catching blue. Kinsman watched in silence, hearing Linda's breath going faster and faster as she worked the camera.

Then they were in darkness. Kinsman flicked on his helmet lamp. Linda was just hanging there, camera still in hand.

"It's . . . impossible to describe." Her voice sounded empty, drained. "If I hadn't seen it . . . if I didn't get it on film, I don't think I'd be able to convince myself that I wasn't dreaming."

Jill's voice rasped in his earphones: "Chet, get inside! This is against every safety reg, being outside in the dark."

He looked over toward the lab. Lights were visible along its length and the ports were lighted from within. Otherwise he could barely make it out, even though it was only a few meters away.

"Okay, okay. Turn on the airlock light so we can see the hatch."

Linda was still bubbling about the view outside long after they had pulled off their pressure suits and eaten sandwiches and cookies.

"Have you ever been out there?" she asked Jill.

Perched on the biology bench's edge, near the mice colony, Jill nodded curtly. "Twice."

"Isn't it spectacular? I hope the pictures come out; some of the settings on the camera . . ."

"They'll be all right," Jill said. "And if they're not, we've got a backlog of photos you can use."

"Oh, but they wouldn't have the shots of Chet working on the power pod."

Jill shrugged. "Aren't you going to take more photos in here? If you want to get some pictures of real space veterans, you ought to snap the mice here. They've been up for months now, living fine and raising families. And they don't make such a fuss about it, either."

"Well, some of us do exciting things," Kinsman said, "and some of us tend mice."

Jill glowered at him.

Glancing at his wristwatch, Kinsman said, "Girls, it's my sack time. I've had a trying day: mechanic, tourist guide, and cover boy for *Life*. Work, work, work."

He glided past Linda with a smile, kept it for Jill as he went by her. She was still glaring.

When he woke up again and went back into the main cabin, Jill was talking pleasantly with Linda as the two of them stood over the microscope and specimen rack of the biology bench.

Linda saw him first. "Oh, hi. Jill's been showing me the spores she's studying. And I photographed the mice. Maybe they'll go on the cover instead of you."

Kinsman grinned. "She's been poisoning your mind against me." But to himself he wondered, *What the hell has Jill been telling her about me?*

Jill drifted over to the control desk, picked up the clipboard with the mission log on it and tossed it lightly toward Kinsman.

"Ground control says the power pod checks out all green," she said. "You did a good job."

"Thanks." He caught the clipboard. "Whose turn in the sack is it?"

"Mine," Jill answered.

"Okay. Anything special cooking?"

"No. Everything's on schedule. Next data transmission comes up in twelve minutes. Kodiak station."

Kinsman nodded. "Sleep tight."

Once Jill had shut the curtain to the bunkroom, Kinsman carried the mission log to the control desk and sat down. Linda stayed at the biology bench, about three paces away.

He checked the instrument board with a quick glance, then turned to Linda. "Well, now do you know what I meant about this being a way of life?"

"I think so. It's so different . . ."

"It's the real thing. Complete freedom. Brave new world. After ten minutes of EVA, everything else is just toothpaste."

"It was certainly exciting."

"More than that. It's living. Being on the ground is a drag, even flying a plane is dull now. This is where the fun is . . . out here in orbit and on the Moon. It's as close to heaven as anybody's gotten."

"You're really serious?"

"Damned right. I've even been thinking of asking Murdock for a transfer to NASA duty. Air Force missions don't include the Moon, and I'd like to walk around on the new world, see the sights."

She smiled at him. "I'm afraid I'm not that enthusiastic."

"Well, think about it for a minute. Up here, you're free. Really free, for the first time in your life. All the laws and rules and prejudices they've been dumping on you all your life . . . they're all *down there.* Up here it's a new start. You can be yourself and do your own thing . . . and nobody can tell you different."

"As long as somebody provides you with air and food and water and . . ."

"That's the physical end of it, sure. We're living in a microcosm,

courtesy of the aerospace industry and AFSC. But there're no strings on us. The brass can't make us follow their rules. We're writing the rule-books ourselves . . . For the first time since 1776, we're writing new rules."

Linda looked thoughtful now. Kinsman couldn't tell if she was genuinely impressed by his line, or if she knew what he was trying to lead up to. He turned back to the control desk and studied the mission flight plan again.

He had carefully considered all the possible opportunities, and narrowed them down to two. *Both of them tomorrow, over the Indian Ocean. Forty-fifty minutes between ground stations, and Jill's asleep both times.*

"AF-9, this is Kodiak."

He reached for the radio switch. "AF-9 here, Kodiak. Go ahead."

"We are receiving your automatic data transmission loud and clear."

"Roger Kodiak. Everything normal here; mission profile unchanged."

"Okay, Niner. We have nothing new for you. Oh wait . . . Chet, Lew Regneson is here and he says he's betting on you to uphold the Air Force's honor. Keep 'em flying."

Keeping his face as straight as possible, Kinsman answered, "Roger, Kodiak. Mission profile unchanged."

"Good luck!"

Linda's thoughtful expression had deepened. "What was that all about?"

He looked straight into those cool blue eyes and answered, "Damned if I know. Regneson's one of the astronaut team; been assigned to Kodiak for the past six weeks. He must be going ice-happy. Thought it'd be best just to humor him."

"Oh. I see." But she looked unconvinced.

"Have you checked any of your pictures in the film processor?"

Shaking her head, Linda said, "No, I don't want to risk them on your automatic equipment. I'll process them myself when we get back."

"Damned good equipment," said Kinsman.

"I'm fussy."

He shrugged and let it go.

"Chet?"

"What?"

"That power pod . . . what's ft for? Colonel Murdock got awfully coy when I asked him."

"Nobody's supposed to know until the announcement's made in Washington . . . probably when we get back. I can't tell you officially," he grinned, "but generally reliable sources believe that it's going to power a

radar set that'll be orbited next month. The radar will be part of our ABM warning system."

"Anti-Ballistic Missile?"

With a nod, Kinsman explained, "From orbit you can spot missile launches farther away, give the States a longer warning time."

"So your brave new world is involved in war, too."

"Sort of." Kinsman frowned. "Radars won't kill anybody, of course. They might save lives."

"But this *is* a military satellite."

"Unarmed. Two things this brave new world doesn't have yet: death and love."

"Men have died . . ."

"Not in orbit. On reentry. In ground or air accidents. No one's died up here. And no one's made love, either."

Despite herself, it seemed to Kinsman, she smiled. "Have there been any chances for it?"

"Well, the Russians have had women cosmonauts. Jill's been the first American girl in orbit. You're the second."

She thought it over for a moment. "This isn't exactly the bridal suite of the Waldorf . . . in fact, I've seen better motel rooms along the Jersey Turnpike."

"Pioneers have to rough it."

"I'm a photographer, Chet, not a pioneer."

Kinsman hunched his shoulders and spread his hands helplessly, a motion that made him bob slightly on the chair. "Strike three, I'm out."

"Better luck next time."

"Thanks." He returned his attention to the mission flight plan. *Next time will be in exactly sixteen hours, chickie.*

When Jill came out of the sack it was Linda's turn to sleep. Kinsman stayed at the control desk, sucking on a container of lukewarm coffee. All the panel lights were green. Jill was taking a blood specimen from one of the white mice.

"How're they doing?"

Without looking up, she answered, "Fine. They've adapted to weightlessness beautifully. Calcium level's evened off, muscle tone is good . . ."

"Then there's hope for us two-legged types?"

Jill returned the mouse to the colony entrance and snapped the lid shut. It scampered through to rejoin its clan in the transparent plastic maze of tunnels.

"I can't see any physical reason why humans can't live in orbit indefinitely," she answered.

Kinsman caught a slight but definite stress on the word *physical.* "You think there might be emotional problems over the long run?"

"Chet, I can see emotional problems on a three-day mission." Jill forced the blood specimen into a stoppered test tube.

"What do you mean?"

"Come on," she said, her face a mixture of disappointment and distaste. "It's obvious what you're trying to do. Your tail's been wagging like a puppy's whenever she's in sight."

"You haven't been sleeping much, have you?"

"I haven't been eavesdropping, if that's what you mean. I've simply been watching you watching her. And some of the messages from the ground . . . is the whole Air Force in on this? How much money's being bet?"

"I'm not involved in any betting. I'm just . . ."

"You're just taking a risk on fouling up this mission and maybe killing the three of us, just to prove you're Tarzan and she's Jane."

"Goddammit Jill, now you sound like Murdock."

The sour look on her face deepened. "Okay. You're a big boy. If you want to play Tarzan while you're on duty, that's your business. I won't get in your way. I'll take a sleeping pill and stay in the sack."

"You will?"

"That's right. You can have your blonde Barbie doll, and good luck to you. But I'll tell you this . . . she's a phony. I've talked to her long enough to dig that. You're trying to use her, but she's using us, too. She was pumping me about the power pod while you were sleeping. She's here for her own reasons, Chet, and if she plays along with you it won't be for the romance and adventure of it all."

My God Almighty, Jill's jealous!

It was tense and quiet when Linda returned from the bunkroom. The three of them worked separately: Jill fussing over the algae colony on the shelf above the biology bench; Kinsman methodically taking film from the observation cameras for return to Earth and reloading them; Linda efficiently clicking away at both of them.

Ground control called up to ask how things were going. Both Jill and Linda threw sharp glances at Kinsman. He replied merely:

"Following mission profile. All systems green."

They shared a meal of pastes and squeeze tubes together, still mostly in silence, and then it was Kinsman's turn in the sack. But not before he checked the mission flight plan. *Jill goes in next, and we'll have four hours alone, including a stretch over the Indian Ocean.*

Once Jill retired, Kinsman immediately called Linda over to the control

desk under the pretext of showing her the radar image of a Russian satellite.

"We're coming close now." They hunched side by side at the desk to peer at the orange-glowing radar screen, close enough for Kinsman to scent a hint of very feminine perfume. "Only a thousand kilometers away."

"Why don't you blink our lights at them?"

"It's unmanned."

"Oh."

"It *is* a little like World War I up here," Kinsman realized, straightening up. "Just being here is more important than which nation you're from."

"Do the Russians feel that way too?"

Kinsman nodded. "I think so."

She stood in front of him, so close that they were almost touching.

"You know," Kinsman said, "when I first saw you on the base, I thought you were a photographer's model . . . not the photographer."

Gliding slightly away from him, she answered, "I started out as a model . . ." Her voice trailed off.

"Don't stop. What were you going to say?"

Something about her had changed, Kinsman realized. She was still coolly friendly, but alert now, wary, and . . . sad?

Shrugging, she said, "Modeling is a dead end. I finally figured out that there's more of a future on the other side of the camera."

"You had too much brains for modeling."

"Don't flatter me."

"Why on earth should I flatter you?"

"We're not on Earth."

"Touche."

She drifted over toward the galley. Kinsman followed her.

"How long have you been on the other side of the camera?" he asked.

Turning back toward him, "I'm supposed to be getting your life story, not *vice versa.*"

"Okay . . . ask me some questions."

"How many people know you're supposed to lay me up here?"

Kinsman felt his face smiling, an automatic delaying action. *What the hell,* he thought. Aloud, he replied, "I don't know. It started as a little joke among a few of the guys . . . apparently the word has spread."

"And how much money do you stand to win or lose?" She wasn't smiling.

"Money?" Kinsman was genuinely surprised. "Money doesn't enter into it."

"Oh no?"

"No; not with me," he insisted.

The tenseness in her body seemed to relax a little. "Then why . . . I mean . . . what's it all about?"

Kinsman brought his smile back and pulled himself down into the nearest chair. "Why not? You're damned pretty, neither one of us has any strings, nobody's tried it in zero gee before . . . Why the hell not?"

"But why should I?"

"That's the big question. That's what makes an adventure out of it."

She looked at him thoughtfully, leaning her tall frame against the galley paneling. "Just like that. An adventure. There's nothing more to it than that?"

"Depends," Kinsman answered. "Hard to tell ahead of time."

"You live in a very simple world, Chet."

"I try to. Don't you?"

She shook her head. "No, my world's very complex."

"But it includes sex."

Now she smiled, but there was no pleasure in it. "Does it?"

"You mean never?" Kinsman's voice sounded incredulous, even to himself.

She didn't answer.

"Never at all? I can't believe that . . ."

"No," she said, "not never at all. But never for . . . for an adventure. For job security, yes. For getting the good assignments; for teaching me how to use a camera, in the first place. But never for fun . . . at least, not for a long, long time has it been for fun."

Kinsman looked into those ice-blue eyes and saw that they were completely dry and aimed straight back at him. His insides felt odd. He put a hand out toward her, but she didn't move a muscle.

"That's . . . that's a damned lonely way to live," he said.

"Yes it is." Her voice was a steel knife-blade, without a trace of self-pity in it.

"But . . . how'd it happen? Why . . ."

She leaned her head back against the galley paneling, her eyes looking away, into the past. "I had a baby. He didn't want it. I had to give it up for adoption—either that or have it aborted. The kid should be five years old now . . . I don't know where she is." She straightened up, looked back at Kinsman. "But I found out that sex is either for making babies or making careers; not for fun."

Kinsman sat there, feeling like he had just taken a low blow. The only sound in the cabin was the faint hum of electrical machinery, the whisper of the air fans.

Linda broke into a grin. "I wish you could see your face . . . Tarzan the Ape Man, trying to figure out a nuclear reactor."

"The only trouble with zero gee," he mumbled, "is that you can't hang yourself."

Jill sensed something was wrong, it seemed to Kinsman. From the moment she came out of the sack, she sniffed around, giving quizzical looks. Finally, when Linda retired for her final rest period before their return, Jill asked him:

"How're you two getting along?"

"Okay."

"Really?"

"Really. We're going to open a Playboy Club in here. Want to be a bunny?"

Her nose wrinkled. "You've got enough of those."

For more than an hour they worked their separate tasks in silence. Kinsman was concentrating on recalibrating the radar mapper when Jill handed him a container of hot coffee.

He turned in the chair. She was standing beside him, not much taller than his own seated height.

"Thanks."

Her face was very serious. "Something's bothering you, Chet. What did she do to you?"

"Nothing."

"Really?"

"For Chrissake, don't start that again! Nothing, absolutely nothing happened. Maybe that's what's bothering me."

Shaking her head, "No, you're worried about something, and it's not about yourself."

"Don't be so damned dramatic, Jill."

She put a hand on his shoulder. "Chet . . . I know this is all a game to you, but people can get hurt at this kind of game, and . . . well . . . nothing in life is ever as good as you expect it will be."

Looking up at her intent brown eyes, Kinsman felt his irritation vanish. "Okay, kid. Thanks for the philosophy. I'm a big boy, though, and I know what it's all about . . ."

"You just think you do."

Shrugging, "Okay, I think I do. Maybe nothing is as good as it ought to be, but a man's innocent until proven guilty, and everything new is as good as gold until you find some tarnish on it. That's *my* philosophy for the day!"

"All right slugger," Jill smiled ruefully. "Be the ape man. Fight it out for yourself. I just don't want to see her hurt you."

"I won't get hurt."

Jill said, "You hope. Okay, if there's anything I can do . . ."

"Yeah, there is something."

"What?"

"When you sack in again, make sure Linda sees you take a sleeping pill. Will you do that?"

Jill's face went expressionless. "Sure," she answered flatly. "Anything for a fellow officer."

She made a great show, several hours later, of taking a sleeping pill so that she could rest well on her final nap before reentry. It seemed to Kinsman that Jill deliberately laid it on too thickly.

"Do you always take sleeping pills on the final time around?" Linda asked, after Jill had gone into the bunkroom.

"Got to be fully alert and rested," Kinsman replied, "for the return flight. Reentry's the trickiest part of the operation."

"Oh. I see."

"Nothing to worry about, though," Kinsman added.

He went to the control desk and busied himself with the tasks that the mission profile called for. Linda sat lightly in the next chair, within arm's reach. Kinsman chatted briefly with Kodiak station, on schedule, and made an entry in the log.

Three more ground stations and then we're over the Indian Ocean, with world enough and time.

But he didn't look up from the control panel; he tested each system aboard the lab, fingers flicking over control buttons, eyes focused on the red, amber and green lights that told him how the laboratory's mechanical and electrical machinery was functioning.

"Chet?"

"Yes."

"Are you . . . sore at me?"

Still not looking at her, "No, I'm busy. Why should I be sore at you?"

"Well, not sore maybe, but . . ."

"Puzzled?"

"Puzzled, hurt, something like that."

He punched an entry on the computer's keyboard at his side, then turned to face her. "Linda, I haven't really had time to figure out what I feel. You're a complicated girl; maybe too complicated for me. Life's got enough twists in it."

Her mouth drooped a little.

"On the other hand," he added, "we WASPS ought to stick together. Not many of us left."

That brought a faint smile. "I'm not a WASP. My real name's Szymanski . . . I changed it when I started modeling."

"Oh. Another complication."

She was about to reply when the radio speaker crackled, "AF-9, this is Cheyenne. Cheyenne to AF-9."

Kinsman leaned over and thumbed the transmitter switch. "AF-9 to Cheyenne. You're coming through faint but clear."

"Roger, Nine. We're receiving your telemetry. All systems look green from here."

"Manual check of systems also green," Kinsman said. "Mission profile okay, no deviations. Tasks about ninety percent complete."

"Roger. Ground control suggests you begin checking out your spacecraft on the next orbit. You are scheduled for reentry in ten hours."

"Right. Will do."

"Okay, Chet. Everything looks good from here. Anything else to report, ol' Founding Father?"

"Mind your own business." He turned the transmitter off.

Linda was smiling at him.

"What's so funny?"

"You are. You're getting very touchy about this whole business."

"It's going to stay touchy for a long time to come. Those guys'll hound me for years about this."

"You could always tell lies."

"About you? No, I don't think I could do that. If the girl was anonymous, that's one thing. But they all know you, know where you work . . ."

"You're a gallant officer. I suppose that kind of rumor would get back to New York."

Kinsman grinned. "You could even make the front page of the *National Enquirer*."

She laughed at that. "I'll bet they'd pull out some of my old bikini pictures."

"Careful now," Kinsman put up a warning hand. "Don't stir up my imagination any more than it already is. I'm having a hard enough time being gallant right now."

They remained apart, silent, Kinsman sitting at the control desk, Linda drifting back toward the galley, nearly touching the curtain that screened off the sleeping area.

The ground control center called in and Kinsman gave a terse report. When he looked up at Linda again, she was sitting in front of the observa-

tion port across the aisle from the galley. Looking back at Kinsman, her face was troubled now, her eyes . . . he wasn't sure what was in her eyes. They looked different: no longer ice-cool, no longer calculating; they looked aware, concerned, almost frightened.

Still Kinsman stayed silent. He checked and double-checked the control board, making absolutely certain that every valve and transistor aboard the lab was working perfectly. Glancing at his watch: *Five more minutes before Ascension calls.* He checked the lighted board again.

Ascension called in exactly on schedule. Feeling his innards tightening, Kinsman gave his standard report in a deliberately calm and mechanical way. Ascension signed off.

With a long last look at the controls, Kinsman pushed himself out of the seat and drifted, hands faintly touching the grips along the aisle, toward Linda.

"You've been awfully quiet," he said, standing over her.

"I've been thinking about what you said a while ago." What was it in her eyes? Anticipation? Fear? "It . . . it has been a damned lonely life, Chet."

He took her arm and lifted her gently from the chair and kissed her.

"But . . ."

"It's all right," he whispered. "No one will bother us. No one will know."

She shook her head. "It's not that easy, Chet. It's not that simple."

"Why not? We're here together . . . what's so complicated?"

"But—doesn't anything bother you? You're floating around in a dream. You're surrounded by war machines, you're living every minute with danger. If a pump fails or a meteor hits . . ."

"You think it's any safer down there?"

"But life *is* complex, Chet. And love . . . well, there's more to it than just having fun."

"Sure there is. But it's meant to be enjoyed, too. What's wrong with taking an opportunity when you have it? What's so damned complicated or important? We're above the cares and worries of Earth. Maybe it's only for a few hours, but it's here and now, it's us. They can't touch us, they can't force us to do anything or stop us from doing what we want to. We're on our own. Understand? Completely on our own."

She nodded, her eyes still wide with the look of a frightened animal. But her hands slid around him, and together they drifted back toward the control desk. Wordlessly, Kinsman turned off all the overhead lights, so that all they saw was the glow of the control board and the flickering of the computer as it murmured to itself.

They were in their own world now, their private cosmos, floating freely

and softly in the darkness. Touching, drifting, coupling, searching the new seas and continents, they explored their world.

Jill stayed in the hammock until Linda entered the bunkroom, quietly, to see if she had awakened yet. Kinsman sat at the control desk feeling, not tired, but strangely numb.

The rest of the flight was strictly routine. Jill and Kinsman did their jobs, spoke to each other when they had to. Linda took a brief nap, then returned to snap a few last pictures. Finally they crawled back into the spacecraft, disengaged from the laboratory, and started the long curving flight back to Earth.

Kinsman took a last look at the majestic beauty of the planet, serene and incomparable among the stars, before touching the button that slid the heat shield over his viewport. Then they felt the surge of rocket thrust, dipped into the atmosphere, knew that air heated beyond endurance surrounded them in a fiery grip and made their tiny craft into a flaming, falling star. Pressed into his seat by the acceleration, Kinsman let the automatic controls bring them through reentry, through the heat and buffeting turbulence, down to an altitude where their finned craft could fly like a rocketplane.

He took control and steered the craft back toward Patrick Air Force Base, back to the world of men, of weather, of cities, of hierarchies and official regulations. He did this alone, silently; he didn't need Jill's help or anyone else's. He flew the craft from inside his buttoned-tight pressure suit, frowning at the panel displays through his helmet's faceplate.

Automatically, he checked with ground control and received permission to slide the heat shield back. The viewport showed him a stretch of darkening clouds spreading from the sea across the beach and well inland. His earphones were alive with other men's voices now: wind conditions, altitude checks, speed estimates. He knew, but could not see that two jet planes were trailing along behind him, cameras focused on the returning spacecraft. *To provide evidence if I crash.*

They dipped into the clouds and a wave of gray mist hurtled up and covered the viewport. Kinsman's eyes flicked to the radar screen slightly off to his right. The craft shuddered briefly, then they broke below the clouds and he could see the long black gouge of the runway looming before him. He pulled back slightly on the controls, hands and feet working instinctively, flashed over some scrubby vegetation, and flared the craft onto the runway. The landing skids touched once, bounced them up momentarily, then touched again with a grinding shriek. They skidded for more than a mile before stopping.

He leaned back in the seat and felt his body oozing sweat.

"Good landing," Jill said.

"Thanks." He turned off all the craft's systems, hands moving automatically in response to long training. Then he slid his faceplate up, reached overhead and popped the hatch open.

"End of the line," he said tiredly. "Everybody out."

He clambered up through the hatch, feeling his own weight with a sullen resentment, then helped Linda and finally Jill out of the spacecraft. They hopped down onto the blacktop runway. Two vans, an ambulance, and two fire trucks were rolling toward them from their parking stations at the end of the runway, a half-mile ahead.

Kinsman slowly took his helmet off. The Florida heat and humidity annoyed him now. Jill walked a few paces away from him, toward the approaching trucks.

He stepped toward Linda. Her helmet was off, and she was carrying a bag full of film.

"I've been thinking," he said to her. "That business about having a lonely life . . . You know, you're not the only one. And it doesn't have to be that way. I can get to New York whenever . . ."

"Now who's taking things seriously?" Her face looked calm again, cool, despite the glaring heat.

"But I mean . . ."

"Listen Chet. We had our kicks. Now you can tell your friends about it, and I can tell mine. We'll both get a lot of mileage out of it. It'll help our careers."

"I never intended to . . . I didn't . . ."

But she was already turning away from him, walking toward the men who were running up to meet them from the trucks. One of them, a civilian, had a camera in his hands. He dropped to one knee and took a picture of Linda holding the film out and smiling broadly.

Kinsman stood there with his mouth open.

Jill came back to him. "Well? Did you get what you were after?"

"No," he said slowly. "I guess I didn't."

She started to put her hand out to him. "We never do, do we?"

Afterword:

Chet Kinsman has been with me for a long time. This is the third story about him to be published. In terms of Kinsman's own life history, this is

the earliest story, the first part of his awakening to the real world. Or the first step in his fall from grace.

Kinsman was the star of a Great Unpublished Novel, written in 1950–51, which predicted the US *vs.* USSR space race with amazing accuracy. At least, I've been amazed. Unluckily, though, in those early fifties there was a Senator McCarthy running loose. Not Gene. Publishers were distinctly unhappy about a book wherein the Russians got ahead of us in space. Obvious trash. And unhealthy. So that early version of Kinsman had to wait for the Russians to make his story believable. (In all honesty, the writing in that novel was pretty damned bad. Maybe it wasn't *all* Holy Joe's fault.)

The Mile High Club, incidentally, is no fiction. It was described to me by a man very much like Cy Calder. The windburn and fogged goggles, however, are reasonable extrapolations of the story as I originally heard it, and I offer them as an example of the hallmark of science fiction: accurate technical detail that lends credibility and pathos to the characters and their problems.



Introduction to

A MOUSE IN THE WALLS OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE:

Watching a writer mature through examination of the body of the work as it grows, is an interesting pastime. A writer who begins as a bright and promising innovator, frequently plays out his song in three or four books and begins either repeating themes and approaches, or capitalizes on early success by giving the audience more of the same. Contrariwise, a writer who learns the craft through contemporary analogues of the "pulp school" —inexpensive paperbacks, men's magazines of the lower orders, several of the lesser sf periodicals—and starts off as little better than a hack, can find a voice and a growing muscularity and develop into an important talent. There are numerous examples, they spring to mind almost unbidden, of both species of writer.

Dean Koontz represents the latter. His early work, for instance *Star Quest* (Ace, 1968), reads like typical, average, not-particularly-outstanding action-adventure of the 1940's *Amazing Stories* variety. His recent novels—notably the brilliant *Beastchild, The Dark Symphony* and *Hell's Gate* (all Lancer, 1970)—demonstrate a vigorous fluency of imagination, a strengthening grasp of concept and plot-material, and an emerging style very much of his own making.

Until 1969, the name Koontz was considered by many to be simply one of those mortar-in-the-chinks names that filled the spaces between Zelazny, Delany, Moorcock and Spinrad, writers who were then drawing considerable attention with a volume of unusual and arresting stories. Koontz was just coming on the scene (when DV was assembled, his name was not even considered). But within just three years he has so solidified his position as a writer to watch, that when A,DV was on the drawing-boards, the Koontz solicitation was made a matter of immediacy. His contribution more than lives up to expectations.

If he continues as he has, the next five to seven years should see Dean Koontz rise to the enviable pinnacle of One-Mansmanship: the perch where he is the only man doing Dean Koontz stories, where he has the corner on a market demanding Koontz fiction.

Personally, Koontz is a very winning fellow. Met him in Pittsburgh in 1970. What's in a name? Well, seeing the cold name Dean R. Koontz in print, one gets the impression—God knows why—that he is a venerable gentleman of stooped manner and crypt breath. Not only is he a very hip and well-dressed dude in his middle twenties, but the only thing more at-

tractive than the unseemly-named Koontz is his extravagantly beautiful wife, Gerda—which is a name I associated till meeting her with thick-ankled *hausfrau* living in Punxsutawney or possibly Przemków—with whose collaboration he wrote the scathing non-fiction attack on *The Pig Society* (Aware Press, 1970).

In addition to the previously-noted books, Dean has also produced: *Fear That Man* and *The Fall of the Dream Machine* (Ace, 1969), *Dark of the Woods* and *Soft Come the Dragons* (Ace, 1970), and *Anti-Man* (Paperback Library, 1970). By way of disillusioned autobiography, Dean submits the following:

"I am somewhere around 26. I was born in a small Pennsylvania town, raised in a traditional lower-middle class home, and went to a small, traditional Pennsylvania college. I graduated after three years of intensified study and began teaching under the Appalachian Program in a small coal mining town which, unfortunately, no longer had any operative coal mines. During that first year of idealism when public service meant more to me than money, I became quickly disillusioned. Politicians talked loudly about how much was put into the poverty program. I discovered that, once the budget was approved, the President, then a Texan whose name I have forgotten, quietly but ruthlessly halved the poverty budget. My school would be promised 20,000 dollars for work with the poverty-stricken—and receive ten. To get nine dollars worth of paperback books for use in my classes, I had to do everything but sign away both legs to guarantee I would not split with the six dollars. Meanwhile, several thousand dollars earmarked for instructional materials in the Title III poverty classes was rerouted into the school's fund for construction of a new gymnasium. Somehow, the priorities seemed screwed up to me.

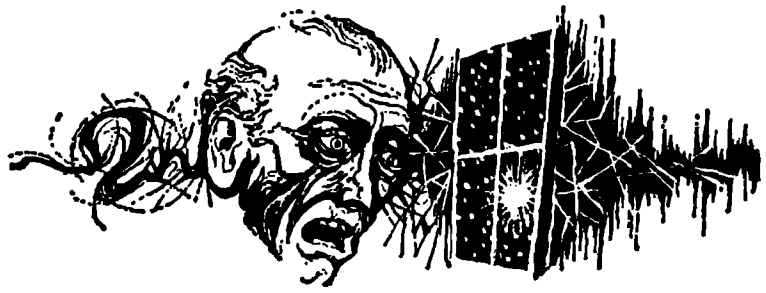
"As my idealism slowly drained away, I began to become more conscious of the need for money. We lived the first three months of our married life in a six room rented house—with only a studio couch for a bed and a kitchen table and chairs. Oh, a used refrigerator and a hot plate (no stove). There was certainly no hope of getting rich through teaching—even if I moved to a nice, urban school district and gave up the poverty program. How to get a little extra cash? While I had been a senior at college, my creative writing teacher had advised me to send a story to *Readers And Writers*, a new magazine aimed at college literature majors. I did. The story sold and brought a check for fifty dollars. Now, a year later, I began earnestly to try to sell more work. My first professional sale in the field was 'Soft Come the Dragons' to F&SF. When Ed Ferman bought a second story and Joe Ross at *Amazing-Fantastic* bought two more, I was hooked.

"The following year, I took a job teaching English at an urban school

district outside Harrisburg. In the poverty program, the students put in my classes were all the discipline problems and the kids with police records, those the other teachers didn't want, not really those whom I could help. In this new urban situation, the students were better behaved, though generally as apathetic as they had been in the small coal-mining town. A year and a half later, disillusioned altogether, and earning enough writing to at least pay the rent, I decided to become a full time freelancer. At this supposedly advanced, upper-middle class school district, I had been constantly on the carpet for what I taught and had been accused of teaching obscene books. *Stranger in a Strange Land,* by Robert Heinlein, was one of those judged obscene. So was *Catch-22.* No one of the administration would read the books in question. They merely assumed the parents were right and asked me not to teach the novels in question. In one instance, an administrator told me the book was obviously obscene because the cover drawing depicted a partially disrobed girl (all strategic areas, though, were covered). Aside from this incident, I found that the younger generations were no more liberal, no more aware than the older. It was just that the small percentage that has always been aware was more vocal than ever before. One or two enlightened kids in a class of thirty, however, didn't make for enjoyable teaching. On January 27, 1969, I became a full-fledged writer.

"Thus far, I have sold over two dozen magazine stories and forty novels. I have seven other novels with my agent and have begun to branch into mainstream novels and suspense novels as well as science fiction.

"ASSORTED TRIVIA THAT MAY BE USEFUL: I stand slightly over 5' 10", weigh 160 pounds. I am madly addicted to movies and would one day like to see some of my suspense and mainstream work on film. I detest almost all sports. Married. No children. No religion. Read anywhere from four to six books a week. Think quite highly of John D. MacDonald. Paint and draw to relax and have actually sold some of my work to people who, apparently, were poor judges of art. Am highly interested in classical music and some modern rock (including The Beatles) and have written an sf novel structured like a 19th Century symphony *The Dark Symphony.* Have worked as a stock and bag boy in a grocery store, a cleaner (by high pressure steam) of engines, a forest ranger (one full summer) in a state park, and as the aforementioned English teacher. Have played in a rock combo and have written some rock ballads. Am planning on doing at least one—and hopefully a series—of science fiction books in collaboration with Vaughn Bodé, the artist-illustrator. They will be multimedia art-and-text compilations that will go beyond mere illustration. Am presently collecting background for a mammoth mainstream novel about members of the paramilitary Minutemen and expect to spend six months of this year on the final writing of the book. That is all. Over and out."



Dean R. Koontz

A MOUSE IN THE WALLS OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

It has been three weeks now since it happened; three weeks is a long time. You would think that I could accept it now. You would think so, but I can't. Which means, while I lie here trying to remember, that secret little voice inside of me will be building up its reserves for a scream. One hell of a scream. Then they will come up the stairs, their feet thumping on the dusty, worn tread. They will come quickly down the corridor, mumbling so low that I will not be able to understand any of what they say. One of them will kick the door open while the other will come through and cross to my bed. Choreography of the first class. The one at my bed will tell me to stop screaming. I will try. Really, I will. But that secret little voice that is not really mine (they don't understand that, of course; they think I can control it) will go on and on, rising higher all the time until the one at the door will say, "Might as well get it over with." And I wonder why they bother speaking when they don't have to, when they are Empathists. "Might as well get it over with." And the other one will say, "Christ!" And then he will hit me. He will strike me with his open hands, again and again until my ears are ringing. Then he will drag me off the bed and throw me up against the wall and hit me some more with his fists until I am finally quiet. I don't think they really want to hurt me so much. It is just that it takes me so damned long to quit screaming.

But I've got to think about it, don't I? I mean, if there is ever to be an end to the memories, if I am ever to accept what has happened, I must go over and over and over it until I have bleached all the color out of it. All the color and sharp edges and pain. Perhaps repetition is the mother of acceptance.

I repeat . . .

The fan shuttles came under my window then, one every evening, came moaning down the street, their long, heavy bodies dancing daintily on toes of air. It was winter, and the snow kicked up around them in thick, fuzzy clouds until they were completely concealed in the shower they caused. Then the shuttle would stop before the lobby downstairs, up against the front steps. The fans would be turned off, and the coach would settle onto its hard rubber cushion as gently as the snowflakes settled on the snowflakes that fell before them. My bed is up against the window. I would lie there on the warm, gray blankets and watch all this with a curious, melancholy detachment, yet with a great deal of excitement for what was to come.

There would be a little while, then, when I would watch the shuttle, trying to see through the windows and pick out the passengers by the dim glow of the ceiling lights. Most of them would be sleeping, their heads against the glass, their breath fogging the panes so—mostly—I could not see much.

After a few minutes, the door at the front of the shuttle would open, and the driver would come out, dressed in a long, blue coat that flapped in the brisk wind. He would hunch against the drive of the snow and cross the walk into the lighted lobby, out of sight. Once, when I was especially curious about what the driver did in the lobby every night, I went out into the hall and crept down the stairs (I am only on the second floor) and looked around the stairwell corner. The driver and Belias, the night manager (big man, much dark hair, little eyes, quick hands), were standing next to the lobby fireplace, drinking coffee out of heavy brown mugs. They laughed a couple of times, but did not say anything. Of course, they're Empathists and don't have to talk. After they had finished their coffee, Belias gave the driver three packages that had been mailed from the hotel post office, and the driver left, hurrying out into the snow to the snug haven of his cab. I went upstairs to my room and watched the fan shuttle leave in a gust of white. Then I cried, I think. Anyway, I never went to watch Belias and the driver again.

But I didn't stop signaling the passengers. Every night, when the two o'clock shuttle swung in against the steps before the lobby, I would have my lamp on the windowsill, the shade off and laid carefully to the side. When the driver left the shuttle, I would rapidly flick the light on and off several times. Then I would pause, waiting for something. I was never completely sure what it was that I waited for. I guess maybe I thought someone in the bus would fiddle with the light over his seat, flash his hand over it to make it pulsate. But no one ever did.

Except once.
Three weeks ago.
Listen . . .

I was lying on the bed, waiting for the two o'clock shuttle. I had moved the lamp to the window and had it ready. Outside, the snow was falling, a dry snow that was easily stirred by the wind, that screeched when it was blown against the glass and whirled away like bits of sand. I kept an old shirt next to me to wipe my breath from the window whenever the pane got too clouded. At one minute until two, the shuttle turned into the street several blocks away, just at the edge of my vision. I had my forehead pressed hard against the glass, numbing it with the cold, and that was how I saw it so far away. First, there was just the dim glowing circles of the headlamps, cut to almost nothing by the driving snow. Then as the shuttle drew closer, the lights became bright, warm things I wanted to touch and hold. My heart was pounding as always, and my fingers were on the lamp switch.

At first, everything was as usual. The shuttle pulled against the curb, blowers whining, fountaining snow on all sides. It settled into the thick white carpet, and the rotars stopped beating altogether. The driver got out and went into the lobby, leaving the passengers alone. Almost panting, trembling, I flicked the lamp on and off six times, then stopped and waited.

That was when things changed. Someone returned my signal. There was a flicker of yellow. Another. A third. Six in all. Frantically, I wiped the window to be sure I hadn't been seeing things, a trick of lights reflecting on my glass from farther down the street. I signaled again. Now the window was clear, and there was nothing to obstruct my view of the cigarette lighter that burned, then flicked off, then burned again.

I think I laughed. I know I lunged against the window, trying to see better, for that was when I knocked the lamp off the sill. It bounced once on my bed, fell over the side, and smashed loudly on the floor.

I scrambled after it, discovered the bulb was ruined. The rest of the lamp seemed undamaged. But I needed a bulb. Any minute now, the driver might finish his coffee and go back to the bus, leaving me alone, taking away the man or woman with the lighter and leaving me by myself. I needed a bulb. Badly.

I remembered the one in the floor lamp on the other side of the room. In the darkness, I stumbled across to it, tripped over a leg of my only chair, and fell before I could throw my hands up to protect my face. I bruised

my jaw and snapped off the end of a front tooth. The tooth was driven forward into my lip which was bleeding steadily and which was the only thing that really hurt. I lay dazed, feeling the floor roll under me like small breakers on a warm beach. Finally, I got up and went on, found the floor lamp and tried to get the bulb out of it.

My hands don't work so good. They were both broken several times and never set properly. I'm missing three fingers altogether, which doesn't help much. And I don't have any feeling in my right thumb, though it can grip things readily enough. I was a musician. That's why it was just my hands that were worked over. I really didn't get as bad treatment as some Stunteds got.

I fumbled with the bulb, but it kept slipping out of my hands. I cursed it, wrenched at it, tripped again, bringing the lamp down onto the floor with me.

Well, dammit, you know how it was. A man comes along with the Empathy Circuits to augment the brain, and you are happy to let them install one in your own head. I mean, everyone's one big family now. No war. No misunderstandings. Only love. Right? Well, eventually. It's going to be great. Someone's having problems, everyone helps straighten him out, gives him love and understanding so that he can eventually come to terms with himself. And no words are needed. Man, not when everyone is an Empathist! So you come out of the operating room, chrome and white and tile and crisp nurses and doctors that smell of antiseptics, all around you. And that's when you find out, in your case, the circuits didn't work. At first, everyone is afraid, because they think it means a lot of people are going to be unreachable. Then, five years later and a few billion simple operations later, they know the unreachables are not many. Just a few. Stunteds. Closed to telepathic understanding. Always wanting to talk, talk, talk when talk is no longer necessary. So they are singled out immediately as being different. Different. And one day when some of your children and more perverted older citizens beat a Stunted around just for fun, you join in. It wears off, this streak of sadism, and you are ashamed. Mankind is rapidly approaching total sanity and you realize your attack on the Stunteds was a last fling of bestiality, the last brutal act before the coming of age. So the next stage in the Empathist establishment's treatment of the Stunteds is to, in a flurry of liberalism, pass flocks of laws under whose wings the Stunteds will be protected. So things are rosy, right? So there is a happy ending, check? So, forget the Stunteds. And slowly, it becomes obvious that the Stunteds need more than laws to protect them from physical violence. There is another kind of violence that is much more deadly, much more defeating. It is the violence of indifference, the violence of

being a caste apart from the rest of the world, the violence of being ignored, the violence of sitting alone, living on a pension, searching through the tattered, yellowed pages of old books for the lingering warmth of human understanding the writer may have been able to impart to his words. Look up other Stunteds. Yeah, try that. Only problem is that there are only fifteen thousand of them in a world of four and a half billion. And when you do find some, you discover that the mental type that is not susceptible to the Empathy Circuits is not always stable to begin with. Finally, you realize there is no place to go. Absolutely no place at all . . . And the men who keep them, the sleazy hotel operators, the two-bit roominghouse executives don't mind beating them a little to keep them quiet, because Stunteds don't really exist, do they? They aren't really people, are they? It is no longer the bestiality of out-and-out torture, just the rather boring, necessary task of discipline.

I lay with the lamp, holding it, saying, "Dear Jesus, don't let the bulb be broken; Dear Jesus, don't let the bulb be broken," over and over until I suddenly realized how eerie I sounded. I shivered a while and felt like I might vomit. Then I pulled myself together and felt around the inside of the lampshade. The bulb was intact. I whimpered while I fumbled it out of its socket, but I couldn't help it. I was so happy!

A minute later, I was back at the window. The shuttle was still there, but it could not stay for long. I picked up the table lamp and tried to unscrew the broken bulb. My hands slipped, and I slashed my fingers on the paper-thin glass, but I got it out. I screwed the new bulb in and brought the lamp back to the window. I was about to flash a signal to the passenger with the cigarette lighter when the driver and Belias came out of the hotel lobby.

I stopped my work and leaned my head against the glass, shivering. I felt miserable. My head was all covered with sweat. It dripped into my eyes and made them sting. Yet my stomach was cold—cold and flopping around like a dying fish. I had missed my chance. I had utterly missed it. After a few moments, I raised my head and looked back at the shuttle, expecting it to be gone. I don't know why I was still interested in watching it. Perhaps it was because I was curious about Belias being outside. He never went outside before. It was always the other way around: the driver came in. And they drank coffee by the fireplace and laughed but didn't talk and transferred the mail and I cried about it but didn't know why. Anyway, when I looked up, I saw something else strange. Belias and the driver were lifting the sidewalk SHUTTLE STOP sign into the luggage rack on the rear of the bus. They shoved it back in. The driver stayed

there, chaining it in place so it would not roll against the passengers' luggage. Belias went back inside. When he finished with the sign, the driver followed him.

There was more snow.

I watched it.

I watched the dark shapes of the passengers' heads against the window, thought about them resting in there between sleep and wakefulness, thought about them being lulled by the dull roar of the blades and the soft swish of the snow as they barreled through the night from one place to another.

Then I remembered the lamp.

I was about to signal when Belias and the driver returned. They were carrying a lobby sign indicating the hours the shuttles arrived and departed, rates and so forth. They started putting that in the luggage compartment too.

And then I understood. The fan shuttle was not going to come through town anymore. This was the last trip. From now on, some new air-cushion by-pass, some fast solid surface that would give the fans a better beat top to press against. An open stretch without buildings on both sides so that there would be no necessity to cut speed to keep from breaking windows. They would go away, leaving the streets empty, and that was how the streets would stay. Tomorrow night, I would look out the window, and there would be no warm, yellow lights coming brighter and brighter. There would be no thundering fans. No clouds of displaced snow.

The lamp switch was slick with blood from my fingers.

I got off the bed and found the door, somehow. I had to get down there. There was nothing to do but get down there. I went into the hallway and started running, but found I was going in the wrong direction. I came to a dead end on the other side of the hotel and just stood there, trying to think what had happened. Then I remembered where the stairs were and said, "Shit!" though I almost never swear, and ran back the other way. I found the stairs and went banging down them and across the raggedy lobby carpet.

I pushed through the glass doors and went down the steps. I slipped on the ice and fell across the sidewalk, caking myself with dry snow that melted against me and became ice on my clothes when it refroze. I remember that I was crying—and that I was embarrassed because I was crying—and that I just couldn't stop. Again, my gut heaved like I would vomit, but all that came out of my throat was a dry, racking heave that made my eyes water. And me a grown man.

The driver and Belias had not seen me yet. I got up and swayed back

and forth, the wind very cold and sharp against my skin. I went along the side of the shuttle until I found the fifth window where the cigarette lighter had fluttered. I rapped on the glass until a face turned to me. It was a woman, very heavyset, with long, stringy brown hair. She looked at me oddly while she tried to find my thought lines, then opened her mouth in a little round "O" and looked right through me—that look a Stunted gets used to.

I shouted at her. "Hey!" I beat on her window. "Hey! Hey!"

Suddenly there were arms around me, Belias' arms. He held me firmly, and I finally stopped trying to get away. The driver came around and looked at the woman in the seat. They were all talking, but I couldn't hear any of it. Then I saw a small boy in the seat beside the woman, and I guessed what it had been. The boy had seen me flicking the light and had taken his mother's lighter out of her purse. Maybe she was asleep, one of those lulled by the rushing and the beating of the fast machine. He had flicked it at me in answer. His mother had awakened and had taken it from him, had changed seats with him to keep him out of trouble.

Children are the only ones who can really be cruel anymore. They go through a stage when taunting is fun to them.

But, at least, there was one consolation.

He did not look through me.

No glass eyes. No fish stares. Our eyes met once, quickly, before Belias carried me back inside.

He made me go back to my room, back to my bed. I lay with my face down on the mattress, panting and shaking and trying to think. Then there was the roar of the fan shuttle blowers starting up. I got quickly to the window, kneeling on the bed, just in time to see the bus disappear down the road, its canopy of blown snow sealing it permanently out of sight.

That was when I started to scream.

Belias came and kicked open the door. The other man, whose name I do not know, came to me and told me to stop. I tried to stop. I really did. But the repressed sob would catch in my throat when I tried to force it down and come back twice as hard. I screamed and cried and couldn't seem to make enough noise to satisfy me. I thought of the quiet streets, the quiet snow falling softly, noiselessly upon other snow; I thought of the quiet of the hotel and of the quiet way in which the driver and Belias had talked to the fat woman. I screamed even louder. The nameless one backhanded me several times across the face, then dragged me from the bed and threw me against the wall the way he always does. He slammed a fist into my stomach three times, very quickly, and knocked all the breath out of

me. But I screamed silently. And when the breath came back, the scream came with it.

Belias crossed to my lamp and turned it on. The light was dim and ugly. The second one thrust me into a chair and began slapping me again and again, back and forth, top to bottom, until there was blood coming out of my nose. He split my lip farther than my fall had, and he punched once at my teeth, breaking loose the one I had partially damaged earlier.

While he was hitting me, I saw his face for the first time. It had always been dark before, and I had never been able to see him. It was an ordinary face—except that he was not looking through me. He was looking at me. Directly at me. And he was laughing. His mouth was pried wide by his broad, white teeth, and there was laughter wrapped around his tongue. I knew, immediately, why he was able to beat me. He was not an Empathist. He was a Stunted like me. Probably roomed here too. A sort of handy man to keep the other invisible people quiet.

I stopped screaming.

They watched me a moment.

I stared back at them.

They went away, leaving me in the dim light.

I found my way to the bed and stretched out on it, tasting blood and salt. Far away, in another room, a woman was screaming. She's the one who breaks things too. She's the blonde. Or she used to be before her hair turned color. I remember her. I remember her sleek loins, the moment when our friendship had changed, the moment when we had lain together, the moment of sliding, sleek, long, trembling penetration, that special closeness that changes always and forever any friendship. I remembered our falling away after that special closeness—and the discovery that the short minutes of connection, the fleeting seconds of tight, wet togetherness had only served to indicate how bad the loneliness was the rest of the time.

And now she was screaming. She was too old to find, in copulation, even fleeting seconds of warmth and light. And I guess I had started her. I was sorry my screaming had triggered hers. I was sorry I had caused the scene at the bus. I was sorry that I was a Stunted. But sorrow, after all, does absolutely nothing. It is much like holy water. It is not even used to quench the thirst.

That was three weeks ago. And I still don't want to remember. I listen for the fan shuttle, for the thumpa-thumpa of its blades. I lie awake until five or six in the morning, thinking that surely it must just be late. Sometimes, like now, I force myself to remember. I am too old for delusion. I am sixty-five. I was twenty-four when the operation failed. I am sixty-five. My hands are liver-spotted. My hair is very white. White as the snow out-

side, you might say. So I am remembering now, and the room is quiet. The snow falls against the pane, quietly. I snap my fingers to break the quiet, but it seems as if there is no noise. I snap again. There is no noise. And now I think I will have to scream for Belias and the second one without a name . . .

Afterword:

The most common civilian reaction to the discovery that you are a writer is to be asked, usually in a tone of fatuous condescension (after all, you *don't* have a regular job, do you; you don't follow the Great American Tradition of the nine-to-five existence, do you?) something quite like, "Where do you get all your ideas?" To answer this in depth would require seven or eight hours of the questioner's time. Considering his attention span is usually one minute and forty-eight seconds and that he has never read a book in his life (recent studies show that fifty-eight per cent of the American public is willing to admit just that), a seven hour response would not be fitting. So you shrug and say, "From life," or some other equally vague and pointless generality.

But since this is labeled as an afterword, and since you are reading it, a complete answer is obviously in order this time. Not seven or eight hours' worth, but just a few minutes on this story alone.

A writer of any genre of fiction—aside from the Western and the historical novel—must keep abreast of developments in physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, social science, and philosophy. This is especially so for writers of science fiction. It is with one, beady eye open for possible plots, therefore, that I devour magazines and books in many different fields. When I first discovered Marshall McLuhan's philosophic mutterings in *The Medium is the Massage* and *War and Peace in the Global Village,* I realized that here was a veritable gold mine of story ideas.

McLuhan theorizes, among other things, that the world has and will continue to become, due to electronics—telstar in particular—a Global Village. He foresees the day when national boundaries might disappear, all men might become as citizens of a single town, increased swiftness and completeness of communication bringing an understanding between men heretofore impossible. For my first extrapolation on McLuhan, I wrote a novel, *The Fall of the Dream Machine,* which tried to depict what would happen to the power cencentration in such a drastically shrunken world. Logically, the power structure would be managed by fewer hands than at any time in history. It might very well be possible, then, to have our first global dictator, though he would have to be a businessman rather than a politician. A second attempt at this extrapolation produced a short story,

"A Dragon in the Land", that dealt with the growth of understanding between people due to a world-shrinking war. The story dealt more with human relationships than had the novel. I liked it better, but it still did not sum up all I felt about the Global Village concept. Next came a mainstream novel titled *Hung* (from the catchphrase "hung-up") set in the present in the hippie subculture of a small university. I was trying to show that our world was already being compressed and what it was meaning to us. A war in Asia, for example, something we would once have been able to sweep under the rug (considering the country is a minor one), was setting moral reverberations around the world. This is a sign that McLuhan is on the right track. When *Hung* was finished, however, I knew I had still not said exactly what I felt about McLuhan's prophecy-philosophy. Yes, it would require another story. A science fiction story. Thus came the piece you have just read.

I wanted to show both the good and bad aspect of such a "world neighborhood." Surely, there might be an end to nations, better understanding between peoples, and an end to war. But it would mean something else, too, something altogether unpleasant. In a world so tightly knit, what will happen to ethnic backgrounds? Will we become merely an amalgam, a bland mixture, and not retain the individual, rich heritages? And what will happen to those who can't manage to blend with the Great All? The Global Village, with its whiz-bag, flash-crackle, snap-pow electronics, will try to brainwash and standardize its citizens as no society ever has before—simply because there will be no alternatives for the disenchanted, no place else to go . . .

In this story, the hero is alienated from the Global Village of the Empathists because of a medical-scientific problem. In a larger sense, he represents any man who is alienated from society for whatever reasons. The truly frightening thing is that he is living in a future wherein, by and large, everyone is happier than at any other time in history. Yet his existence is a nightmare. Even in utopia, then, there are dark corners. The Global Village might be nice, but it will not be a place for loners, for those who are different, for the iconoclast. It will be a place of glass walls that can't risk vibrations. And if you don't fit, the only thing you can do is exactly what the hero of this little story does. Scream for the one without a name and hope he will kill you this time . . .



Introduction to

GETTING ALONG:

For over thirty years James Blish has been the most consistent, loudest voice in the field for literacy, grace and technical expertise in writing speculative fiction. Both as himself and as "William Atheling, Jr." he has fought the good fight: as the former, by example, with stories of power and rigorously-manipulated imagination, with elegance in his writing, with a frequently cerebral appeal too often ignored in sf . . . and as the latter, with critical writings that have informed and sustained an entire generation of new writers, proffering literary standards by which to judge our best and our worst. Of all the writers one might call "giant," Jim Blish is certainly most deserving of the title.

Further, he is impeccably honest.

No one has greater cause to know this than your editor. I won't go into it—I have elsewhere, if I recall—but Jim's position seems always to have been one that is best encapsulated by a quotation from a silent Doug Fairbanks film, *Don Q, Son of Zorro* (1925), in which Fairbanks, as Don Cesar de Vega, apologizes for having offended someone, and when his compatriots bring him to task for it, he tells them, "When you're in the right, fight; when you're in the wrong, acknowledge it." I've seen Jim Blish do that in print, and knowing how difficult it is to backtrack, I take it to be a singular mark of the man's honesty.

Further, he is incorruptible.

He values his integrity more highly than any man I've ever met. Hired to do a series of adaptations of *Star Trek* scripts for Bantam paperbacks, Jim found himself confronted, on one occasion, by a puzzle that might have stumped Solomon. The filmed version of one script was vastly different from the original version written by a certain sf writer. Jim had to please the Bantam people, the producers of the show, the honchos at Paramount Pictures, and he didn't want to insult the sf writer who'd done the script, which original he'd liked. You or I, we'd have just sidestepped the problem and adapted something else; but Jim carefully took the best of *both* versions and wrote a marvelously ameliorative paragraph explaining that this was a version cannibalizing both. And everyone was content.

Further, he is patient with those who need to learn.

Without flying into the towering rage taken as refuge by so many other observers of the sf scene—and I shamefacedly admit to being one of those

lesser mortals—he has over and over again tried to point out to advocates of the Old Wave/New Wave controversy that *every writer tagged as being a member of the "New Wave," has vehemently denied it.* Even Blish's calm and reasoned sanity, however, has done little to stifle the, er, *piercing* tirades of those who would not only deny writers hungry to test the parameters of the sf equation their new forms and daring experiments . . . but continue to joust with paper tigers by insisting that the more avant-garde wish to deny that right to their brothers and sisters tagged "Old Wave." It is, at core, a moron's jehad. As Blish has noted, patient with the dull and even the humorless who are doomed to see the world with tunnel vision, the universe of speculative fiction is wide enough, colorful enough, rich enough, to support *all* forms, *all* styles, *all* writers.

Which brings me to "Getting Along."

A very special piece of work, even in a book devoted to the extra-special.

It is a story, certainly, and brilliant parody, of course—of which, more in a moment—but it is something else. It operates on a level of social intercourse once peopled by the likes of Alexander Woollcott, Bernard Shaw, Periander, James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Dorothy Parker, not to mention H. L. Mencken. It pokes gentle but (again) *piercing* fun at a philosophical position so humorless that its proponents conceive of the very act of laughter anathema. It is James Blish doing what he does better than anyone else in our midst—letting the hot air out of gasbags—and having just a grand time doing it.

And, if an editor may be pardoned the liberty, since it is painfully apparent to one who has encountered the unlettered youth of our nation in several hundred colleges these last five years and found the names Herman Melville and Gustave Flaubert unknown to an alarming number of those who consider themselves hip because they know the names of every instrumentalist in Blood, Sweat & Tears or Three Dog Night—the parodies may be a trifle obscure, so I would like to identify the authors being lampooned.

It should be understood that this suggests no contempt on the editor's part for the reader's intelligence, but merely one further attempt to make this volume as complete and uplifting an experience as, say, an Evening with Bobby Sherman.

However, to insure no one will take offense at the act of kindness, I suggest you read "Getting Along" first, try to identify for yourself the authors being parodied, and just skip everything that comes between the space below (including the upside-down part) and the next big space in the copy. Everything in-between those spaces identifies the authors parodied in the nine letters. After you've read the story you can come back and see how many you were able to recognize. It'll be more fun that way.

Okay, start skipping now.

The parodies run like so . . .

Letter 1: John Cleland
2: Bram Stoker
3: Mary Shelley
4: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
5: John Collier/Lord Dunsany
6: A. Merritt
7: H. G. Wells
8: Victor Appleton
9: H. P. Lovecraft

The combination in the fifth letter is due to the fact that the two men wrote almost identical stories—"Two Bottles of Relish" and "A Touch of Nutmeg Makes It"—although for the parody Blish drew pretty generally on all the stories in Collier's *Fancies and Goodnights* and, of course, Dunsany's famous Jorkens stories. Similarly, the Doyle section is a mixture of Sherlock Holmes and *The Land of Mist.* I'm not sure it's necessary, but there may be readers who have forgotten that John Cleland wrote *Fanny Hill* and that "Victor Appleton" is the name signed to the Tom Swift books. Anyhow, in letters 6, 8 and 9 it seems clear that the author had no specific works in mind.

And perhaps it might be suggested that Jim show letter number 5 to Lady Dunsany, who should find it amusing.

Now that you've skipped over the information pertaining to the parodies, and have reserved the joy of figuring them out for yourselves before coming back to test your erudition, it is time to catalogue the Blish books to date, and to offer Jim and his lovely wife, Judith Ann Lawrence, with whom he wrote this delight, a chance to state their vital specifics.

In science fiction, these are the Blish titles:

The Warriors of Day
The Duplicated Man
(with Robert W. Lowndes)
Jack of Eagles
The Cities in Flight Series:
1. *They Shall Have Stars*
2. *A Life for the Stars*
3. *Earthman, Come Home*
4. *The Triumph of Time*

The Seedling Stars
The Frozen Year
Vor
Galactic Cluster
A Case of Conscience
And All the Stars a Stage
Titan's Daughter
The Night Shapes
So Close to Home
The Star Dwellers
Mission to the Heart Stars
Welcome to Mars!
Best SF Stories of James Blish
A Torrent of Faces
(with Norman L. Knight)
Star Trek 1/2/3/4
Spock Must Die!
Anywhen

Fantasy titles are *Black Easter* and *The Day after Judgment;* an historical novel, *Dr. Mirabilis;* a teen-age novel, *The Vanished Jet;* brilliant criticism in *The Issue at Hand* and *More Issues at Hand;* as editor, *Thirteen O'Clock* (early stories of C. M. Kornbluth), *New Dreams This Morning, The Nebula Award Stories,* Fifth Volume and *Kalki,* the James Branch Cabell Society Journal.

In preparation at this writing: *Beep, King Log, Histories of Witchcraft* and *Demonology & Magic* (two volumes), and *The Sense of Music.*

Of Judy A. L. Blish, much can be said. Not the least of which is that she sub-authored this story/parody/happening with her husband Jim. It can also be said of her that she is a talented artist and draftsman; that she designed the covetously handsome Nebula awards of the Science Fiction Writers of America, a three-dimensional rendering of any sf writer's dream of what a neat award should look like; that she writes well; that she is a woman of uncommon good sense and almost unbelievable empathy; that she will be pissed-off I haven't given her as much space as Jim. But she knows me. And like an angel, forgives me more than she should.

They both live in England, at the moment, and here is what they write of themselves, sort of in the spirit of just, er, getting along . . .

"JB born 1921 in Orange, N. J.; educated Rutgers (B. Sc. 1942) and Columbia; U. S. Army 1942–44; trade newspaper editor 1945–52, public relations counsel (both agency and corporate) 1952–69; now full time free lance author. M. 1945 Virginia Kidd, two children; rem. 1964 Judith Ann Lawrence. 27 books in print, one in press, three in process; represented in 64 anthologies not counting A,DV; translated into 18 languages. One of the three founders of the Milford Science Fiction Writers Conference; vice president of SFWA, two years; winner of Hugo award for best novel of 1958, *A Case of Conscience;* guest of honor, Pittcon (1960) and Lunacon (1967) and principal speaker at Phillycon (1968). Have also written Westerns, detectives, sport stories, popular science articles, poetry, plays, literary criticism, music criticism, TV scripts and feature films."

"O god Jim says I have to do this too. Won't give birthdate to anybody. BFA Columbia 1957. Taught school, ran elevators, secretaried & all that. Now freelance illustrator—19 books, many magazine spots, mostly sf. Married to all the above. Like it. Isn't that enough? Refuse to satisfy any more prurient curiosity.

"This was not a cold story collected out of the air. It was collected out of a hot British summer night at about 4 a.m., and climbed out of a nice warm bed and wrote its idea down, on a still warm electric typer."



James Blish

(with Judith Ann Lawrence)

GETTING ALONG

[*For a year before going to England my wife and I lived in an elaborately decorated Brooklyn brownstone which we suspected of having been a* fin du siecle *bordello. In the master bedroom was a combination wallsafe which nobody, including the landlady, knew how to open. Curiosity and avarice finally got the better of us and we hired a professional cracksman to do the job.*

[*Inside we found no jewels, deeds to eighty-four square feet of Wall Street, or gold eagles, but only a packet of yellowed, flaking-edged letters in a feminine hand. We do not know how much credence to place in the story they tell, but we are certain we have never before seen one quite like it.—J. B.*]

LETTER THE FIRST

Dear Madam,

In view of your many past kindnesses to me in a time of tribulation more than ordinary even for my misfortunate self, I respond, albeit not without reluctance to intrude further upon your ready sympathies, to your request for further particulars of my handkerchiefly history.

Know then, dear Madam, that I first saw the light of day in Winnetka, Illinois in the year of Our Lord 18—. I was four years old at the time of which I speak, my dear mama having been cruelly cast into debtors' prison four years, eight months and two weeks earlier. We crept out of the gate in the chill dawn that day and the turnkey bade us all a fond farewell. He kissed my dear mama and the three younger children decorously, and pressed half a dollar into my dear mama's hand.

Now, Madam, my dear mama had been trained in a famous School of Needlework in a small Thamesside town, where she helped to make part of the trousseau for Queen Victoria's eldest daughter; but in the far West of that day, inhabited as it was preponderantly by buffalo, Red Indians and boisterous bullfighters and roadrunners, there was but little call for services so gentle, and her health had been much weakened by long privation and insomnia. Hence it fell out that, after a lingering struggle with the pthisis, she was called to her long reward when I was but ten *ae;* leaving me, as I need hardly add, even less prepared than she for the nurturing and education of my brother and sisters, in view of the sheltered nature of my earliest years.

Happily I was mature for my age and soon came under the protection of a landed gentleman, wealthy in the corn and kine of the country. Though he was rude and choleric in many of his ways, I shall never forget his generosity. He was not, of course, prepared to adopt a veritable family of small children for the sake of a congenial companion, but instead arranged for their acceptance into a sort of asylum where, I was assured, they would be well cared for, and trained to do useful work.

Though I was sorry to be deprived of the sight of their dear faces, my indebtedness to my patron was such that I could not but acquiesce; for, Madam, you will readily appreciate that at that time I was wholly ignorant of the social arts attendant upon ministering to a protector, not to speak of those refinements which were eventually to make me worthy in some small measure, dear Madam, of your elegant Eastern establishment: and it can well be imagined with what a combination of eagerness, shyness, timidity and apprehension I was entered upon these new duties; but I found my master tolerant and even, perhaps, oddly pleased at my inexperience.

I was later to learn that such tolerance is far from uncommon among men of the world, but this in no way diminishes my gratitude; moreover, I found those offices which I was called upon to exercise so congenial that I was soon seeking out pretexts to re-discharge affairs which had been thoroughly discharged but little earlier, and although my protector at first was amused by my enthusiasm, he at length found it necessary to rebuke me, howsoever gently, for such excess of zeal.

Thus I seemed to have found my haven, but alas, in due course this gentleman was afflicted with financial reverses, quite beyond my poor comprehension, having to do with a mysterious operation called selling crops short (for his, indeed, seemed to my naïve eye to be quite long enough for any purpose). In this extremity he soon found his holdings much reduced, and as if to compensate for having brought me into deprivation (for which, however, sad experience had now taught me the saving grace of drawing

upon my own inner resources), he further neglected his business enterprises in favor of my company. In our joint interest I made bold to protest that indeed he did not need to concern himself so strenuously in my behalf, and to lend conviction to my protestation, made shew of my ability to pursue the pleasures of solitude if needs be; but this had no effect but to spur him into redoubling his exertions; and in the aftermath of a particularly strenuous such confrontation, during which both sides became indecorously inflamed, my dear master incontinently died.

He had, I found, provided for me in his will, but of course everything that he had had to give me had since been spent. Thus it was that I found myself—though not, praise Fortune, my little former charges—once more cast forth upon the unfeeling bosom of the world.

At this desperate juncture, a higher power than ours reminded me that, although my dear departed mama had no relatives alive elsewhere but in Buckinghamshire and London, the turnkey of whom I spoke above had local brothers and sisters, of whom he had spoken often. It therefore occurred to me that although he was not my father, some one of these relatives might be moved to take pity upon me who was sister to their nieces and nephew.

Deeming this venture, though mischancy, less unpromising than any other prospect before me, I sold the only jewel my late protector had left me in order to purchase a coach ticket to Niles, Michigan, where dwelt, by latest report, the turnkey's eldest sister; and how I fared there you shall hear in my next epistle, dear Madam, if I have not already too grievously abused your patience. In the meantime, I remain, believe me,

Faithfully yours, &c.,

[signature illegible]

[*In the letters that follow, I have deleted the salutations and complimentary closes, which are all alike.—J.B.*]

LETTER THE SECOND

There were several others in the diligence, all peasants, who were bound for the same destination as I, and for the first part of our journey we all chatted pleasantly. When, however, I artlessly inquired whether anyone could direct me to the home of Mrs. Vrolok (this being my aunt-in-lieu's name, though I had been given to understand that her husband was dead), they all became reticent and pretended not to understand my

vestigial English accent, though they had understood it well enough before. When I pressed for details, they all made a peculiar sign, clenching their fists and thrusting their middle fingers into the air, and simply refusing to speak any further. I found this somewhat disquietening.

But apparently the coach driver had somehow been appraised of my destination, for in the middle of the night the vehicle stopped with a lurch and a clatter of harness, and springing down from his box, he jerked open the door and silently motioned me out. When I complied—he had already thrown my poor traps to the ground—and asked where I was to go now, he as silently pointed up a hill, and then sprang back to his position with a single bound from the whiffletree.

While I still hesitated, one of my erstwhile travelling companions, a man older than the rest, leaned out of a window, and putting one finger to his lips, reached down and pressed some small, hard, dry object into my hand. Then a whip cracked and the coach was off, at a reckless speed. Bewildered, I looked down at the object the elderly gentleman had given me. In my palm was a bulb of garlic.

As the daughter of an English gentlewoman I had of course never even considered allowing such a vegetable into my kitchen, but now I was sufficiently uneasy to drop it in my reticule while I took stock of my surroundings. I was quite alone in the bright moonlight, though in the distance I could hear the uncanny crying of a loon. Behind me, across the road which the diligence had just quitted so hastily, was the deep gorge through which flowed the St. Joseph River; farther upstream was a sound of turbulence, as though of waters falling over a weir, but here they flowed with an oily silence. Ahead was the hill the driver had pointed out, a surprisingly long and steep one; the countryside through which we had passed to come here was mostly level, though it had become increasingly forested.

At the summit of this hill, the silhouetted chimneys, gables and cupolas of a large house jaggedly broke the sky. Though I had written to Mrs. Vrolok through General Delivery, I seemed not to be expected, for no ray of light shone from this edifice.

But when I wearily climbed the creaking porch steps and knocked at the old door, the latter opened at once with a protest of hinges. Standing in the entrance, bearing a hurricane lamp, was a square-jawed woman with fiery eyes, iron-gray hair and what seemed to be a faint moustache. Though she was wearing a housecoat which enveloped her completely, she somehow gave me the impression of great physical strength.

"I am Felicity Coupling," I said hesitantly.

"Ah, yes, my dear," she said. "Enter and be welcome, of your own free will."

When I hesitated, she uttered this odd greeting twice more, and at last I stepped over the threshold. Taking my bags—she was indeed strong—she led me to a large sitting room, where despite the lateness of the hour a handsome supper was laid out, and a fire was burning brightly. Candles too were lit, although I had been prevented from seeing the light from outside by drawn drapes of heavy chintz. Over the fireplace was painted the motto, "Frae ghoulies an' ghiesties an' lang-legged beasties and things that gae bump i' the night, Good Laird deliver us," and the quaintness of this inscription and the cheerfulness of the scene helped considerably to revive my failing spirits.

Bidding me seat myself, Mrs. Vrolok asked after her brother, though not, I thought, with much appearance of real interest or affection, and inquired if my journey had been comfortable. On hearing that it had gone as well as anyone could expect—for I deemed it impolitic to describe the mysterious behavior of my companions upon the mention of her name—she pressed me to tell what had impelled me to make the trip, and gradually drew out of me my entire life's story (though again, modesty prevented me from describing the full extent of the tenderness which had been shown me by my lamented protector).

During my recital, she insisted upon serving me the supper with her own hands, and when I protested, said with flashing eyes: "But I must insist. You are my dear relative and guest, and in any event I no longer keep servants of nights. Our family is a proud one, but fallen upon evil times. My father was an Ambassador, his father before him a state Senator, and his father before him the Captain of a clipper ship—by day you will see that this house, fallen into disrepair and far from the sea though it is, has a widow's walk," and here she revealed brilliantly white teeth in a sudden grim smile, although I was at a loss to fathom the nature of the jest.

The fire had now almost burnt down, and involuntarily I shivered. Instantly she said, "But you are chilled and tired. I have been thoughtless. Come, I will show you to your room, and see to it that you are warm and comfortable."

I was by now more than willing. So fulsome indeed was her hospitality that in order to be quite certain that I was warm enough, she joined me in the spacious four-poster bed, where for the first time in my life I experienced those attentions which a woman of ardent nature can bestow only upon another woman. I found these more than pleasant, though I believe Mrs. Vrolok was somehow disappointed with me, for she soon said in a muffled voice, "You were not quite candid with me, my dear, about your protector." But such was my exhaustion, compounded of repeated emo-

tions, that I was half-guiltily pleased when she arose silently and departed, just as a cock crowed in the back yard.

I arose very late, to find a luncheon laid out for me in my room. After freshening myself and partaking of this, I went in search of my hostess, but the house was silent and empty. Just after sundown, however, she returned, bringing with her a blonde peasant girl of what seemed to be just my own age, although she was insufficiently clean to make this judgment easy, and never spoke; she seemed either sullen or terrified, and perhaps both. Both my aunt and I attempted to draw her out over dinner, but without success; and in due course my aunt showed the girl to her own room, drawing her by the wrist in a grip whose strength I now knew well indeed. I was not sorry to have the evening to myself, for I had many matters of moment to mull over, and indeed sleepiness overcame me before I had more than begun to put my experiences in order.

By morning I felt quite refreshed, and somewhat inclined to smile at my earlier forebodings; surely my aunt, peculiar though she was in some ways, had shown me nothing but kindness; and which of us is not without his harmless crotchets? But this mood was dispersed by the sight of the peasant girl, who hurried past me down the stairs as I was finishing my breakfast. In contrast to her appearance of the previous day, she was not only clean but as wan as fine linen, and looked not only exhausted but somehow drained. I do not believe she had seen me at first—for I was still sitting at my repast in my room—for when I called to her through the door she started like a wild thing and fled the house entirely.

Once more I was all in a state of amazing wonder, and sought Mrs. Vrolok—somehow I was unable any longer to think of her as my aunt—in hope of reassurance. But as before, she had vanished, and I began to suspect that there was no other living being in this house but myself. Yet how then were these elaborate meals prepared? The thought reminded me that I had yet to observe Mrs. Vrolok eat or drink anything, despite her iron strength. What manner of being was this? The question emboldened me even to invade the kitchen, which I found sunny, neat and well-stocked, but again quite uninhabited.

I was about to quit it when I noticed, almost obscured behind two barrels, a low door which proved to lead into an unheated woodshed, the walls of which were lined with shelves of preserves in Mason jars thickly coated with dust. At the very back of this rather narrow enclosure was a completely incongruous object: A teakwood case much like a hope chest, but longer and narrower. When I approached this more closely, I saw to my astonishment that several holes had been bored in its lid, a circumstance

which to a woman could not but seem to defeat the whole purpose of such a chest.

It was not locked, and not without an awareness of my violation of hospitality in such an action, I raised the lid, and there—of my horror I may not and cannot speak—lay the creature I had in my awful ignorance claimed as a kinswoman! She rested upon a bed of fresh mothballs, and appeared asleep—except that her eyes were open, though without their wonted fire. She looked younger, for her iron-gray hair had changed to glossy black, and even her moustache had darkened; her jaw had softened; her lips, normally so thin, were full and red; and around them, and upon that chin, were smears of scarcely darkened blood!

All too well I knew the source of that repast . . . and why the gentleman in the coach had given me the bulb of garlic. Casting it in among the mothballs—little though I dare to think it will discommode that devil's daughter! —I fled that cursed house upon the instant.

LETTER THE THIRD

To anyone who would ask me how I, still a very young girl, could then consider seeking out another of my stepfather's relations—not only possibly to endure, but even to dilate upon, another such hideous experience—I can only reply that I have always been of a sanguine temperament, and readily responsive to the beauties of nature, which refresh me, to speak in Sanchean phrase, as if from a fountain of forgetfulness and joy. Of such beauties I saw a plethora in the course of my flight from that house of tragedy, for I was on my way to the famous University of Gh— in the fortunate country of Ohio, where the turnkey's eldest brother, Prof. Turnkistan, had won at a very early age a chair in the science of natural philosophy.

Yet I was but ill-prepared for what I was to find, for on applying to the first learned man of the university as to where I might find him whom I sought, I was greeted with a darkened countenance. Upon my showing myself taken aback at this discourtesy, the professor—for such he was—apologized, and hastened to explain that until recently Prof. Turnkistan had been adjudged the most promising of all those who labored in that center of learning in natural philosophy, having indeed nearly perfected, even before earning his degree, an engine which would reproduce upon paper the perfect image of a person or object, including the illusion of living motion. I could not repress an exclamation of wonder at this remarkable achievement, whereupon my informant, who had been in fact the earliest

mentor of him whom I sought, informed me that Prof. Turnkistan had since abandoned his studies in this field and had withdrawn himself from the society of his fellows, and now, a recluse, labored in the utmost secrecy upon some work the nature of which was unknown to all, save that it required the constant consultation of the volumes in the university's library of Cornelius Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus, and other works of even more unsavory fame.

I nevertheless persisted in my desire to see this most unusual man, forbearing in common prudence to add that I must needs cast myself directly upon his mercy; and was directed to an ill-favored lodging-house near the river which bounded the city of Gh—. Inquiring here, I was shortly greeted by a pale, sickly creature whom I could hardly credit to be the eminent scholar whose story I had heard. Was it upon *this* most miserable of mortals that my fate must henceforth depend? For melancholy and despairing he seemed in the extreme, languishing as though his cup of life had been poisoned forever by his unhallowed arts.

And yet, when I had identified myself, his ravaged countenance was lightened by a momentary beam of benevolence and sweetness, like that of a child. "Oh! but you have arrived in the nick of time!" exclaimed he. "For I am on the brink of completion of the work of a lifetime, and there is none that I can trust to understand or help me at my moment of greatest need!"

He led me up many dark flights of stairs to his quarters, which were in a garret in the utmost squalor and disarray. Books and chemical instruments lay scattered about, and in the center of the narrow cell was a long table upon which—Great God!—there lay what I took to be the partially dismembered corpse of a beautiful woman, some of whose parts rested on a smaller table nearby in apparent carelessness.

My horror at this charnel scene was such that I did not at first perceive the presence of another person, who stood motionless in the darkest part of the garret. He was a veritable giant, fit to have worn that monstrous helmet which dashed out the life of the young heir in the opening pages of *The Castle of Otranto*. Fully eight feet tall he was, with long, gleaming black hair, white teeth, and magnificent musculature; but his watery eyes were a dull yellow, his lips straight and black, his complexion shriveled, so that the effect was one of mingled beauty and monstrosity.

Noticing the direction of my startled gaze, Prof. Turnkistan continued feverishly, "This is Doll, an homunculus of my own creation, of whom I would once have said that he merits every shudder of your delicate frame—and yes! of all of humanity's, for he has been guilty of fiendish murders. Yet the guilt for these inheres ultimately in me, for though I made him gentle by nature, I turned from him in loathing, and the hands of all men

were turned against him, leaving him no emotion but that of horrid vengeance. All this I could have prevented had I acceded to his wish, which was to make him a mate like unto himself, with whom he could retreat to South America among the apes and others who would not think them unusual. Once I so promised him, but—wretch that I am!—I broke that promise. But now I have repented, and you see before you his almost finished bride."

"Was it, then, but pity for his deformities that moved you?" inquired I. "Or fear of further depredations on his part?"

"Neither were capable of moving me," said the Professor, "until my discovery of the active principle of the kinematographotype, by which it is possible to capture images in a semblance of living motion. It was then revealed to me, as if by a guardian angel, that it was for *this* that I had created life: to study the natural affections, attractions and interactions between the sexes without impinging upon the privacy or the sensibilities of my God-created fellow-creatures. I resumed the great work forthwith, but there are still several steps to be taken, in which only you—only you, my dear cousin!—can be of assistance!"

His fervor was contagious, and I at once inquired how I, a mere unlettered girl, might contribute anything to so deep an enterprise.

"My studies," explained he, "have left me little time for the normal pursuits of youth, and indeed I fear that despite my sufferings I am somewhat unworldly. Hence, although as you may see I have made my female Doll of an appropriate stature, I lack experience to tell me whether her more intimate arrangements—which await her, over there—will suffice to keep my monster happy among the cyanocephali and mamaluchi of South America. Were the outcome to be otherwise, the consequences for all mankind would be hideous, to say nothing of the loss of opportunity to make—shall I vulgarly call them 'moving pictures'?—of congresses so pregnant with possibilities for the understanding of our own passional natures. Should you therefore be willing to determine whether or not these organs, as God more usually fashions them, are suitable to the purpose, we shall be sensibly advanced along our way."

So structured is the mind that the different accidents of life are not so mutable as the feelings of human nature; and although I had been well treated for a brief interval by my aunt, whose crimes I now saw in a less lurid light, my natural frailty had again begun to yearn toward that rock and refuge which man must ever represent to the female species. Moreover, it was clear that the illness and torments of Prof. Turnkistan had unfitted him, poor wretch, for such a rôle. It is true that the monster Doll was hideous, and yet I have already noted that in him also were some elements of beauty, and for a woman the slightest sight of what is beautiful in

nature, or the study of what is excellent and sublime in the productions of man, can always interest her heart, and communicate elasticity to her spirits. Besides, it was exceedingly dark in the garret.

I therefore delighted my uncle by agreeing to his proposal: and this experiment being concluded to the satisfaction of all concerned, the Professor next turned to the main enterprise. On a dreary night in November, the pale student of unhallowed arts collected about him the instruments of life, and knelt beside the hideous phantasm of a woman stretched out at his feet, that he might infuse a spark of being into his unnatural progeny. The rain beat dismally against the panes, and the candle was already guttered before the assembled corpse stirred convulsively with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Then the yellow eyes opened, and the living woman arose, and saw Doll!

Oh! how deeply affecting was that union of these two Promethean beings, who had been so uniquely "made for each other!" How exhibitory of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue! Nor is its potential power to move suffering humanity to new understanding of itself confined to the productions of my feeble pen, for Prof. Turnkistan captured virtually its every moment upon the magical paper of his marvelous engine; and some few of these kinematographotypes, along with many others that were recorded in succeeding weeks, survived the later catastrophe and may be viewed at the library of the University of Gh— to this day by qualified scholars and physicians.

Little thought we then of catastrophe, for we were heedless of the possible effect of any human endeavor to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. Indeed, so salubrious was Prof. Turnkistan's success to his own health and spirits that he was shortly enabled to essay with his new creation the same experiment that Doll and I had performed, while I operated the recording engine; and subsequently was able to confirm my finding that her interior design, whatever the repellancies of her outward appearance, was flawless. Thus again was affirmed that saying of the divine Shakespeare that all is not gold that glitters, and that a leaden exterior may conceal the greatest treasures.

Of the crasser treasures of this world, however, we were in short supply, for the experiments were costly, and you may well conceive that two such huge beings as the Dolls required extraordinary amounts of sustenance, especially while demonstrating for the enrichment of natural and moral philosophy their abilities and capacities. Prof. Turnkistan therefore proposed that we should offer for sale some copies of his less bizarre recordings; and the actual performance of this task fell upon me, since he felt

that my youth, sex and natural demureness of manner would be less likely to excite suspicion among baser minds.

Some of these recordings, however, came to the attention of the police, who were alike as incapable of appreciating their wonder as of comprehending their maker's disinterestedness; and since I myself am utterly incapable of dissembling, their place of origin was soon also ferreted out. I believe (although I shall never know) that Prof. Turnkistan, seeing these officials approaching in a menacing manner, may have attempted to put to the torch the more difficult to explain of these documents; for one afternoon, as I was returning through the snow with the proceeds of my latest expedition, I beheld with horror that the entire lodging-house was aflame, with such fervor that it could not fail to be the funeral pyre of my uncle, his miraculous Dolls, his marvelous engine, and my hopes of a happy home. Its fury gave the very police officers pause. With sad solemnity I watched until the light of that conflagration had faded away, and its ashes had been swept by the wind far over the plains of Ohio and on toward the awful grandeur of the Alleghenies. May they rest in peace!

LETTER THE FOURTH

It was at the beginning of the year that, my coffers somewhat relined by the proceeds of the Affair of the Moving Picture, I was able to quit my practices in Gh— and join forces with Mr. and Mrs. Pullover in Orange Park, Pa. Mrs. Pullover, a good, earnest soul of the sort upon which the best societies are based everywhere in the Colonies, was my second oldest aunt, and her husband a similar sort but a man of markedly less practicality. I was readily accepted into their lodgings, not only because of my rather remote ties of blood, but because the modest sum I had brought with me was most welcome to them and their cause.

I record these personal particulars not, of course, because they are of any interest in themselves, but because they form an interesting contrast to what may be the least interesting case in my files, as well as being essential to the reader's understanding of it. Indeed, Buddworth Maracot, to whom I served as friend and amanuensis during this period, raised his eyebrows scornfully over his bagpipe at the very notion of my taking notes on it.

"My dear Coupling," he said, "I am sure that with so little of substance upon which to expatiate, you will succeed only in sensationalizing my methods even further beyond recognition."

But I digress. First I must further note that Mr. and Mrs. Pullover were

at this time the prime movers of an organization called the First Church of the Unreal Absence, which was a gathering-place for spiritualists from all over the Colonies. These people maintained that the dead are not extinguished forever, but instead simply wander, discorporate, in some misty other land from which they may graduate only as they attain to superior understanding of their condition. In the meantime, they may be spoken to by means of seances conducted by psychic mediums, of which latter group my aunt was considered preeminent.

"The First Church," my aunt was fond of saying, "is a great leveler of classes. Here the charwoman with psychic force is the superior of the millionaire who lacks it."

I was prepared to grant this sentiment some nobility, but when I reported it to Buddworth Maracot, he said drily: "How many millionaires have you seen there lately?"

Nevertheless, Maracot's position was somewhat compromised by the fact that his daughter Deepily was a member of the First Church. I am unable to account for my friend's having had a daughter at all, for I never had any success in interesting him in the opposite sex—"To me, Coupling," he said often, "the BVM will always be the *only* woman"—but what is important here is that Deepily had challenged him to attend a seance at the First Church and bring to bear the fullest powers of his formidable scepticism to expose it, if he could.

Maracot brought to the session not only his scepticism, but a veritable brute of a man, bulging with old hockey muscles, whom he had recruited during one of his trips in disguise to the docks along the banks of the Monongohela (which in those days, as the name indicates, was much haunted by Mongols). This creature was made as welcome to the seance by Deepily and the Pullovers as was everyone else, and Maracot was then invited to search both Mrs. Pullover and her cabinet. Insofar as I could see, he did both with equal impartiality, including all the drawers of both.

Then we all sat down, the lights were turned to a ghostly dimness, and Mrs. Pullover called upon her "contact," a childish spirit named Sam.

"Me wee pee lamb top hole allee samee sensa wonda byembye seeka tomollah, you bet," piped the little voice.

"Tell me, Sam, dear, is there anyone in the land of mist who wishes to speak to anyone here?" Mrs. Pullover intoned.

"Here ee weary topside bigfella past competent journalist Bergen Record," Sam squeaked through the trumpet. "Callself allsame J. R. Transistor, wantee mohtal gaslight explohah infinite storm."

But no, no one would own to a friend named J. R. Transistor, or even a relative of that name. But at the same moment there emerged from the

cabinet an astonishing vision, wrapped from moorcock to gernsback in a coating of ectoplasm.

"Grab him!" cried the voice of my friend, and the soccer player lunged in a full football tackle for the anxious ankles of the spirit. Since he failed to release my hand as he did so, we soon found ourselves rather more entangled with each other than with the Problem of the White Sheet, but in the confusion managed to make the best resolution of it that presented itself.

* * *

It was sometime later that I asked my friend how he had known that Mrs. Pullover had been generating the voices in the tube by vibrating her diaphragm. "My dear Felicity," he said, stuffing his Persian slipper into a pot, "can you really have missed the clue of the Third Fundamentalism? Then I fear that you are too inattentive to serve any longer as my liaison officer."

And with this, alas, I was waved away anew, and never again saw the best and wisest and most unsatisfactory man that I have ever known.

LETTER THE FIFTH

All apelike young Irishmen named George, as is well known, eat nothing less good than tournedos Rossini. Thus it was no surprise to me to find that he was a mushroom cultivator. He was the turnkey's second oldest brother, and despite his ugliness I believe he had the heart of a poet. I found him very engaging, though somewhat gullible.

I cannot say the same for his wife, who struck me as the most stupid, blind, perverse, and ill-natured witch who ever infested the earth. I do not know why such men always marry such women, unless it is because they think they can get no other kind.

I disabused him of this notion, if he had it, rather quickly. Finding me friendly, he took me to the cellar to show me his beds of rare mushrooms, and behind the boiler I raised another specimen which afterwards we cultivated assiduously in my own bed. If he was taken aback to find me more expert at fungiculture than he, he was too gentlemanly to say so. For my part, I found that like all true amateurs, what he lacked in technical polish he more than made up for in energy.

Since we now shared one secret which had to be kept from his demon of a wife, he showed me another one: a species of morel which, when dried, broken up and chewed, released a remarkable drug. I found that it tasted

like a mouthful of elastic bands, but after only a few moments made one feel like a bird of paradise that had just been released from a cage.

In particular, if taken just before bedtime, the dried morel heightened the pleasures of entertaining a friend to the shimmering verge of delirium. I said as much; and George then confessed that for years it had been the only thing that had made his wife's company at all tolerable to him.

This remark set me to thinking with some speed. George was charming, his house was cozy, he had money and an unusual hobby to keep him occupied while either of us was temporarily bored or otherwise out of touch with the other; the only serpent in this Eden was the legal female demon. One night after he had been stifling a particularly deep resentment of her, I asked him casually if some of his pets were poisonous.

This leaven—these mycelial metaphors are getting away from me—produced a fine brew in a remarkably short time. George's proposal was for tournedos Rossini with broiled mushrooms, at which the demon should receive the deadly *Amanitopsis vaginata*, and George and I the morel as a prelude to a night of celebration. As for the police, George said, shrugging, doubtless they would be sticky for a while, but a mistake is a mistake: Everyone knows that amateurs should not cook with noncommercial mushrooms.

And so they shouldn't. As the meal progressed, the demon and I were seized with a progressive fit of the giggles, while George slowly turned an unbecoming black.

LETTER THE SIXTH

It was hushed and silent spring by the time I had beaten my way, through the inhuman malice of the jungle and the savagery of the natives, to the fabled lost valley of Hidden, Del. For a part of the expedition I had been accompanied by three gallant soldiers of fortune, veterans of the Boxer Rebellion, whom I had recruited under a boxcar, but alas, the last of these had perished after 72 pages in small type of terrible privations. Now only I stood looking down into the valley upon the stately mansion in which, if the turnkey's frightened whispers could be trusted, there dwelt that creature of legend and dream, my aunt Messalina.

I say it was silent; but the hush was the absence only of the usual rustling of pine fronds, the blood-curdling distant roar of squirrels, the indignant chattering of deer, even the trilling of robins. Instead, the air seemed filled, as if with exotic perfume, with a far-off bungling, as of the blowing of faëry flutes. What sort of creature could make so magical a sound?

(Later, I was privileged to see an entire flock of them: scaly and winged, in some parts of the valley they dangled from every participle.)

As I mounted the steps of the mansion, this elfin music was joined by the sound of gongs, hollow, awful, empty, one to each step. What did this gongorism portend? But I was given no time to ponder the puzzle, for the great door swung open, and before me in the aperture stood—the White Goddess, my aunt Messalina herself!

How to describe such beauty? Her eyes were blue, wondrous, though not without a taint of fiendishness in them; an almost invisible veil slipped down from the neck, the shoulders, half-revealing, hoo boy, the gleaming breasts. And eldritch, eldritch beyond all song was that exquisite head and bust floating above me—and beautiful, dextrously beautiful beyond all singing, too. So might even Potiphar's wife, that ever-normal granary of fruitfulness, have shown herself tempting Joseph!

"Ah, Felici-tee!" she cried in a mocking voice. "My winged messengers have foretold your coming! Enter my temple, and be glad!"

Within, the mansion revealed itself to be indeed a temple, but a temple of sensuousness, a palace of indulgence. I paused, awe-struck, and behind me sounded Messalina's tinkling laughter. Before me on divans, languidly sipping some nectar from golden goblets, lay a motley company, consisting at the moment of three men and a girl (though I found later that there were many others among the worshipers of the Goddess). The men present were a fey Irish-American, a huge Scandinavian who in his speech constantly invoked a mixture of Norse and German gods, and a dirty spy (whether German or Russian I was never able to determine). The innocent-appearing girl was named, appropriately enough, Magda.

At the back of the great chamber was the Goddess' throne, and above the dais on which it rested there hung on the wall, suspended from two golden thumbtacks, a Satanic mask which constantly wept, drooled and sweated typewriter-ribbon ink. This ran down into a golden bowl, which was periodically borne away and replaced, by squattering, froglike creatures.

One of these brought me a beaker of the lambent ichor, which I drank gratefully; as I raised it to my lips, there was a clamor of flutings from the invisible creatures, as though in warning, but I was too hot and sticky from the jungle to heed it, and quaffed deeply. At once my senses reeled, and I can give no coherent account of what followed, except that it somehow involved Magda, myself and the Goddess with the three men in a sort of drugged garland, and that toward its end I was a good deal stickier than before but not quite so hot.

How long this might have gone on is impossible to guess, for as we were

drowsily rearranging ourselves upon the floor and divans, there entered a tall, burly man in the robes of a pagan priest, whose harsh countenance was almost a duplicate of that of the drooling mask.

"Ha, Messalina!" he thundered. "Once again I find you in the toils of self-indulgence, to the neglect of all those intrigues which imperil your kingdom! Fie, witch-woman, and for shame!"

"Be not so harsh, O Abram," the White Goddess whispered in her cadent voice. "Call me instead by those sweet names you called me of old—Queen of Spayeds, Egg of the Wild Pigeons-s-s-s—"

But he interrupted her brutally, drawing his singing sword. "Enough!" he tromboned. "You have betrayed your ministry! You must pay!"

Since all the rest of this company seemed too drugged with the elixir to act, I arose and walked toward him, removing my tattered marching clothes (an easy task, for by then I was wearing only the shirt, and that open) in preparation for combat. The evil priest's eyes widened as he realized that he still had a capable antagonist.

"Felici-tee!" my aunt trilled. "Do not oppose him! It is sacrilege!"

But I did not heed her; to do so would have been the death of us all. I stared boldly into the eyes of the villain.

"Do you dare," I said, "risk single combat with one not of your world, who sneers at your base superstitions?"

His eyes narrowed calculatingly, but he did not hesitate; he had courage, this evil priest, I must allow him that. We closed in furious engagement. For a while, I thought I had met my master, for he was fresh, and I both tired and wine-benumbed; but at last he lay exhausted beneath me.

Pulling his weapon from my flesh—no difficult task, now—I arose; but my triumph was short-lived. The squattering creatures were back in the room, hordes of them, in panic flight.

"Deadloin!" they croaked in terrified batrachian voices. "The deadloin is coming!"

Turning in bewilderment, I beheld again the mask on the wall. Its expression was now truly malignant, and from it was coming such torrents of ink that paper to carry it would have deforested all of Canada. The black tide rolled across the tesselated floor toward us. There was nothing to do but flee—but my erstwhile companions had neither will nor strength left to do so. As I paused at the door, I saw it overwhelm them.

My last memory of that enchanted realm is of the despairing music of the invisible creatures. I shall carry it in my heart well into the next 253 pages.

LETTER THE SEVENTH

In order to protect himself and his researches from the fear and malice of the ignorant, and the prying of journalists, my third uncle had changed his name to Philip H. Essex and removed his laboratory to a remote island off the Jersey coast. There is no traffic with the island from the mainland, and to reach it I had to take a small launch sent for me by the doctor.

The Charon of this ferry was a sinister and taciturn creature of great strength—though I discovered when we disembarked that he limped—and shagginess, rather resembling a Lord Byron who had somehow tried to turn himself into an ape. He was so surly that I wondered why my uncle tolerated him, although he did certainly seem able to keep his own counsel, and his attitude toward the doctor was outright servile.

This question, however, vanished from my mind when I saw Dr. Essex's residence, which looked not so much like a laboratory as a stockade. Once he had made me comfortable in his study, however, he explained this very readily.

"There are wild beasts on this island," he said. "Yes, wild. Lots of them. Wouldn't do to venture outside. Wouldn't do at all."

He fell to ruminating. I prompted him.

"How did it happen? Oh, well . . . easily enough. These are dangerous waters, around the island. Rocks. Shoals. Some years ago, a supply ship for a zoo, bound for Florida, got caught in a storm and was beached. None of the crew survived, but many of the animals got ashore.

"And bred. Oh, yes, they breed.

"Incredible, eh? But come along and I'll show you."

He arose and led me to his surgery, a huge place, almost like a dynamo shed. Here, in a cage against one wall, was a tawny young lioness, pacing and pacing.

"Rather a windfall for me," my uncle said. "Experimental animals, free of charge. And extraordinary ones. None of your commonplace white rats or guinea-pigs for me."

The lioness glared at him as though she had half-understood the import of his remark in some dim, savage corner of her mind. I felt quite sorry for her, though indeed she seemed quite as dangerous as he had suggested.

The suggestion preyed upon me later that night, nor was sleep sped by what seemed to be a remote throbbing of drums. Were there other people on this island as well, besides my uncle, his sinister boatman and myself? He had not said so; nor could I imagine how there could come to be drum-

thumping savages this close to a great center of civilization like Long Branch, N. J. Perhaps it was only some trick of the waves.

Then I became aware of a truly terrifying animal sound, a sort of muffled screaming—yet unlike the cry of an animal too, in that it seemed to come with almost mechanical regularity. It was all the more frightening in that its source seemed to be somewhere inside the stockade—perhaps inside the house itself!

Putting on a wrapper, I opened my bedroom door. Yes, the sound was indeed inside the house, and it was not hard to track down; it was coming from my uncle's surgery, under the door of which an eerie greenish light streamed. I knelt and peered through the keyhole, and beheld an astonishing sight.

The lioness had been removed from her cage and was now pinioned to the far wall of the shed, as if crucified. In this position she looked rather like some misshapen human creature in golden furs. My uncle, his face impassive and yet somehow Satanic in the green light, was systematically and intimately tickling her with a long white feather.

As I watched, paralyzed, the mechanical screaming began gradually to take on a human quality, like the voice of a woman, and to be interspersed with panting, gasps and groans. When at last the poor tormented creature also began to giggle, I could bear it no more, and fled.

It took me most of the next day to nerve myself up to asking my uncle the meaning of this scene, and when I did, his face darkened menacingly.

"Still I suppose you can do no harm," he said after a moment. "And the work I am prosecuting here is the culmination of the work of thousands of men—this man a suggestion and that an experiment, until at last only one vigorous experimental and intellectual effort is needed—mine—to finish the great work.

"Very few laymen can possibly understand the power that the nervous system has over the very shape of the total living organism. Here and there you will find a few people who say glibly that their illness of the moment may be psychosomatic, by which they mean no more than that their foolish emotions have made them sick . . . which happens more often than either they or that charlatan Freud ever dreamed. But very few indeed realize that the energy which drives the nervous system itself, which I have called orgroan energy, could under proper control reorganize their whole physical being.

"But the control must be very precise. Specifically, the stimuli involved must be applied delicately to those organs of the mature corpus which are most richly supplied with nerve-ends.

"These are, of course, the sense-organs, as any first-form student of

anatomy knows. But while most of the senses are localized in the tongue, the ear and so on, there are no specific organs of touch. This is why all my predecessors missed the essential clue, which in fact must be found in moral philosophy, not in science. Almost every philosopher has spoken —at one time or another—of the human rites of mating as a form of animalism, or, at the very least, a kind of animality. Very well. Suppose we should turn the equation upside down? The key for turning an animal into a man must lie through the sense of touch in what is called the erogenous zones.

"And in fact I have succeeded—or almost succeeded—in transforming animals into men by this route. A complete transformation still eludes me, but all my results show that I am on the right track . . . It is perhaps unfortunate that the sensory areas involved are also the ones most richly supplied with pain axons, but one can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."

"But," I said, "aren't there laws against . . . vivisection?"

"Pah! I'm not cutting animals up. Quite the contrary. I'm giving them the chance to use their own misdirected nervous energy to make themselves into something finer than their Creator did . . . their Creator, and all the forces of evolution.

"Of course . . ." he paused, and put the tips of his fingers together. "Of course, they don't see it in quite that light. Not yet. They don't understand. They fear me. Indeed I think many of them hate me; that is why I must have the stockade. But they'll come around.

"You've met my boatman. *He's* come around. He was a baboon to begin with; closer to the human than the bears and tigers and so on that I've worked with since. And the breeding is a problem. You see, my work doesn't affect the genes, so the cubs of these creatures revert to type. But there again, that's only a hurdle, not an impassable wall. I shall conquer it. I *shall* conquer it!"

"Perhaps you will," I said. "In fact I can hardly doubt it. But if you don't mind, I'd prefer not to see it happen. I shall be going back to the mainland in the morning."

"No," he said. "No, I'm afraid I can't let you do that. I already have good reason to mistrust your discretion . . . and people might misunderstand, and come to interfere. You'll have to remain here. But there's nothing to fear, as long as you stay inside the stockade. I can't guarantee your safety otherwise."

The threat was clear, but after what I had seen, and the revelation of the true nature of the ferryman—who *was* inside the stockade—I resolved not to stay in that House of Orgroan another moment longer than I could possibly help. And indeed, I stole out of it late that night—while my uncle

was occupied in his horrible theatre of green light—and, as I thought, forever.

The jungle was very dark but the beating of the drums guided me to the rude village which had been built by Dr. Essex's creatures. After a few ticklish moments of suspicion, I was welcomed. The males among them were sufficiently human to be conscious of the fact that they had never seen a white, hairless woman before, and to be consumed with the hope of fathering cubs more human—rather than less, as was, as my uncle had told me, the rule—than their parents; and yet they were also sufficiently animal to make their attempts at such parenthood remarkably more emphatic than any I had ever encountered before.

It was several days before I was able to get them off this subject for more than a few hours at a time, nor did I make any real attempt to change it until I felt that it had been completely exhausted, and perhaps even become somewhat of a sore one. But then I soon found other ways in which their longing to be human expressed itself.

Obviously, once cast out of the stockade as unsuccessful experiments, they had to adapt to the new conditions in which they found themselves, and gradually managed to do so, though of course with many failures. These methods and expedients they called the New Ways. But there was among them a very vocal group which still longed for the Old Ways of life within the enclosure, and this expressed itself in a pathetic attempt to talk like P. H. Essex, Ph.D. Strange it was to hear, issuing from these furry faces, this gabble of "thought-variants," "sixth-order forces," "inertialess drives," "second foundations," "rational nobility" and other such terms which had no bearing at all upon the kind of life they were now leading.

This might have been merely pitiable or merely comic, or a mixture of both, depending upon one's temperament, had I not discovered that this longing for the Old Ways was no longer limited to mere talk. A substantial number of the creatures were planning a return to the enclosure, by force if necessary. The consequences of this course could well be serious for all concerned, for brutish though they were, these creations of Dr. Essex had fire.

In the dead of the night before the storm broke, therefore, I persuaded (or rather bribed) one of the youngest of them to help me steal the boat, and with a sigh of relief found myself on the way back to the mainland. Even today, however, when I hear the piercing voices of the yahoos in the streets, I sometimes shudder and long for the rational nobility of the horse, though I can't figure out how he gets into the story at all.

LETTER THE EIGHTH

"Why, bless my pushbuttons!" my fourth uncle chuckled chinnily. "If it isn't my niece, Felicity!"

The young inventor looked up from his giant hydraulic microscope as I entered, a trace of a twinkle in his serious blue eyes. Under the microscope, he had been puzzledly studying his own thumb, but now, rising, he thrust it into his mouth and made me welcome.

"Tell me, Uncle Tom (for that was his name)," I responded antiphonally, "why were you studying your thumb?"

He looked carefully under his workbench, behind the doors, out the window and up the flue before replying.

"I am surrounded by scientific crooks and international spies," he gritted flintily. "I must take the utmost precautions against theft."

I could well understand this. Arranged around the eighteen-year-old genius' workbench were cabinets containing models of some of his previous marvelous inventions: the clockwork nightingale, the rocket calliope, the Steam Drive, the Earth-Moon ladder, the psionic stamplicker, the British telephone system and the marine dowser. Most of these had been cast in bronze, but even those made of Tomasite, the young inventor's wonder plastic, were scratched, dented and chipped from having been stolen at least once per book since about 1897.

At last, however, he seemed satisfied, and resumed his seat. "Now, here's my plan," he declared. "I find that the chases, adventures and mysteries in which I am constantly becoming involved leave me very little time for research. Also, they are constantly disrupting the work and the income of the Enterprises Construction Company, and sometimes the whole town of Workville—"

Abruptly he was interrupted as a stout, stubble-faced man burst into the laboratory. "Brand my lil ole circus sideshow, Tom," he sighed complainingly, "but yore mother an' sister will be plumb ornery with me if you don't make it home for grub agin tonight!"

Tom grinned. "Okay," he said, and when the chubby man went out, he added, "That was Chow Ping Plonker, the former chuck-wagon cook who tends galley in the laboratory. If I do not eat at home, I have to eat his cooking, and I get rather tired of mashed mongoose fritters. But that is part of the problem. We all need time to eat and sleep, too."

"Whew!" I exclaimed bewilderedly. "But how do you propose to deal with the problem, Uncle Tom? It seems insoluble."

"By a division of labor," he replied. "Hereafter I will leave all the inventing to my father. After all, it was he who made all the basic discoveries of our age, no matter what the history books say—the dirigible, the great searchlight, the war tank, the motor-cycle and many more. I shall devote myself entirely to chasing our enemies."

"But that will not leave you very much more time for eating and sleeping," I objected.

"I will need less," he confided confidently. "I shall convert myself into a terrible hunting machine."

"A robot?" I cried gloomily. "That seems inhuman!"

"No, indeed," he replied cheerfully. "For my brain, my senses and all my important organs will remain untouched. They will only be reinforced mechanically. I shall become not a robot, but a cyborg!"

The breathtakingness of this idea took my breath away. "I hope you make out all right," I panted breathlessly. "If I may help you in any way, you have only to ask me!"

"Thank you, Felicity," he replied judiciously. "But now it is time for us to go to dinner."

The work on the cyborg progressed rapidly, and soon I was able to give the young inventor substantial help in selecting what parts of his healthy young physique he should retain.

On our first trial, the mechanical parts of the mechanism—which was to be eight feet tall when completely assembled—blew out. But before it did so it behaved very well. Uncle Tom was enthusiastic. So was I. It seemed clear that soon he would achieve his goal of converting himself into an inexhaustible hunter of any sort of quarry.

But then, his enemies struck!

I was studying an anatomical diagram in the laboratory when in burst young Harlan Ames, head of the plant's security division.

"What ever is the matter?" I cried, pulling up my work trousers hastily.

"The cyborg project!" he yelped furiously. "It is ruined!"

"But why? How?"

"Some fiend has stolen Tom's thumb!"

LETTER THE NINTH

South of Prospect Park the brownstones rise wild, and there are mortgages there no mustard has ever cut. When I first came there, I had already been told that the place was evil, and little did I marvel at such tales after

I saw it, for indeed it seemed implicit with the mystery of some primal earth. The very cats were sickly and stunted, and about the tumbled maws and lids of the ancient ash-cans many dead Puerto Ricans tottered or lay rotting.

Nevertheless, I was myself shaken and disappointed with the ways of men and their creations, and welcomed my self-exile in that dismal valley. The old people of Red Hook had in particular muttered frightenedly against your establishment, where, they said evasively, strange rites were practiced when the sinister stars looked down; but I found you less aged or wild than I had expected, and those reputedly darksome rites familiar to me from much past experience. Indeed, they brought a certain respite and restfulness to my haunted and frustrated soul. Of course, the screams of the things in the upper two storys of the house were sometimes a little alarming, and in the morning it was more than alarming to find the rank back garden littered with powder-puffs which clearly had been terribly beaten in the course of some nameless quarrel; and sometimes, up there, late at night, one could also hear the mindless whining and pounding of flutes, lutes, cutes and other ancient Greek instruments.

Yet I remained queerly content, in a sort of orgiastic numbness, like an unearthly jewel which had found its rest at last in the clammy slime of some rayless, bottomless ocean. When the creeping smog masked the malicious stars with colors no man could name, I would sometimes steal from the house and wander through the morbid vegetation of the park, looking with queer approval upon the wetly rigid, unplantlike shadows which they threw across the flabby turf. Of my half-waking dreams during such wanderings, I dare not speak.

But the end came at last. On one such night, a gigantic, glowing stone of indescribable shape descended from the murky sky among the tenebrous shadows of the ancient monuments of Grand Army Plaza, preceded by a blast of absolute coldness which made me shiver to my marrow even in my woolies. I was frozen with terror; though I was perilously close to this eldritch visitor from the illimitable inane, I could do naught but watch.

And then—Good God!—what dream-world was this into which I had blundered? Out of that roughly yet inarguably shaped stone, with a feeble mewling and scratching, came—merciful Heaven! How can I go on? Polymorphous, perverse, partly dextrose, partly levulose, oozing a blasphemous ichor, it enfolded me, and for a while—blessed release!—my horror overcame me and I knew no more.

There is little more to tell. Some men of science—God! how little they know of the ultimate depths of noisomeness through which mankind

crawls!—have said darkly that there is no square inch of the human body which cannot be, and has not been, exploited for ghastly and unendurable pleasures. They are cruelly right. *Iä! Iä! Ow! Slurp-Ofaywrath!* The Club with a Thousand Members! . . .

And so it was that I never returned to the fated brownstone. With a choked-off scream, I became wife to the frightful messenger from unformed infinity beyond all Nature as I had known it, and soon thereafter I was carried away into those realms of black, ultra-cosmic gulfs whose mere existence would frenzy the unprepared mind and the untrained body.

But before my whole substance is dissolved into the ichor of unutterable Sensation, I have been allowed to make this record for the warning of mankind. I have to consider that I have been, in my grotesque way, very fortunate in my preparation for the Plot-Skeleton Out of Space. To anyone less fortunate who may meet another, let me add hastily that in getting along with aliens, one rule is paramount:

They are not easily satisfied.

Now, I must come away. *'Ng topuothikl m'kthoqui h'nirl* . . . Coming, dear . . . Aggghhhh! . . .

ULP.

Afterword:

This story was intended to be fun, and I decline to mash it flat by reading any Deep Meaning into it. For one thing, the fact that it has two authors guarantees that if it Meant anything, that thing would be different for each author.

The device of writing each section in the style in which its central character was first given to the world was an obvious notion and has no Hidden Intent either. Some readers may detect a desire to show certain recent reactionary numbskulls what some of the writers they profess to revere were "really" like; but to this I must promptly add that of the ten (yes, ten) authors parodied, I have only the deepest respect for four, and a qualified respect for two more. Besides, I know very well that not a one of them is "really" like his caricature here; and even where the fit is fairly close, these authors continue to be read for reasons quite irrelevant to style. (For some of these reasons, see the essay "On Stories" in C. S. Lewis' last book, *Of Other Worlds.*)

I enjoyed doing the parodies hugely, and learned something from them, too. Another famous critic (whose name I shall not mention here, so as not to exacerbate further one of the numbskulls mentioned above) suggests in *ABC of Reading* that Eng. Lit. students might as an exercise

compose parodies and then exchange them; the gauging pupil then should be asked (1) who is being parodied, and (2) whether the joke is on the parodied or the parodist; "whether the parody exposes a real defect, or merely makes use of an author's mechanism to expose a more trivial content." I think there are both kinds in "Getting Along." One can't, for instance, really parody Wells' manner, because he has few mannerisms to begin with; either you wind up with a pastiche, as Brian W. Aldiss did in *The Saliva Tree,* or you find yourself parodying his preoccupations, which is something else entirely.

But the story isn't literary criticism. It's only a game, and meant to be enjoyed as one.



Provincial, monomaniacal twits that we be, here in the flashy world of sf, we like to think we did it all ourselves, without even a good wash behind the ears from the waters of the mainstream. Yet how many times have we validated our existence to scoffers and critics with sponge-wringings of *1984, Brave New World, On the Beach, The Child Buyer* and final, hysterical recourse to Vonnegut—who left us—and Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*—the least worthy of all his many novels? When pushed to the wall, we try to obtain approbation and legitimacy by recourse to those works of sf written by men from outside our little circle.

Now sf is valid, it is legitimate, it is taught and analyzed and people write their Masters' theses on Delany and Aldiss and Sturgeon. And though it pains us to have to admit it, we did it only partially on our own hook. We managed to swing along into the golden land riding the hook with Wells and Hersey and Huxley and the rest of the big boys.

Yet even thumbscrewed into admitting our debt to the non-specialized writers who dabbled in our form and came away (as did all of us) richer for the experience, we still deify second-raters who will permit the words "science fiction" to be emblazoned on their book jackets, while ignoring the writers *sui generis* from outside sf, who have influenced us most strongly these past two decades.

Donald Barthelme, David Ely, W. S. Merwin, John D. MacDonald, Vladimir Nabokov, Carlos Casteñada, John Barth, John Fowles, Shirley Jackson, James Joyce, George P. Elliott—ignoring for the moment the inescapable debt we all owe to Poe—all have influenced to greater or lesser degree the *kind* and *style* of sf we are reading and writing today. Yet when we totemize the seminal and germinal influences, these names seldom, if ever, find their way onto the lists of admiration. But none of us would be writing as we do, today, had these writers not spread their pollen of special dreams.

And at this moment in time, the most innovating force working on new writers is that demonstrated in the unbelievable fictions of Jorge Luis Borges.

Though Borges has been writing for over forty years, it is only recently that the Literary Establishment (and even more tardily the sf Establishment) has come widely to appreciate the labyrinthine intricacies of the Borges *ouevre*. Along with the new vitality of the unpredictable, the in-

tense and the magical Borges, the finest writing in the world today, the most important, the most different and the most inventive, is coming to us from Latin America. Fuentes, Neruda, Julio Cortazar, Cesar Vallejo, Ernesto Sabato, Juan Banuelos, Gabriel Garcia Marquez . . . these are the names of the knights of the pen who have cast aside the regimens of European thought and attack, and boldly sought out their own ways.

But more than any other, Jorge Luis Borges has influenced with the mysticism and potency of his work, an enormous number of younger writers. They could have no better model from whom to work. Because no one can *imitate* Borges. He is very much like John Campbell in one important way: he gives only the ground-plan. Going in his footsteps is virtually impossible, and when attempted is so disastrous that even the imitator realizes it before he has finished his Borges-like story, and he tears it to shreds, and then takes what lessons there are to be learned, and goes his own way.

In the purest sense, Borges is a teacher. To read him is to learn. If you have not discovered him, I urge you to obtain *at once The Aleph and Other Stories 1933–1969* (Dutton).

One who has learned from Borges and the other Latin American brilliants, is Al Parra. I met him at the University of Colorado in 1969, and upon reading "Totenbüch" instantly bought it for this anthology. More than any other story in this collection, it shows a direction for speculative fiction that can truly be called "dangerous" because it is fresh, demanding, powerful and strangely unforgettable. I know of no one who has read this story in manuscript or galley who has not mentioned it with awe and delight. Many have found it beyond their powers of comprehension—for it is a story that demands the reader approach it fastidiously—but none have thought it irrelevant or slight or purposely obscure. They have recognized the hand of a talent here, and they have been driven to read it again and perhaps a third time, to finally unearth the burning truths buried in its metaphors and allegories.

I venture to say that ten years after many of the stories in this book have passed from memory, the reader will still recall "Totenbüch" with a shiver, and know without question that he or she was touched by a probe from another reality-plane.

And I must point out the regality of the story. There is a pervasive feeling of *quality*, of eminence and respect the story generates.

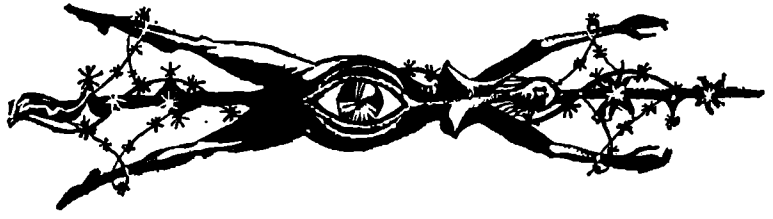
As an editor, I feel deeply honored to be able to present Parra to a wider audience than may previously have found his work. And as an introduction to what I consider the *real* New Wave of fiction, this story is a treasure.

Mr. Parra delivers the following data on himself:

"Born and raised in Key West, Fla. Both sides of the family Cuban (great-grandfather, Pedro E. Figueredo, composed the national anthem, and was executed for his pains). Educated at St. Joseph's, University of Florida

(BsJ, MA), and University of Iowa (MFA in August 1970). Worked at news editing and writing, college teaching, four years in Far East with the Navy, and some odds and ends like construction and shrimp boat labor. Married Lois Mitchell (Madison, Wis.) and have four children—two girls and twin boys. 1969, had Harcourt, Brace & World Fellowship to Colorado Writers Conference and Florida Faculty Development grant to Breadloaf. Now on a teaching assistantship through Iowa Writers Workshop, University of Iowa, in Vance Bourjaily's workshop. Will be included in Directory of Young American Writers, though as I'm not under thirty, don't know what they mean by Young. About the name: christened Armando Albert, but the Armando got lost in the shuffle between church (Episcopal) and state records. Since my blood is Cuban, I feel entitled to append my mother's family name also.

"Publications include: 'Sanchez Escobar at the Circus' (SS), *Quartet,* Fall, 1967; 'Cross-Country' (SS), *Laurel Review,* Spring, 1968; 'The Lake at Hamilton's Bluff' (SS), *Kansas Quarterly,* Winter, 1968; 'This Side of Bahia Honda' (SS), *Four Quarters,* Jan., 1969; 'The Almond Tree Swing' (SS), *Fine Arts Discovery,* Spring, 1969; 'The Estevez Holograph' (SS), *Kansas Quarterly,* Winter, 1969; 'Put Down for Jack' (Poem), 3rd Prize, *Writers' Digest* contest, 1969; 'North Atlantic' (Poem), *Dekalb Literary Arts Journal,* Accepted for future pub; 'The Golden Bone' (SS), *Forum,* Acc fut pub; 'King Kong: The Art of Loving in the Promised Land' (Essay), *Dekalb Literary Arts Journal,* Acc fut pub; 'Pie de Palo: Relacion' (SS), *Transatlantic Review,* acc fut pub."



A. Parra (y Figueredo)

TOTENBÜCH

The evidence from camps such as Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Mauthansen, Ravensbrüch, Sachsenhausen, Treblinka, and Wolsek somehow never ceases to amaze. Libraries of documentation: diaries, photographs, suicide epistology, journals, confessions, depositions, tapes, movies!

The imagination falters. But for Oberweiler—nothing. Not a scrap of paper, a shred of film, not a word.

Rudulf von Pfister was in command, though the true genius of the place was not this SS colonel. Elsbeth Zimmermann had come up through the Bund Deutscher Mädel and (a rare honor) had been selected for elite training in the Ordensburgen. So whatever her relationship to von Pfister or her role at Oberweiler, she came well trained and dedicated. And while so much of the bestiality was sexually oriented, Elsbeth's ingenuity had no equal in any of the camps.

"But get on with it."

"Ah! A surge of salacious juices?"

Perhaps you weren't ready for such a story. Like so many amateurs. So wrapped in LITERATURE you miss all around you the stuff it's made of. You conned yourself into believing your mind was recording for the future, in UP-case, for posterity demands the grand style for its memory of reality. So you soaked up the raw materials well enough, the details of the illusion you fabricated.

"The illusion *you* wanted to fabricate."

Illusions can be controlled, reality not. Yet the front-page came out accurate enough: you spelled all the names right, you got all the facts straight. Lisa Steinberg . . . prominent winter visitor . . . the old Curry house of wrecking fortunes from the Reef . . . charter member of the Old Island Restoration Foundation. But anyone can have money. Who was she? Where did she come from? Why all the rumors of what went on behind the walls of that landmark house? Then Perucho . . . painter of seascapes which in no way compare to the power of his photographs . . . age 48 . . . the—what? The relationship was uncertain, beyond confirmation, though not important enough to risk editorial cuts that might distort the rest. And what photographs! that collection uncovered after the fact. Not at all like the ones he put on exhibit. Was he merely a fancier? a collector? Moreover you discovered in that writing something of how mystery enhances the piece. Or was it mere rationalization that some things are best left unsaid? After all, why not let the reader's imagination work for you?

"How innocent!"

"Like Jarcha?"

The day he sailed between Havana's Malecón and the Morro, bound for Barcelona and the university, how innocent was Jarcha. Those adventures must be slighted here, though, including lessons learned in the International Brigade. So much seemed to happen to him by accident,

though, so much. Suffice it to say Jarcha Avicebron was the victim of two mistakes, one of which was Jewish ancestry predating the Inquisition.

Having escaped Spain under the most impossible conditions left him exuberant, however, and he took such Prussian recalcitrance to be a misunderstanding. *Manana y mananal* But to travel the road to a *Vernichtungslager* with the eye of a tourist—nothing could be more innocent. Along the way he caught glimpses of the Saale and pleasant meadows. The shade of oak trees tempted him and his mouth watered at the juice-plump blackberries on wayside bushes. Remember, Jarcha? And the linden trees, from the barracks at night remember their fragrance?

"But all that is so ordinary."

Yes, ordinary. All enacted before. On purple pages of juvenalia, in sleazy rooms of cheap hotels, in throbbing chambers of the heart. And Elsbeth, what did she feel?

"What goes on monotonously day after day and by its repetition gains the name of reality?"

The TP would be stripped and shackled by chains from the rafters. In the beginning Elsbeth would personally handle these interrogations. But time sapped any newly aroused interest, regardless of progressively more exotic perversions, until ennui relegated her to the voyeur's sidelines. Jarcha arrived during the period of her experiments with volunteer "administrators," an innovation whose success amazed even von Pfister. Since these sessions were mere introductions to Oberweiler, the TP usually survived. Rare was the time that things went so far as the night a raven-haired gypsy girl so aroused her "administrator" that he cannibalized her, biting away first her nipples and then, on all fours, her clitoris.

As it happened, Jarcha drew a stout Jewess whose husband had been beaten headless with rifle butts that morning for trying to wrest their screaming children from guards come to take one to the brothel, the younger sickly boy to the "Baths." The fury this woman spent on Jarcha's naked body was fantastic. The air whistling with flails, Elsbeth got up from her desk, her interest stirred for the first time since the night of the gypsy. Here was a Test Person who writhed, apparently, in pleasure. Her heart quickened to the spasmodic jerks of his body. No longer did she understand, she merely obeyed this urgency in her chest. In a sense she had no awareness of ordering the others from the room. Of undressing. Of hearing the moans of some deep voice coursing Jarcha's flesh. Of none of this had Elsbeth any knowledge. In a sense. Nor the flourishes at the end. So you became lovers, you and Elsbeth. But let's not forget the social graces.

"It's not my fault you know."

"I know—it's this heat. For crissake don't start on *that.* The tropics are supposed to be hot."

"You don't love me anymore, that's what. Anyway, we're not in the tropics, not technically. That is it, isn't it? You don't love me anymore."

"You've gotten as shrill as one of these green parrots. Get me a light, will you, love?"

"One thing, Americans know how to make cigarettes. Sometimes I feel the cigarettes make it all worthwhile."

"Ay! *tú*—it burns. You did it, I know, you did it on purpose. Even at cocktails you enjoy making me suffer."

"It's true. Nothing's like it used to be."

"You *are* shrill. Strange I've not seen that until now."

"All I know, all the fun has gone out of life. Nothing happens anymore."

"All things end, love. Then they are forgotten. Who knows that better than you?"

Much else you knew for fact never did appear in the KEY WEST CITIZEN. Of course, with people like Lisa and Perucho there always are fantastic tales on the tip of every tongue. Apocrypha which awed even intelligent men like Scott Fitzgerald into supposing that a difference exists among people. Even the fact that, after having spent only the winter months during previous years, in that one year they established residence at the outset of summer, that was enough to incite new curiosity about them. But it was short-lived. There was more interest in what would happen to Eichmann, who had been spirited from Buenos Aires.

So in the end what did you understand? What did you plumb of the scene enacted in this air-conditioned room upstairs in a wealthy house? Is it to your credit after all that so much blood did not dismay you? Neither the mutilations. No rationalization of—

"It's my job."

—rests easy with that spectacle of flesh you cannot imagine the mind so tormented as to consummate it. Did you not learn anything about the human heart? And the mind? How boundless the imagination to conceive the drama performed in this room reeking of passion and blood. How naive to think this a sex crime! How inane to dismiss it all as psychopathic! To generalize (however secretly) about moral decadence. You did not even know what to make of the "confession." All this hell behind papered walls because the victim had become a wretched bore. Understatement be-

longed to high comedy. Ah! You had begun to rewrite, with that you began, recreating the actors, redirecting their movements, their dialogue, building a new set entire. In so doing did you discover nothing important about the laws of reality and the nature of illusions?

"In the dark of the night who can hold his hand to the light without seeing blood?"

"All endings are the same, yes—invective, guilt, accusation."

These many years later you are uncertain about what to expect. But to find nothing—? It is perhaps the wrong place, you misunderstood the directions in Weissenfels. Yet you remember the oak woods, the pleasant meadows, and unmistakable is the June fragrance of lindens. No, this is the place. Here stood Oberweiler—one, an illusion. Pick one of the berries there. And feel! the sun bursting in your mouth, the succulence spreading on your tongue. When last you passed this way how you yearned to press those berries between tongue and palate. Remember how in your thirst you closed your eyes to imagine the tart juice filling your mouth? On *that* visit to Oberweiler, though, you weren't allowed to pick blackberries. Remember? And in this moment of perception do you know which blackberry tasted better? Those your imagination picked along the thirsty road here, or these you savor in the fields from which the reality of Oberweiler has been effaced?

"Come!" you cry. "Get down to the meat."

Ah! Petulance does not become you, though I understand your impatience. How many have been conditioned by our detumescent fiction?

"I've done my part."

Yes, everything but use your imagination. Still you want your titillation.

"But I don't know—"

Whether you want to go that far? You're no different than anyone else, and the heart has no limit. What you really want is to be relieved of responsibility, that's all.

"Have no qualms, love, that's only your humanity you feel. Nobody ever dies of *that.*"

You want your juices to dry up in its heat, your skin to pop with blisters, you want me to draw taut your spinal cord with expectancy's arrow aimed at your heart.

"Well, can I help it if— It's not my fault you know."

Coercion is rationalized so that responsibility may be disclaimed.

"It burns! Ay, *tú,* it burns."

Though still, Elsbeth sweats. Outside snow falls. The only sound is the crackling of the fire. At the other end of the room where shadows move

along the wall, Jarcha paces and turns. They honor the invisible bars keeping them apart, for they have learned that in due time their cages open. Some nights one cage, but not the other. Other nights nothing happens, each remains caged. Only once have they found themselves with no bars to constrain their freedom.

Elsbeth starts slapping the dagger blade against her naked thigh. Jarcha stops to consider her actions. The flames make his eyes shine. Elsbeth steps from behind her desk, then takes another step. Her cage has opened. Her nipples sting. Jarcha's nostrils flare. Warm odors of flesh have stirred from folds of shadow. Elsbeth has squatted at the fireplace. She plays at cutting the flames with the dagger.

"Today the orders came. By spring Oberweiler will have ceased to exist."

"What will you do then to—"

"The orders are precise. Nothing and no one remains."

"And you?"

"No doubt some higher-up has his orders. But—that seems the way of the world. All things come to an end."

"The way of the world is to deceive. Its illusions make us believe we guide our own destinies. That is the great trick. To make us believe that when in fact there's always something higher manipulating the strings."

Elsbeth turns her face from the fire. "The one thing that has come to bore me most, you are given to platitudes."

"There lies the comic element. Each puppet-master concentrates so intently on manipulating his dolls that he never realizes the strings making him function."

Elsbeth stands. Jarcha comes toward her, then stops. They seem bewildered, momentarily, and nervous. Then they sense that his cage has opened.

"You can't let it end like this."

"It always does, *tú*, it always does."

There he lies, ensconced in death's far country. He has the bad habit of the condemned: conceiving himself in plurality. Such is the stuff of loneliness and dull conversation.

"Well, now our moment of truth comes, eh?"

A bit of pedantry you picked up in Spain that means nothing.

"But we do know what arbitrary means, eh, we know that much. Remember Lisa? Perucho? For no better reason than she was a bore, remember how—"

You phony intellectual. You speak as if your hands are clean. What of Jarcha Avicebron?

"So! Again it comes to this, arguing guilt? Always the same. Always *you*. It's always *you* who must bear the guilt, *tú*, the other."

Dentro el cielo y la tierra no hay nada oculto, as Jarcha would say.

But, the future must yet occur.

Afterword:

The original conception was to construct a fiction which synthesizes in the reader not vicarious but real experience. For example, a story about characters who set out on some kind of adventure only to get lost, but written so that the reader himself becomes lost in the story.

In "Totenbüch" the characters and story serve as pawns in the happening between writer and reader. Ostensibly "Totenbüch" is about some characters discovering what it feels like to be powerless before forces that determine what will happen to them at a given time and place. Okay. The reader can get that in any number of fictions. I wanted him to feel the frustration first-hand, to feel screwed, exploited, manipulated, and to feel helpless to do anything about it, just as powerless, say, as a prisoner.

"Totenbüch" is anti-pornography. My objection to pornography is that it seldom leaves anything to the imagination, so is dull to most people past their virginity. Pornography works best for innocents. To me serious, speculative fiction goes the other way, bringing to light the vision of evil. So in "Totenbüch" I promise the reader some pornographic specificity, tease him along with the promise of some sado-masochism. What he is supposed to get in the end is—nothing. Nothing except the real experience of frustration and maybe some insight into his own impulses.

One thing I wanted to suggest in "Totenbüch" was that the impulse that generates atrocities and Nazism and perversion and concentration camps continues, like a virus, cropping up in different places, different times, and is not restricted to a few psychos. For this reason I shifted places and times (Germany/America) and changed names, if not characters—Jarcha/Elsbeth and Lisa/Perucho. But this is an area that left me dissatisfied: I wanted ambiguity (leaving open the possibility that Elsbeth and Jarcha escaped to South America, like Eichmann) but don't feel it came off.

So. If I'm wrong in interpreting the reactions to the story, then it would be pointless to add anything, for that means the idea behind the story is wrong, it just doesn't work.

On the other hand, if I am getting a true reading to your reaction (that is, you as reader experienced a sense of frustration in being promised a

satisfaction that is withheld), this would suggest the concept operates, and *nothing more is needed.*

One of the drawbacks of speculative fiction, no doubt, is the greater risk of falling flat on your ass.



Introduction to

THINGS LOST:

As children, often we saved the tastiest morsels for the end of the meal, torturing ourselves with expectation. As if some nether deity were looking over my shoulder in the preparation of this anthology, savoring like a good meal my anguish and agonies of writing introductions, the tastiest (to the demon) morsels—i.e., the toughest for me to write—would come at the flagging-energy last stride of the task.

Tom Disch is the Devil's Dessert.

You see, Tom Disch was the only writer I excluded from the first volume, *Dangerous Visions*, out of personal dislike. (I realize this brings you up short; I'm sorry to reveal to those of you who consider me unflawed, estimable in every way, that I am a capricious, cranky creature. I hope it won't ruin our relationship. After all we've meant to each other.) I was wrong, Lord how wrong I was. But to have to now crawl, to apologize, to abase myself before you, the readers, who were denied Disch earlier, and before Disch himself, who is too little the nobleman to eschew gloating, is a chore of hideous ugliness. Yet it must be done. And that is probably why I placed Tom's story so far to the rear of the book. No, no, don't hand me any of that logic about tagging-off the book with one's strongest entries; *I know that's good policy, and I did it in DV and have done it here as well* . . . but no, I cannot escape my responsibility and my guilt. I've put off Disch all through this book because of this very moment of fear. I sit before my typewriter, my fingers trembling and an eldritch tic twitching my right eye. Without hedging I must confess that Thomas M. Disch is a young colossus among writers of the imaginative. I must state clearly and without hope of absolution, that for base and mingy reasons I denied Disch his rightful place in the *Dangerous Visions* roll call. *Mea* bloody *culpa!*

No good to protest that the two stories Disch sent for that first collection were awful; no good to protest that he was snotty and supercilious to me when first we met; no good to protest spite and malice motivated me. No good.

All of that can be chalked up to my lack of perception, my inability to perceive what grandeur other, nobler writers found in Tom Disch.

I am base clay, and deserve your sneers.

Condemned to Hell, certainly. But at least by this public recanting I escape the limbo land of Purgatory. To Hell, of course, for my lousiness (a

Hell, no doubt, where the imps will jab me with tridents and force me to read, over and over again, till the end of time, paperback copies of Tom's novelization of *The Prisoner*, from the TV series of the same name). Oh, hell!

Yet in order to save my immortal soul, I must fulsomely praise the work of Disch, a writer of complex and experimental fiction, whom even those who loathe the "new" writing find impossible to badmouth.

And though it must pall on the A,DV reader by this time, my saying "such-and-such a writer is unlike anyone else," still it must be said again, about Disch.

(It occurs to me that even though my hype for each writer singles him or her out as a *rara avis*, nothing I could say is closer to the core of truth; and nothing dispells more quickly all this "New Wave" nonsense; for each writer in this book *is* a *rara avis*. How the hell do you compare a Disch with a Vonnegut, or a Tiptree with a Wilhelm, or a Parra with an Anthony? Each one does his or her number in a manner that would be totally alien to all the others. I can't see Chad Oliver writing Joanna Russ's "When it Changed" or Ben Bova writing Gene Wolfe's "Against the Lafayette Escadrille." Each creator is a wave unto himself. They fly alone. They don't clump. They don't flock. It is in the nature of a miracle, that we have so many, so different, all at one time. But to say this anthology is representative of any single school of writing—why, that's the Monday morning quarterbacking of silly reviewers and sillier "critics" who must find their days and nights joyless indeed.)

Tom Disch has created so many memorable stories, in such a short time, that it was inevitable he should be a featured luminary in the DV cast. And it was insanity for me to have excluded him, whatever the cause. And for those who like happy endings, Tom and I are friends now. So much so, that Tom even suggested I help him with a new title for "Things Lost" when it was called something else. I enter that tiny act on my part as amelioration for my original sin, in hopes Tom has some "in" with the Man at the Gate.

And now, genuflecting all the way, I bow out and leave you with Mr. Thomas M. Disch.

"Biography:

"February 2, 1940. Des Moines, Iowa.

"Grew up in Minnesota: St. Paul, Minneapolis, Onamia, Fairmont, St. Paul.

"Two and a half years at NYU.

"A year in advertising, all the other kinds of book-jacket jobs.

"When we met, Harlan, it was the second Milford conference I'd come to, in Summer of '65. I was back at an ad agency briefly, after a long spell in Mexico writing *The Genocides*. In fall of '65 I set off for Europe with

John Sladek. In Spain, and later in England, I did my share of the work on our collaborative novel, *Black Alice.*

"(Which may be a movie, Paul Monash has optioned it; by the time A,DV goes into production we should know.)

"And also those two stories that I submitted to *Dangerous Visions.* I insist that you mention both by name: they were '1-A' and 'Linda and Daniel and Spike.' You hated them. 'Things Lost' was written only a couple months after those two stories, in February of '66. It was then the opening sequence of *The Pressure of Time.* I did another stint of writing on that book from April to June of '67, a portion of which appeared in *Orbit 7.* At the same time I did an extensive revision/expansion of 'Things Lost.'

"For various reasons, personal and impersonal, I never got back to work on *Pressure,* and now I see I won't, alas. Since *Camp Concentration* (which took 8 months to write) I realize I can't afford to spend such a lot of time on a book that earns only a standard sf advance. To earn a living writing sf I'd have to speed up my rate of production by 3 or 4 times. No."

Bibliography:

SF:

The Genocides (Berkley, 1965)
Mankind Under the Leash (Ace, 1966)
Echo Round His Bones (Berkley, 1966)
Camp Concentration (Doubleday, 1969; Avon, 1971)
The Prisoner (Ace, 1969)
102 H-Bombs (Berkley, 1971) (short stories)
Fun with Your New Head (Doubleday, 1971) (short stories)

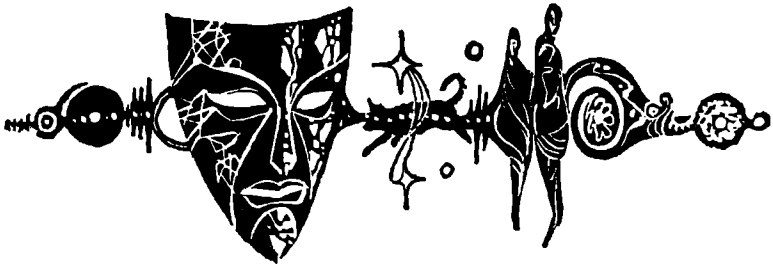
In collaboration with John Sladek:

Black Alice (Doubleday, 1968; Avon, 1970) (under pseudonym of Thom Demijohn)

Magazines:

Stories in the sf magazines (but never *Analog*), *Playboy, Knight, Escapade, Mademoiselle, Transatlantic Review, Paris Review.* In all, some 60-plus pieces.

Poetry in *Epoch, Bones, Minnesota Review, Ronald Reagan, New Measure,* and lots of little mags.



Thomas M. Disch

THINGS LOST

Tuesday, April 31, 2084

Yippy, the stars! An outburst of real enthusiasm.

Though, at my age?

Well, we must allow that it has been a very special occasion. There was even a parade, a work of the most meticulous archaeology, with military bands and bunting, with drum majorettes and such sententious speeches as I have not heard since my high school graduation. A camp—but what else is one to do for a launching, after all?

The most memorable moment from the pageant: Traffic had bottlenecked and we, the astronauts, were stalled in the Saragossa of Piccadilly, where the raving thousands waved their flags and spread their banners and cheered and sang and wished to hell we'd move our asses on. But there was one little creature who was having no part of it all. She stood not five feet from our scallop shell—the saddest, smallest nymph (surely a mortal)—and stared at me *so* solemnly with her dark, credulous eyes, eyes much too large for so diminutive a face, but this is an agreeable fault in a child. Four or five or maybe a very *untermensch* six-year-old, and dressed all in the deepest mourning. (Again: a mortal? Or only prematurely in the vogue?) Her black-brown clustered curls were a proper rat-king tangle. Quite steeped in pathos, the darling. Right out of Dickens—Little Dorrit, perhaps. Better yet, Little Nell. The traffic unsnarled, and our scallop began to inch ahead. The crowd grew lively again, but *she* waved no good-byes nor breathed a word of farewell but only stared and stared. What did she make of it all? Did she know who we were, where we were bound? How the image of her face sticks with me! As though those dark eyes were the emblem of everything we are leaving behind, earth and old mortality. Good-bye then, little sister. Forgive me if there was no time to explain. I

fear there never will be, now. What, still staring after me? Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye.

Then, reluctantly (and lushed to the gills) I turn to face the stars.

Wednesday, May 1, 2084

That wasn't the sort of opening I had had in mind for this journal. I would have preferred something at once more formal and less florid, an introduction that would say in a polite and orderly fashion that this is the journal of Oliver Wendall Regan, only son of Joseph and Hope Regan, age 92, astronaut, geneticist, novelist (unpublished). But if I had begun so, I would probably have found myself (as I find myself now) with nothing left to say.

Nevertheless, sail on.

Since coming on board the *Extrovert* I haven't left my cabin. For 24 hours I have merely fussed, disposing the contents of my little carton of Earth Fetishes about the cabin—the chessboard on this shelf; then, above it and a little to the left, my Authentic Souvenir Ashtray of *Boston Massachusetts 1999;* then this drawer for masks and this drawer for the tea service. At the conclusion of which I discover that there is no niche for my oboe, unless it shares the drawer with my shirts, so I have to begin all over again. Then I must decide where to hang the Rauschenberg litho (*Inferno,* Canto XII) and whether to hang Veronica's fakey engraving of Hohentübingen. Decisions, decisions. And all the while, of course, overriding this fuss and quite drowning it out, the delicious sense of imminent adventure, boundless possibility, endless journeying, so that I feel as if each beat of my heart were an explosion, and that it is only by the carefullest magic (*this* goes on this shelf, and *that* goes in that drawer) that I am able to keep myself from blowing up and splattering these immaculate walls. It is quite plain to see that I am in no shape yet to keep a journal—and probably won't be till we're quite outside the solar system.

We passed the orbit of Mars this morning, and soon we can begin to count asteroids. (A memory: the game I used to play with my father when we would go out on long dull rides to Vermont for the family's vacation—Counting Cows. He'd count the cows on his side of the road, and I'd count the cows on my side of the road. Somehow I usually won. Did I cheat? Or did he cheat on my behalf?)

Lord, how I ramble. No, I'm *not* in fit shape. Till such time as I am, I give you my very warmest hiatus.

Sunday, May 12, 2084

The stars, the silence, the cold. The growing sense that it is all—all that vastness out there—alien, empty, inimical. But there is also the sense of how cozy *we* are, we voyagers, in our snug little whalebelly.

Snug and cozy we may be, but jolly we are not. The distances between the stars seem brief by contrast to the distances between each of us and his fellows. We will have, after all, a century or so to become acquainted. We feel no need to rush things.

So that for these first two weeks the corridors have seemed to rustle with ghosts, who hurry past with, at most, a furtive glance through the eyeholes of their masks. Speaking of which, I must say that I have seldom seen so many exquisite pieces of craft. One that I especially admired, a woman's —full-face and crown in heavy tarnished silver, with the curls that ringed the face applied free-form with solder. Her eyes were dark brown, solemn. I smiled. Since I've been wearing a plain velvet domino, she could not help but see it. And did she smile too, beneath the silver mask?

Aside from these scurryings down the corridors to the dining hall or the library, my sole communal activity has been orchestra rehearsals. With only thirty members we will not have much occasion to tackle the heavier romantics without electronic assists, and our conductor, Hamline Quinn, gives evidence of being too much of a purist for that. He's done very well with the Haydn, and the Ives fantasia is coming along, coming along. Quinn is, rather drolly, an activist and interlards his musical fiats with Anarchist messages that even he must see aren't very relevant so far from his native New Zealand.

The girl in the silver mask is also in the orchestra, but as she plays cello I have yet to see the face behind the mask.

Tuesday, May 14, 2084

Here I am, right in the front lines of History, rushing at the stars with a constant acceleration of 1.25 gravities, the last word in the contemporary, and what has been, and becomes increasingly, my preoccupation? The past.

It must be due to the sudden atrophy of social life. Or perhaps it is the psyche's reaction to leaving the comfortable Copernican universe so far behind. Whatever the reason, I have become a veritable Proust, lounging in my cubicle, chewing over scraps of old memories. It is not that I worry, as my father claims he does, that I will lose them unless they are exercised regularly, that the past will slip away from me. On the contrary, I grow

annoyed with these intruding memories. I have better things to do. I have, as they say, my whole future ahead of me.

One image that recurs and recurs, like (sweet ancient metaphor!) a broken record: it is the painting my stepmother did shortly before she suicided. "The Struldbrug Dot" my father used to call it, though he must have realized it was intended to be his own portrait. Sometimes I think I can see the same vermilion disc, like a glowing traffic light, set into the brows of my fellow-voyagers, as if, despite our unaging faces, we bear the seal of that undying, undead senility which poor mad Swift, and my poor mad mother, thought immortality would be.

We are so smug, we chosen ones, and can afford the saintly luxury of self-castigation.

I wonder if my father still has that painting. I must remember to ask him the 'next time' we meet.

Later that day:

Another stab at the exhaustive (that forlorn ideal of the second-rate), at gathering up all those things that 'go without saying' in order to try to say them. In short—what am I doing here?—or for that matter, where am I?

I am on the *Extrovert*, a starship, the constuction of which began some 20 years ago in orbit above the Earth. It is the shape, give or take some dozen protuberances, of a honeycomb. It measures 1.6 kilometers from end to end (large for a ship, small for a microcosm), and is veined with 1,174 miles of corridors and catwalks. It is faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive. Using a photon drive it will reach .9 the speed of light in 250 days. A postcard would convey all this more graphically, I'm sure. Will there come a time when these press-agent specifications will be thought remarkable, as for instance I find the dimensions of the *Mayflower* remarkable? The faith that such a time will come is the only justification for such a journal as this.

There are 246 of us, ranging in age from Sheila Dupont, 23, to our captain, Lester Gorham Gray, who became a centenarian some dozen years ago. The median age is 68. Each of us had distinguished himself one way or another, and one might wax lyrical at this point. It seems to me, however, that Distinguished Achievements are, in the modern scheme of things, only to be expected.

My own D.A., which earned me my berth? I did a complete genetic map of the mouse, *Mus musculus*. When the Nobel committee extended their invitation to me, citing this as my largest glory, I felt rather as though

I had been honored for having written a definitive haiku. It didn't help when Veronica began to speak of me as "The Star-Mouse."

But it is not so much for any single accomplishment that a person is selected. Rather, as I understand it, each of us is here because he has shown himself to be the most polly of polymaths. Our community thereby incorporates the widest possible range of interests and skills, and each astronaut is susceptible, presumably, to being caught up in, or trained for, any of them. And thus we can hope to wile our time away, as we crawl through the long light-years from star to star.

Personality was also a consideration, of course. We're expected to have stable, stolid characters. Lacking facilities for ego-restructuring, self-satisfaction is at a premium. I imagine it came as a blow to most of us to learn that we were stable stolids. I've always tended to think of myself as the volatile type.

More than enough exposition. Back now to my musky, cork-lined nest.

Sunday, June 3, 2084

Her face is every bit as lovely as her mask.

Last night after another deadly dull emergency drill I approached her in the outer perimeter arcade, removed my mask, and introduced myself.

"Ah yes," she murmured through unmoving silver lips, "the oboe. And my name, since I see I must surrender it now, is Aspera."

"Per Aspera ad Astra," said the Star-Mouse, with a gallant flourish.

"It is a readymade pun, Mr. Regan, but I fear that I'll encounter it in the next century as many times as I am introduced. You can, if it suits you better, call me Hope. Many of my friends do."

"Aspera is a lovely name. Your mask is lovely too."

She removed the mask. She was smiling. There was a natural beauty-mark (mole seems too harsh a word) high on her left cheek, an unusual feature, surgery being the preferred course. Close-grained procelain skin of the sort Ingres delighted to paint. Silver-blond curls in a careless, crafty tumble—not unlike the curls of the mask. And such eyes—large, dark, vulnerable, a doe's eyes beseeching a hunter to come after her. Ah, she turned me to jelly, like an inverse Medusa.

As simply as that.

Afterwards I checked at the library (where Slade recounted another of his dreams; he seems to have made an art of dreaming). Aspera Donatio is 54, an Olympic swimmer, and a noted psychotherapist, specializing in the psychoses of children and addicts. An unusual specialty to bring aboard the *Extrovert*. Except in the ghettoes of the mortals, there are few enough

children these days even on Earth. As for drugs, we stable stolids are virtually teetotalers. And, as I already knew, she acts.

There is something about the woman, something that haunts, like a telephone ringing in a bricked-up room.

Later:

The haunting is solved. It came to me as I was going to sleep. She has the same eyes as that child, the dark eyes of mortality and old earth.

Wednesday, June 13, 2084

Slade seems a more unaccountable fellow each time I visit him. I visited the library again today to see him, though maintaining the pretext of impersonality—i.e., a request for book-films of Proust, whom I have been exhorting myself to reread for the last month. At first glance Slade strikes one as being a most unprepossessing sort, anomalous, an error on the part of the selection committee. Shy, Coptic eyes; a Turkish moustache to mask his overbite; a reticence in ordinary conversation that takes him to the brink of invisibility. After I'd gone on a bit in my own bland way, parroting the usual textbook things about Proust, Slade smiled and started to tell me, with his usual disconcerting directness, of his latest dream:

"I dreamt that I had written *Remembrances of Things Past,* though in the dream they became *Things Lost.* I've never read the book, and so the only thing it had in common with the original is probably that it was written in the first person. In the part I can remember I was walking through a French village with Gene Shaw. Perhaps you know her—she programs some of our environments? Well, no matter. Gene and I used to be very close years and years ago, during the pogroms in the States, and that's surely the significance of 'Things Lost.' We came to a square at the center of the town, and as I've never seen any more of France than Paris, the square was a replica of the little park in front of the courthouse in Clarion, Iowa, where I grew up. It was ringed round with bright brick houses plagiarized from Vermeer and de Hooch. A public lav that looked rather like a bandstand—my notion of a French urinal, I suppose—stood at the center of the square. Gene and I looked in through the stained-glass windows. A nasty-faced little boy was whipping the toilet bowl with a length of heavy chain. He destroyed it completely. While I wrote the story, I kept changing the boy's name. At first it was Genet, but that looked too much like Gene. It was a huge novel, but I forget the rest of it. Do you like it?"

"I think it's one of your best."

"Oh, I'm not sure. In some ways it's quite transparent. Gene and Genet,

for instance. Still, it has its points." Then, as though embarrassed by his candor (no matter that these dream-recitals have by now become almost a tradition between us), he muttered an excuse and retreated into the fastness of his archives.

Little danger that I'll get to know this fellow too quickly. In a way it even seems a pity, for he's quite likeable.

Friday, June 15, 2084

Inundations of memory, Proust's and my own alternately, keep me from my proper work.

The U of M. I had entered the business school there in 2009, the year before the Berkley Rumor, with no other intention in the world than to serve my time and get a Master's in Business Administration. A follower in my father's footsteps and a Young Republican. $40,000 a year, a vice-presidency at Freedom Mutual or any company with as good a retirement program—these were my goals. I had even persuaded myself that I *wanted* these things, much as a mortal, told of his cancer, or after a stroke, will persuade himself that he really wants to die, that death is a boon and a culmination. So soon did the sense of the limits of our time wrap its iron bands about us in those days. Eighteen years old, and I was already as fearful of 'wasting myself,' of letting the sand slip through the hourglass, as any invalid octogenarian.

It all returns with such vividness: the dreary brick-and-glass buildings; the torpid hours in the classroom; the frightened, mean-souled, bickering teachers; the cafeterias of hasty, ill-synthesized food; the occasional psychedelic blast that illumined with such terrible clearness the drab texture of the everyday; the ritual fun of the frathouse and secret despair; the attrition, almost day by day, of the alternatives left before one. I recall these things with a strange sense of disbelief. Was I ever such a caterpillar as *that?* I was, and but for the gruesome bounty of the Plague I would have never left the cocoon, I would, in all probability, be dead.

What power that word used to have, how feebly it rings today.

"My proper work."

I have shied away from that subject, as I shy away from the task. Essentially it is the feeling that they will laugh when I sit down to play.

I introduced myself to this journal in the role of a novelist (unpublished). I am unpublished for the unassailable reason that I have never written a novel. I am a novelist, therefore, only in the Platonic sense. Somewhere in the Empyrean there is an Ideal Form of Oliver Regan, and it is shaped like a Novelist.

The novel I balk at will be based on the voyage of the *Extrovert*. My characters will be the 246 of us, no more nor less. Their dialogue will be of their invention, not mine. I have trained myself (and this is my meager credential as a novelist) to reproduce conversations I have heard with 95% accuracy. To invent nothing, to include everything, each word and gesture, and yet it must be a work of art as well, it must gleam. I ask no more than any realist asks—the impossible. And, in consequence, I write nothing.

Still, the conditions here are uniquely well-suited for one to attempt the impossibility: a finite environment and cast, a vast but bounded span of time. I am far from being the only voyager engaged upon the task. There is something absurd, indeed, about the degree to which we voyagers chronicle our voyaging—as though Columbus were to staff his three ships with nothing but historians and diarists. But then, why not? The age of tar-buckets and windlasses is past.

Saturday, June 16, 2084

Immediately I say a thing I begin to see it as a misrepresentation. For of course the *Extrovert* is maintained by the labor of human mind and muscle, even if no larger effort is required, often, than that of uncorking the genie-jug of automation. Thus, concerning 'my proper work,' it would be more honest to say I am a farmer or, at most, a cook. I am in charge of all the ship's organic synthesis operations, exclusive of the hydroponics system. My background in molecular biology prepared me to take over this task with a minimum of pre-flight training. The technics of the factory differs only in magnitude from the technics of the laboratory, and the ship's plant is so abundantly supplied with genies that my supervisory visits have taken on the tone already of church-attendance, a moral rather than a practical necessity.

As an administrator I have also a non-priestly function: I am training two other crew-members as replacements, a process that is going on at all levels of the ship's organization and will continue for decades, until, ideally, a crew of only twenty, taken at random, should be able to keep the *Extrovert* running smoothly.

My trainees are Khalid Hatoum, 38, and Amelia Borman, 45. Hatoum is a ritualist (it was he who pointed out to me the priestly character of our work) and was responsible for the parade and launching ceremonies. Suspicious as I am of "The New Forms" (Can a compulsion neurosis be a work of art?), I find Hatoum immensely impressive, a decathlon champion of the intellect. His is the sort of analytic that can mount whole staircases of thought at one bound. Already I feel played out as a

teacher. Borman is more my own intellectual size. She comes to this work with a background in cybernation, though most of her programming experience has been in the applied arts. She has been responsible for the quarter-mile stretch along the outer arcade that I've most consistently admired. A superb color-sense and dazzling kinetics. I eavesdropped once, over the plant intercom, on an argument she had with Hatoum over the merits of her 'quotations' from art history. Hatoum (who is, outside his own speciality, wholly intolerant of the traditional) savaged her. I've been pleased to see that his arguments haven't affected her programs.

Wednesday, June 27, 2084

I am going to be psychoanalyzed!

"At my age?" I asked, but Aspera insists that it is exactly my age that provides the fascination—rather the way an archaeologist might enthuse over the seven layers of Troy. If nothing else, analysis will provide a frame for all these intruding memories. Not to mention that it guarantees two hours a week alone with Aspera.

Orchestra rehearsals are being cut down. The ship starts to come alive. Ghosts whisper to each other, doors open, masks are put aside. We are two months out, and the old Copernican sun is very dim, a mere star among a million others. We approach ever nearer the speed of light.

Friday, June 29, 2084

Today Slade, instead of telling me his latest dream, handed me this typed note:

"Dream, June 28, 2084

"Part of it was talking with a psychiatrist who looked something like Hemingway and something like Jung. I showed him my written-down dreams. It seems that I had never remembered the important parts. I can't remember the rest."

Slade's dreams have come to have a peculiar fascination for me, as they seem to have so often a bearing on my own preoccupations. It is as though he were dreaming for me. When I told him this, he became quite embarrassed.

Saturday, June 30, 2084

My first session in Aspera's cabin. We sat on cushions and drank a mild scopolamine tea. We had both learned the tea ceremony when that fad

went round in the '30's, and we resurrected it today with a good deal of panache, considering.

The mask I had so much admired proves to be Aspera's own handiwork. Her cabin is decorated with others she has made, the most striking of which was a crown and visor in clear polly thickly set synthetic diamonds. Though I expressed my admiration by no more than a smile, she was quick to apprehend my wish and put on the mask. Ravishing!

Then I began to put on my masks—or to take them off, it amounts to the same thing. Somehow I got to talking about my three years in Mexico—from 2011 to 2014—and though I spoke under the influence of the tea I can't help but think there was something crafty in that choice, for I've seldom appeared in such a good light as I did in those years. The President had just confirmed the Berkley Rumor, and I—and anyone else younger than 40—had to cope with the disquieting idea that my probable life-span was of unknown extent. I left the U of M without much hesitation. What did I want with that Master's now? Was I going to spend an unending lifetime drudging in the brick-and-glass buildings of some monster corporation? Such a life had become unthinkable. I didn't know what I wanted then, but it certainly wasn't that. Also, our mortal elders, still holding the reins of power, were starting to make ugly innuendos; one got the distinct impression, like Isaac walking alongside his father on the way to Mount Moriah, that it wasn't quite safe in that neighborhood. Though why we should have thought Mexico any safer, I don't know.

But they were wonderful, lazy, wildly cerebral years while they lasted. Truly, I believe I must have been half-dead until that time. I would tumble long guiltless weekends in the sand—there was time for it—or read any book I took a fancy to—there was time for it—or, if that was all I wanted, I could get the ultimate suntan—there was time for it. Perhaps there had always been time for it, but I, craven mortal that I had been, had not believed it. There is still a little part of me that refuses to believe it, but I think the younger generation, anyone born after 2025 or so, lacks that feeling altogether. Aspera, for one, claims to find the idea quite alien. I pointed out that it was curious to find a psychiatrist who claims to be a Freudian of the most reactionary stamp and who denies the central importance of the sense of death.

"But I don't deny it," she protested. "We've changed, but death has changed too."

"What is death if not the darkness at the end of every corridor? And what does it mean if the corridor doesn't end?"

"You've answered that question yourself, Oliver. Death is a symbol."

Leapday, 2084

Here in space every day is Leapday, the day that is part neither of any week nor of any month. To commemorate the day, the entire crew assembled in the auditorium where we were addressed by Captain Gray and Doctor Stillhøven, who pushed through the calendar reform in 2000, the first of his many famous exploits with the U.N. 2000: I can just barely remember that. I was in third grade and Miss ? (I don't recall her name, but she wore a lavender sweater and a string of pearls. She had come over from England, and we all made fun of her accent behind her back), who had just taught us that "Thirty days has September, April, June, and November, etc.," was under the onus of explaining that from now on February, March, May, June, August, September, November, and December all have thirty days. How Miss ? must have hated Dr. Stillhøven.

Another little atavism of mine: before Dr. Stillhøven came up to the podium I had expected to see a venerable, white-haired patriarch. He *is* 111 years old. I was shocked to see that he wore a codpiece and powdered his hair like the youngest dandy among us.

Later:

Harness. Her name was Harness, and she was nutty about flowers.

Tuesday, July 3, 2084

The doe has fallen to the hunter's arrows. How quickly things happen, after all!

Friday, July 6, 2084

The analysis proceeds apace. Aspera tells me now that her surrender and our continuing liaison are diagnostic tools. Well, she has her tools and I have mine. She complains that I don't have enough dreams, so I have begun borrowing Slade's.

An outsider listening to these sessions would have trouble discerning more than the ordinariest teatime duelling. Everyone, after all, is always 'psychoanalyzing' everyone else; it is part of our culture, the basic form of modern romance, in which one party tries to invade the psyche of another, the victim agreeing provisionally to assist the invader. Rather, in a way, like an old vampire movie.

Nevertheless, there is something piquant in making love to a woman who is so forthright in her assaults. Yet the curious thing—the feeling just the other side of my power to define it (and isn't this always the most in-

teresting kind?)—is this: that despite that she has assumed the role of vampire and I am, for the moment, her willing victim, I am convinced that it is she who is basically the more vulnerable, that she is, despite all she can do, *my* predestined victim. Such are the paradigms of love.

Of *what*, Oliver?

Sunday, July 8, 2084

On reading over all of the above, I sense a curious lack of—is it?—texture. The world I present here is so *intangible*. A bubble drifting through the void. No, that isn't it exactly.

It is as though I were a fetus in a jar—a curled-up, withered, half-formed little homunculus—one of a series lining a long shelf. Aspera inhabits the bottle next to mine, and we occupy the long hours tapping messages to each other on the glass.

We are the figures in the novel that Slade dreams he is writing.

Wednesday, August 8, 2084

A month gone by, and yet it seems that I have only just closed this journal upon the last entry. I have still to begin my novel, unless I can count it to my credit that I have been eavesdropping extensively and transcribing what I like in another notebook. I have been neglectful of my priestly duties, since Hatoum knows them now as well as I do and claims to enjoy them. I have wasted hours and hours trying to read *Genji* in the Japanese, a hopeless task. And I remember things. . .

For the humor of it let me transcribe a little scrap of paper that I found addressed to myself in my shirt pocket: "I must learn to hold to a more commonplace tone, even at the risk of seeming banal. I shall hold up, as an exemplar, my father, who was—and who essentially remains—a businessman."

Sunday, August 12, 2084

Genji and his three friends were watching a dance called the "Warbling of the Spring Nightingales," following which they recited appropriate poems to each other on the subject of nightingales, each of which entailed a page of footnotes. Suddenly the book struck me as intolerably insipid. Tides of adrenalin began to spill through me, and I could think but one fearful thought: "Spring! Good God, I won't see spring again for centuries.

Or never—never again!" I tore out of my cabin without a mask. I had to *do* something. *I had to go outside.*

This being impossible, I went to the gym, which seemed unusually crowded. (How often what seem our most private emotions turn out to have been part of an epidemic!) I competed in an obstacle race (and lost) and wrestled (and lost). To the extent that my panic had been due to excess adrenalin, I rid myself of it. I was still reluctant to return at once to Lady Murasaki, so I looked at the Activities Board to see what alternatives I had. It was a toss-up between a Silent Dance recital (shades of Genji!) and a séance conducted by our own medium, Mme. St. George. Aspera (who saw her in London) says she is a droll performer, but it was booked solid.

Though I pride myself on the catholicity of my tastes, I have never been able to enjoy Silent Dance. I always sit there trying to imagine music to go along with it. A gaucherie, but one I can't help. Also I find that a nude body can give rise to thoughts extraneous to High Art. (I said this once to Aspera, and she was outraged. She thinks me an awful Philistine.)

Today's performance was an astonishment of beauty, and my conversion has been complete. I shall never be able to look at a ballet again. There was, in effect, but a single dancer (the other bodies on the stage were mere ornaments to her own commanding presence)—but she was a goddess. Sheila Dupont. It seems almost criminally wasteful that such an artist should be cloistered aboard the *Extrovert.*

How she radiated youth! How she gloried in the fact of it! How vast a footnote it would have required to lay bare all the significances implied in the turning of her wrist. After all, I have breathed spring air today.

Aspera was present too, in a mask I haven't seen before. Though we were no more than twenty in the audience, and though I went unmasked, I don't think she noticed me. She too was under the enchantment of that child.

Monday, August 27, 2084

An embarrassing passage-at-arms with Aspera. Embarrassing partly because she aggressed so blatantly, partly because she found me out in a small deception.

I had been teasing her about her professed orthodoxy and the lack of science in her methods. Taking my taunts in earnest, she suggested that I submit to a test case.

"Anything you name," I promised.

"Then I propose that you see me, and have seen me from the first, as your mother. And I'll prove it to you."

I shrugged. "Well of course. The resemblance is incontrovertible. No doubt I see Captain Gray as my father too. He's the same age."

"You can't wriggle out of it that easily. I'm not speaking in parables. There is some very specific point of correspondence, something that caught your attention from the first. This, and nothing else, was the reason you came bounding after me."

"To be candid, Aspera, what first attracted me to you was your mask. My mother was dead long before masks came into fashion."

"Tell me about her. You've scarcely mentioned your mother, you know, all this time you've been seeing me. That in itself is significant."

"By that token, what *wouldn't* be significant?"

"You're resisting like all Ireland."

"I am, aren't I? Well then, which mother shall I tell you about? I had two."

"How morbid." Aspera settled herself on a cushion and, like a wise, hungry cat, waited. "Siblings?"

"One, a half-brother. He was mortal."

"Well, go on. Tell your yarn and be done with it."

"My *first* mother died in an automobile crash when I was five. 1997 that would be, long before anyone had begun to suspect what the Plague had wrought and accidents of that sort were still common. No clear memories. I suspect that much of what does pass for 'memories' are no more than stories my father told me at a later time. He has always been obsessed with the past. One, though, that I'm certain is my own: she took me to a *mu*seum. High ceilings. Marble stairways. And I remember that she lifted me up to look at an Egyptian statue, and I was scared. She was very pretty. My father claimed that that was the only reason he'd married her. It was an imprudent marriage. They were both very young, and father was, as the saying goes, impecunious."

"Oh yes, *that* saying."

"But I don't remember her face, her *living* face—only the photographs of it. She looked nothing like you. Her eyes were blue, like mine, and her hair was brown streaked with copper. I remember the funeral. It rained. Emma went to the cemetery with us. The path was muddy, and the wind blew the wreath off the headstone, and I had to go running after it. There were just the three of us. Dad and me, and Emma. And Mommy, of course."

"Emma became his second wife?"

"Yes. They married within two months of my mother's death. The fu-

neral meats, and all that. The second time Dad *was* prudent. Emma's father was the President and Chairman of the Board of Freedom Mutual Insurance, where he worked. Within ten years of his marriage Dad was a vice-president. Emma was a year older than Dad, twenty-seven, single, and she'd been left standing at the altar twice. She was beginning to worry. Dad had been having an affair with her for a year before the accident, though at that time I knew nothing about that. Or maybe, in a way, I did. In any case, I hated Emma heartily."

"She was twenty-seven in 1997?"

"Yes, she was a mortal. After the Berkley Rumor she was one of the first to commit suicide. Her last ten years must have been hell for her. She could see herself aging, thickening, drying out—and Dad staying just as young as on the day he married her. She must have spent fifty dollars a week on beauty treatments in the last couple years. Then, right at the end, she cracked up. She was hysterical all the time. And I told you about the picture she painted of my father. I'll say this for the mortal condition—none of us could ever have painted a picture like that."

"Pish! Of course they could. You have silly notions about what art is. What did she look like, your stepmother?"

"Now, that's strange . . ."

I paused, but I could see that I'd let myself in for it. "The first image that came to mind was of Emma lying in bed asleep—with a beauty mask over her eyes. A mask, you see!"

"Elementary, my dear Watson. But tell me *this*—did she have brown eyes, like mine?"

"As a matter of fact, very like yours. Oh, it's *that* way round." The memory of the eyeless beauty mask had been a means of evading the true point of correspondence, her eyes—their eyes.

"I'll bet you were about twelve or thirteen when you saw her like that. And that you were, like young Hippolytus, aroused? Perhaps for the first time?"

"Ah, you're a clever woman, Aspera."

"Not clever. Just, as you were complaining, orthodox."

"It's so much easier than thinking, isn't it?"

"Mm. But you'll concede that I was right?"

"With the proviso that it was my stepmother you reminded me of—yes."

"How you do resist, Oliver. Don't you realize the point of the *mask*, why you should have found it so attractive from the first?"

"Well, I've already let it slip—the beauty mask . . ."

"What was it that your mother lifted you to see in that museum?"

"An Egyptian statue."

"A mummy. And within moments of your telling me about it, that's what you called her. Then you described her funeral in necrophile detail. Your dead Mommy, indeed! And the beauty mask, eyeless, black, serves a double purpose: it unites the images of the two women into a single image and it expresses that which seems to have impressed you most about both of them—their death, which also unites them."

"Astonishing," I said.

She kissed my nose. "Did I win, or did I win?"

"Both."

"One other thing, Oliver—what was her name?"

I blushed. "Whose name?" I asked, trying to temporize, knowing she had caught me.

"Your *mother's*, dolt!"

There was no getting out of it. But how in hell had she thought to ask just that? "Hope," I said abashedly.

Aspera laughed. Truly, she had cause to laugh, but she kept it up longer than was really called for. "Hope!" she crowed triumphantly. "Hope! Hope!"

Tuesday, August 28, 2084

Aspera confesses that it was all a trap. She had learned my mother's name at the library the day after I introduced myself to her. She's been spinning her web all this time.

In reparation for the blood she drained yesterday, she has promised to make me a mask. It is to be of silver, the mate of her own—to make the punishment fit the crime.

Thursday, August 30, 2084

Chagrin comes not singly. Today, borne on the wind of my usual intercom eavesdropping, I overheard a conversation between Khalid Hatoum and another fellow (though I must know him, I couldn't place the voice) concerning me. They were in the synthesizing plant, where the occasional bleat and whistle of the vats would blot out a phrase or two, though nothing less than pandemonium would have left me unscathed.

The Unknown: Ah well, sentimentality! That can be excused. It's a color with more or less gracefulness. It's the way he mixes his colors—or fails to—that's so ruinous.

Hatoum: It's simpler than that. The man is stupid.

The Unknown: You've claimed to admire many people stupider than Regan.

Hatoum: I don't mean his native unintelligence. When one has reached his age—he's in his nineties—it's what one has *made* of oneself that matters. Regan has petrified. He's become a bibelot, some piece of Sèvres, callow and full of cheap fancies. Talk to him about art some time. He's living in the twentieth century. He's pre-War. He's—

NOISE.

The Unknown: Garrulous, certainly, but not—

NOISE.

Hatoum: —a stamp-collector's notion of art. He appreciates its residues, 'works' and 'pieces'—little turds lined up in rows behind glass. He admires art because he supposes it *endures*. It's the outlook of a mortal.

The Unknown: (laughing) It's the card catalogue he really loves. Not even the turds, but their classification. But why do you let it upset you?

Hatoum: Stupidity always upsets me, when it gives itself airs.

The Unknown: We all give ourselves airs; we all presume too far. Besides, deadheads are necessary. There has to be someone around to whom this sort of thing—

NOISE.

—importance. The world will always need farmers, and farmers will always seem a little more mortal than the rest of us. That can be worn with style too.

Hatoum: I like farmers. It's the Sunday painters I despise.

I have been the rest of the day carrying on imaginary arguments with Hatoum. The bastard always shows me up. It is small consolation that he is unaware of these victories.

Friday, Sept. 1, 2084

I discovered today, by accident, that Aspera has a second 'patient'—and that it is none other than the young goddess, Miss Dupont. I insisted that Aspera introduce us. She agreed, but her reluctance was as evident to the sense as a sliced onion. I pretended not to notice.

Within a quarter-hour she had brought up the subject of my father. A very irresponsible man, she said. A weak man. How so? I asked. Because he had thrown over my mother for Emma and deserted Emma in turn for Veronica. Men are *that way*, I said—men are fickle. She wanted to say more, but she saw that she had already said too much.

Worried, Aspera?

Monday, Sept. 4, 2084

Aspera, bravely, brought us together. Like so many of the performers I have known, Sheila initially seems unremarkable in her merely private capacity. She fumbled making the tea, and Aspera retrieved her errors in the most unobtrusive way. She seemed genuinely concerned that her protegée make a good impression. Nor was Sheila ungrateful. She is, indeed, a very Cordelia of daughterliness—to the extent that she addresses Aspera, not without some whimsy, as "Little Mother."

Yet how little Sheila needed such assistance, after all. Hers is not so smooth and practiced a beauty as Aspera's. Her body is thinner and her face more angular than a bland taste might desire. Her graces are idiorhythmic. But all that is of no matter, for she is a goddess. She is the full, and Aspera the crescent, moon. I find her eyes especially appealing: narrow and blue, they are positively wicked in their liveliness—quick, glistening, and—paradoxically—depthless. They are two mirror-bright shields held up before her, a sign at once of her shyness and of warning. Her hair is dyed a metallic blue-gray that sets off those cold eyes with a severe grace. She reminds me of Veronica—the way Veronica used to be, before she turned brittle. Yes, I find her most attractive. And young, so very young!

I wish I could admire her conversation in equal measure. A sample:

"Aspera tells me, Mr. Regan, that you know everything about mice."

"I spent some forty-odd years looking at bits of them through a microscope. It's been more than a passing fancy."

"Oh, I think that's disgusting," she said, with a disingenuous shudder. "Mice are so horrible. Little squirmy crawly things—ish!"

"I'm afraid my sensibilities have become rather blunted."

"Do you have some here—on the ship?"

"We keep some in cages in the laboratory, and there is a large supply of ova in the outer freezing vaults."

"Where mine are too?" she asked, wide-eyed.

"Yes. But I'm sure there's no chance of their becoming confused, if that's worrying you."

As on Earth, all the ova of the women are kept on ice here. No one has

yet been able to think of a better remedy for the problem resulting from immortal women with a finite number of ova, and without this rather crude expedient the menopause would be inescapable.

"But just *think*—if they were! And if I had a baby, and it were a little mouse! Or would it be half-mouse and half-baby, like the Minotaur? Then I could run him through a maze. It all has to do with chromosomes, doesn't it? And genes. Aspera says you know every gene a mouse has. You must be very brave. But what is there left for you to do, now that you know everything?"

"Now that I know everything, I shall try to make an immortal mouse."

"Oh, I wouldn't do that until they've learned about birth control. You know what a problem *we* had until the Freezers opened, even with free pills for everyone."

"It's not a present danger. Unfortunately, we're a long way from realizing our aims."

"Unfortunately? Do you really identify with them so much then?"

"I say unfortunately because if we knew how to make a mouse immortal we would be much nearer an understanding of the cause of our own mutation. And then we would be able to make the mortals on Earth immortal too. Though, Lord knows, if I came up with anything, I don't see what good it will do, so far from Earth."

"And that's why you worked forty years with mice, and why you're working with them now?"

"Yes. Except that, strictly speaking, I'm not working now. I'm on vacation, as it were."

"Oh, you shouldn't do that! If you have a talent you should *use* it, not hide it away. I'm only a dancer, of course, but I shall *always* use my talent." I could not tell if this were more disingenuousness, or if she really were so very young as to believe what she said.

"Can I come to your laboratory and see one of the mice some time?"

"Any time you like."

"And *touch* one?"

"Yes. At your own risk."

She clapped her hands. "Oh, Little Mother, Little Mother, do say you'll let me go and touch Mr. Regan's mouse!"

Aspera was visibly annoyed with this display of childishness, which seemed almost to parody her own relationship with Sheila. But Little Mother could not, though she seemed to grow pale, withhold her consent.

Wednesday, Sept. 6, 2084

Aspera came around today with my mask. It is magnificent, and I overflowed with gratitude.

Afterwards, we discussed Sheila. I criticized the girl's faerie manner with more severity than I really felt or Sheila deserves. Aspera agreed, all too earnestly agreed, but insisted that she had redeeming virtues, though they might not be evident to me. I said that seemed doubtful.

"Oh, I can assure you," Aspera protested.

"You know her very well, then?"

"We *have* been rather close, in the course of analysis. Transference is a ticklish business between two women."

"I can imagine." I did not go so far as to inquire what diagnostic tools she was employing in this ticklish business. It was understood.

"You *will* leave her alone, won't you, Oliver?"

I promised. She kissed me on the cheek. "You're a darling, and I love you very much." And despite the smile with which she sought to temper this statement, I think it may be true. More's the pity.

Monday, Dec. 25, 2084

And all through the house not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.

Two months! More. And what has the Star-Mouse been up to? Spying on the microcosm, making my fellow-mice immortal. Without, as yet, signal success.

It is good, better, best to be at work again, to feel the familiar bite of that bug curiosity again. Sheila visits the lab regularly to exclaim over the freak mice that my experiments have produced, but so far I have been faithful to my promise to Aspera. My talk with Sheila has been limited to lectures in the field of my speciality. She is shockingly ignorant of the elements of science, but an apt—even an earnest—pupil.

Hatoum has been present during some of these lessons and has fallen under the same enchantment. Sheila either has not seen this or refuses to recognize it. Her sights are fixed on me, and I take a spiteful pleasure in tormenting Hatoum with the spectacle of my pretended indifference. Where are your gibes now?

New Year's Day, 2085

We have reached our terminal velocity, and now we just coast until we have to brake for our first stop, Tau Ceti, some dozen years off. There are

nearer stars, of course, and even nearer stars with planets, but our itinerary has been planned with a view to spacing our stops as evenly as possible. Unless we find something better than our own barren solar system has had to offer us, we shall be passing by a total of twenty-six planeted suns in the next century and a half. With such a prospect, one does not greet the New Year with wild carousal.

Friday, Jan. 6, 2085

Against all expectation, there has been a casualty—Gene Shaw, one of our navigators and the concertmaster of our orchestra. Her helmet was insecurely fitted during lifeboat drill. Death was instant. After hearing the news, I went round to see Slade, knowing he'd once been in love with her. He showed no signs of emotion, though his very willingness for us to speak of something other than his dreams or my reading might be the equivalent, for him, of hysterics.

He was puzzled by his own lack of response, and I told him of other people I'd known who had received the news of a friend's death with the same coolness. I ventured the theory that the classic expressions of grief are only possible among those who have lived long and intimately with the notion of death and its dominion. If it becomes too rare an event, its meaning is unassimilable.

Slade, I discover, is an historian, another odd speciality to bring aboard the *Extrovert.* Seldom has any society been so completely divorced from its antecedents as we. Slade claims that it is just this, the fact that we exist, as it were, without history, without any past but our own, that interests him. He thinks that it will become, as the voyage goes on, the most conspicuous feature of our lives.

Monday, Jan. 9, 2085

Despite all that homeostasis can do, changes occur, and sometimes they are unalterable.

Poor Aspera. When the blow falls, it never falls gently, does it?

This is what happened:

I entered her cabin without knocking, knowing that the deliberate and unaccustomed rudeness would pleasure her. She had unrolled a mirror and was standing before it, in her silver mask and a ceremonial robe, preening herself. She started when I opened the door, seeming for a moment not to know who I was. I was masked, but surely she recognized *this* mask.

"Aspera, my very own," I said, without removing the mask. "Have I startled you?"

She hung her head, refusing to meet my gaze, and I knew then with certainty—I had suspected as much from the first slight movement of her body—that it was not Aspera's face behind the mask.

"Forgive me for returning to this again, my dear, but you must give her up, you really must. If not for my sake, for your own; if not for your own sake, then for the child's. Truly, she is lovely. I can understand your passion. I might even say that in a distant way, in silence, I share it. But you must relinquish her. I will say nothing of the scandal, for that's of small account here. Though there may be some, the most fusty of us, who would consider less than professional in you, an abuse of the child's confidence. They might whisper—unjustly, of course—that perhaps it was no coincidence that your fame was won in dealing with children . . . Of course, Sheila is only *relatively* a child, relative to ourselves. But let's not talk of scandal. I speak for the girl's sake. You forget when you surrender to your maternal feelings—"

The mask lifted far enough to betray a fleeting glimpse of blue eyes. I continued my charade unheedingly.

"—when you allow yourself to play Pygmalion like this, you forget how young she is, how malleable. It is evident, Aspera, that she will never leave you voluntarily—even if she might have the desire, she would never be able to find the strength—and therefore I want you to promise me, Aspera . . . Aspera, look in my eyes."

Once more the mask lifted, and the two glistening shields confronted me boldly, behind those bland silver features.

"You must promise me that you'll see no more of her."

"Must I?"

She knew of course that Aspera would have felt nothing but indignation at such a pigslop of blackmail and innuendo. She recognized my deceit, relished it, and joined me in these amateur theatricals.

"Then I do," she said, and put her hands about my neck, drawing me closer until our silver lips were pressed together in a passionate kiss.

We consummated our double betrayal, suitably, in Aspera's bed. Once the initial impetus of the deed had been exhausted, Sheila became her usual kittenish self. "Tell me some more about genetics," she begged. "Tell me about my chromosomes and things like that."

"I've told you everything I know," I complained lazily.

"Tell me why your eyes are blue."

"Because my mother's eyes were blue."

"And why did you make one little mousey with whiskers instead of eyes?"

"It was an accident. So much of what I do is only trial and error. We know what each gene controls, we know their arrangement. But we know too little about what's inside them. Despite the work of the molecular biologist, we're still in the pre-atomic stage, so to speak. We can eliminate genes, or shuffle them around, but we have yet to study the morphology of the living gene to any significant degree."

"Poor Mousey! And was the Plague just another accident? Is it only an accident that I'm immortal? That would be sad."

"My dear, we're all accidents. Of the Plague, who can say? It appeared, infected mankind, and vanished before the agent could be isolated and identified. It must have died out through having exhausted its supply of hosts. Most of the literature seems to favor the theory that it was an accident—a mutated virus. In the long run, it wouldn't have been a viable mutation, since in rendering its hosts' progeny immortal (and, presumably, immune) it shut off its own supplies."

"But there *are* still mortals, after all. What of Ireland, Madagascar, Taiwan? I was in love with an Irish fellow when I was sixteen. He was thirty and just *starting* to age. I couldn't imagine anything more handsome at the time. Why didn't the little bug get him?"

"The mortals living now are all descended from infants who were *in utero* at the time of the Plague. Their mothers were infected, but survived to give them birth, without, however, passing on the genetic alteration. By the time such infants were born the Plague had passed on. It was over in less than two months, you know. Surely, you *do* know that much?"

"Oh yes, I think science is just fascinating. I'm going to do a dance about genetics and the Plague. The wonderful thing about science is that it's so logical. You don't have a mole anywhere on your body, do you?"

"No."

She sighed. "Aspera had a mole on her left cheek. It always made me feel decadent to kiss it."

Had she used the past tense deliberately? That is the entrancing thing about Sheila—that I shall never be able to answer such questions with any finality.

When she had returned to her cabin, Aspera immediately noticed the damage that had been done to the two masks.

"My dear Sheila," she said with acidy sweetness, "let me make a present of this mask."

"Thank you, Little Mother. As you know, I've always admired it. I might even confess to have envied you."

"Oliver admires it too. For Oliver it's a symbol not only of his mother, but of death. Oliver loves mothers and death."

"Ah, but Aspera," I reminded her pleasantly, "—death itself is only a symbol."

"Yes," she said, smiling (for once again I had walked into one of her traps). "Of our lives here."

Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2085

I have begun to work on the novel. Aspera suggested the title, and we are all in it.

Afterword:

A year ago, in response to Harlan's request for an afterword, I wrote something called "Why I've Stopped Writing Science-Fiction," or some such. It was so awful that even then I could see it was pretty bad, so I sent Harlan only a letter explaining that I had written him an afterword, but that etc. Another afterword was forthcoming, I promised.

Not only was the first afterword awful, but it turned out to be untrue. I have since then written some science-fiction, a little. However, the gist of it hasn't changed—I can't earn a living writing s-f at the standard rates for stories and novels that the field offers. I write too slowly these days.

That was only half the truth, and that's why it made such a poor afterword. The whole truth is that the standard story and novel that standard rates are paid for is a commodity I no longer have the stomach for. I think my most persuasive and candid argument in this respect would simply be the list of titles of all the s-f or fantasy stories I have no intention of writing. The list is about three years old, and even then I could see some of the things on the list were never going to be written, though any of them, I'm convinced, could have been published in one or another of the magazines in the field.

The list:

The Alien Anthology
Among the Rednecks: a Report from the Field
Approximately Joe
The Ball
The Compassionator
Cosmo in the Engines of Love
The Cowboys
The Day the Curve Broke
Diet of Worms

The Exorcist in Spite of Himself
The General Theory of Electromagnetic Tidal Waves and Volcanoes
Ghost Story
Glad Hand
The Goldwater Experiment
The Good Losers
The Governor's Temptations
Grabenstein
The Hamadryad
Horror and Lester McCune
An Investigation into the Activities of My Body
Joseph and the Empress
The Little Family
The Magic Square
Mind Donor
The Original June Bly
The Orphan's Birthday Party
The Other Door to Dutch Street
The People Eater
The Reluctant Eavesdropper
The Satyr
The Servant Problem (or, The Fatal Passion of Lancelot Kramer)
Strip Poker
The Tarantists
Three Square Parables
The Three-Masted Spaceship
300 Pound Weakling
The Time of the Assassin
The Vicar's List
Walt Little's Soul
Wednesdays Off
You Can't Get There From Here (or, The Intersection)



Introduction to

WITH THE BENTFIN BOOMER BOYS ON LITTLE OLD NEW ALABAMA:

When preparing *Dangerous Visions,* I predicted that Philip José Farmer's exciting and experimental "Riders of the Purple Wage" would cop the novella awards in the year of its eligibility. I was right, it did, but it didn't take any special prescience on my part. The story was so outrageously different, and so controversial, it was inevitable that it would be the most talked-about item in the book.

Now I predict that Richard Lupoff's "With the Bentfin Boomer Boys on Little Old New Alabama" will cop the major awards *next* year. Again I load the gun in my favor. This story will enflame and infuriate the traditionalists; it will amaze and intimidate older, longer-established writers; it will confound and awe critics; it will become the subject of fanzine articles and bull sessions and convention panels; it will cause voices to rise, adrenaline to pump, editors to howl, imitators to scramble for their copyriters. It will raise one hell of a noise.

Friends, there has *never* been a thing like this one before, in or out of the field of sf.

One expects some eye-openers when assembling a wild Frankincense creation like A,DV. I got them in DV and I expected some this time. Tiptree did it, and so did Anthony, and likewise Wilhelm, Vonnegut, Nelson, Bernott and Parra. But *nothing* like Dick Lupoff. He takes the solid gold award for *Chutzpah* Above and Beyond the Limits of Gall.

"With the Bentfin Boomer Boys . . ." presents problems for foreign translators of this anthology that I see as virtually insurmountable. It defies most of the rules of storytelling that remained unbroken after Farmer's novella. It is so audacious and extravagant a story that it becomes one of the three or four really indispensable reasons for doing this book. Frankly, had no other story than this one been written for A,DV—the book would be worth reading.

And as you might expect, the story did not come to be a reality easily. Nor has its progression from first submission to final 36,000 word publication been easy. I'll tell you some of the background. I understand it has already been the subject of some discussion through the sf underground.

In 1968 I started sending out calls for submissions and Dick Lupoff queried me about this story, which he said he'd started but completion had been discouraged by not only editors, but by his own agent as well. I wrote back and said let me look at it. When it arrived, I was astounded

that others had not seen in it the wonders I knew lay waiting on the unwritten pages. I wrote Dick a long letter in which I discussed what I'd like to see, and suggested he expand the concept and make it three times as long. He seemed pleased at the project and some months later I received the story in what Richard thought was a final form. There were still areas I wanted expanded—places in which entire chapters had only been hinted at. Dick and I discussed it by phone, and he was happy that the chance had been offered to do even more on the piece. We both realized that what we had on our hands was one of those rare stories that we were enjoying so much . . . we didn't want it to end. So Dick took it back and expanded again. This was the most "editing" I did with any author in this book. As those who were along for the DV ride may remember, one promise I make the contributors to these volumes is that what they write will not be altered to suit artificial regulations of what I, as editor, might deem "the needs of the audience." Every story in this book (and with only one minor editing presumption that was the case with DV as well) appears precisely as the author finally set it down, even to disparities in spelling (e.g., "color" in American, "colour" in British), which makes for derangement among Doubleday's typesetters and proofreaders.

Finally, it was done, and Dick even took a deferred payment on part of his advance. Money was running thin at that point.

I included the story, and went on to completing the editing. Then began the fireworks.

Richard sent off a carbon of "WTBBBOLONA" to his agent, the gentleman who had, with classic perceptivity, suggested he scrap the project originally. The agent flipped—a bit of a miracle, if you know the agent—and promptly suggested to one of the best editors in the paperback market, that she publish it. The editor read it . . . and a second flippage. So they offered Dick lotsa money.

Now understand something (in case I haven't mentioned it elsewhere in the introductions . . . at this final stage of the writing senility is setting in and I may repeat myself): the stories in this book are all new. None have ever appeared in any other form anywhere else. That is one of the big selling points of A,DV. You have to buy *this* book to read *these* stories. After publication of the paperback—several years from now, by contract—the rights revert to the individual writers and they can sell them anywhere they please; but for right now each author protects every other author's chance to make money from this book by the exclusivity of the product. In that way Vonnegut helps sell Ken McCullough and James Blish helps sell Joan Bernott and Bernard Wolfe helps sell Richard Lupoff. In DV, Ted Sturgeon turned down a wad of *Playboy* money because he understood that publication of his first story in many years within DV's pages would help hype the work of younger, unknown writers. This is a gestalt, and it is a sort of communal pull-together project. For that reason,

I have been a hardnosed bastard about letting anything appear in print before publication of the books.

Dick respected the concept and called me, advising me he could clean up if I'd let the paperback house do the story in an even more expanded form as a novel. But he said he was grateful for my faith in the novella and would abide by my decision. I was sorrowful at keeping Dick from the deal, but suggested that an appearance in A,DV would only *heighten* interest in a novel of "Boomer Boys" at twice or three times its length here, after publication of A,DV. He said okay, and told his agent, who told the editor.

Then started the calls from the editor.

I puffed up with pride, of course. Others now thought we had something extraordinarily sensational. But I had to remain firm.

Finally, the paperback house said they'd wait and re-examine the project after publication of A,DV.

Which would have been swell, except it took an extra year to get this book in print, and during that time Dick was beset constantly by extravagant offers that would have cut the story from A,DV. To his credit, though he needed the money and had not seen another penny from me, he refused. (But he bitched mightily, privately and publicly, which I can't put him down for so doing, though it made me feel more and more like a shit. However, having expunged all guilt from my nature—no mean trick for a nice Jewish boy automatically entitled to two thousand years retroactive *kvetching* by a nice Jewish upbringing and a nice Jewish mother, hello Serita, how are things in Miami Beach?—I learned to live with it. All I had to do to make it supportable was remembering those first few ms. pages I'd seen.)

Further, as a mark of his honorableness, some months ago—before publication of A,DV—the contract ran out and the rights reverted automatically to Richard. Had he so desired, he could have kept the advance money and sold the story to whomever he pleased, and I wouldn't have been able to make a peep. And wouldn't have been able to *bring* myself to peep, for after all, I'd taken so long to get it into print.

But Lupoff is a good guy, a fine writer, and here is the story, as originally intended.

I now implore all of you who find it as smashing a piece of work as the agent, the editor and I did, to write your local paperback publisher, demanding "Boomer Boys" be expanded and published as a full novel. It's the least we can do to repay Lupoff for having written it, and for having stood by his fellow writers at his own expense.

And for *more* Lupoff, a talent getting increasingly important every year, let me recommend *Sacred Locomotive Flies* (Beagle Books, 1971); *One Million Centuries* (Lancer, 1967), a 352 page giant of a novel; *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* (Canaveral, 1965/Ace, revised edi-

tion, 1968); and, as co-editor with Don Thompson, *All in Color for a Dime* (Arlington House, 1970), a marvelous collection of nostalgic articles and essays on comic books of the 1940's. Additionally, for those of you too impatient for more Lupofficton to wait for "Boomer Boys" as a full novel, press your local paperback publisher to buy and publish a wild and whacky manuscript titled *Thintwhistle on the Moon* that was originally bought by Dell for paperback publication (but was cancelled when Dell inexplicably cut back its sf program and let go one of the most imaginative editors who's ever worked in our field).

Dick Lupoff—whose fame has gone to his head only in that he now insists his stories be published under the name "Richard" Lupoff—now lives in Berkeley with his wife, Patricia, and their three children, and when he isn't sf-ing, writes rock criticism for such diverse markets as *Organ, Changes, Earth Magazine* and (as this is written) next month begins a regular rock column for *Ramparts*. (In the dreary month of February, 1972, we are advised, Mr. Lupoff will have had a study of the sf field published in the last of those magazines just noted. Look it up.)

And while I don't want to keep you from the "Boomer Boys" any longer than absolutely necessary, here is some Lupoff self-statement.

"Born Brooklyn, 21 Feb. 1935.

"First fuck, some nameless whore after a basketball game when I was 17; believe it or not she was a pleasant person whom I remember vividly (doesn't everybody?) and with affection, and will probably put in a story someday. ('Used again,' she'd remark if she knew about that, but smiling.)

"Patricia and I have been together long enough to have three children (Kenneth, Katherine, Thomas), with whom we share our house with an old spaniel, a nutty afghan and a healing-cat. It's also been long enough to go through a lot of changes, but even so it's just the beginning.

"I attended an all-male, military, Christian boarding school through high school. As a result I am passionately devoted to co-educational, civilian, secular day schooling. After barely surviving the horrors of secondary education I went to college, majoring in journalism. This is a total shuck: I *enjoyed* college and benefited from some of my courses, most particularly symbolic logic and other philosophy courses, but as for writing, as many people have said before me, it can't be taught. You learn by doing if your desire is sufficient, and if you have the requisite innate talent; and if you don't then no amount of drill in the five W's will make you a writer.

"Let's see, is there anything else I can tell you? Oh, I served two calm years in the army after college, then twelve (!) in the computer business before opting for full starvation in 1970.

"I love, like or admire: Patricia the Dancer, good writing, honesty, women, intelligence, children, cats, Mendocino, vegetables, dogs, cities, Alice Smith, freedom, men, dumb horror movies, acid, blues, living.

"I hate: slavery.

"Oh, let's see, I started writing science fiction short stories about 1950 and received rejection slips from Boucher & McComas, Horace Gold, Fred Pohl, and *Planet Stories* (the last not even signed). Some years later I backed into the ranks of sf professionalism by snaring the job of editing half-a-dozen posthumous volumes of Edgar Rice Burroughs, then writing a book about Burroughs.

"Meanwhile I'd cried a lot about my inability to sell short stories, and James Blish suggested that I try a novel instead. I thought this idea absolute lunacy, but it stuck in my brain. I wrote no fiction during the Burroughs thing: mostly just read and read and read all the conceivably relevant stuff I could find that had been published prior to 1920. Out of *that* experience I've promised Tom Disch that I will someday produce an essay 'How I Read 400 Bad Books in One Year.'

"But when I re-emerged into the modern era I followed Blish's advice and wrote a novel along very conservative, traditional lines, quite Burroughsian in structure. It was rejected by the best-known paperback science fiction editor of the time. Because its hero was black. (Or Negro, as we used to say in those quaint, long-ago days.) Fortunately there were other editors around, and Larry Shaw, one of the long-time unsung sf editors, bought it. It was called *One Million Centuries.*

"Somewhere along the way I learned a little about writing saleable short stories. Chester Anderson quotes William Tenn as giving this formula for the short story: *One thing happens.* So I've written shorts in which: four people in a bar play the juke box . . . a man sits in his kitchen waiting for his wife to come downstairs . . . a man wakes up in the night and goes to the bathroom. The last of those is my favorite. Twelve pages of piss. Sam Moskowitz will have a fit!

"'With the Bentfin Boomer Boys on Little Old New Alabama' was planned as a second novel, but no editor I could find would touch it. Even my agent Henry Morrison, normally a most kind-hearted and accommodating man, declined to *try* to sell it. So it lay dormant, three chapters written and the remainder outlined, for a full year until Harlan put out the call for manuscripts for *Again, Dangerous Visions.*

"I think this story was the best thing I'd written up to that point, but there's so damned much to learn, so far to go . . . I hope that some day I'll be a good writer. Or at least a writer. I'm working on a novel now called *Up!* It's about a fellow who finds himself in the basement of a tall building and goes upstairs."



Richard A. Lupoff

WITH THE BENTFIN BOOMER BOYS ON LITTLE OLD NEW ALABAMA

1. *Last Night in Letohatchie*

Well he didn't like it the hot dust blowing, crusting and it made him have to blink a lot standing still a gentleman doesn't move under the circs but you can blink yes by the end of the whole thing it's like sleeping too long the dust tears get caked up and make a gritty crusty blob at the corner of your eye where the nictitating eyelid would push it clear if you were a frog (too late—you're not). He knew that afterward he would have a chance rub the two places one at a time it would hurt (pull scratch) but only for a moment and the dustcrust blob would come out, get it between the last joint pad of thumb and forefinger of each hand it would roll into a nifty sphere so what?

Mean, what do you do with a perfect sphere (two in fact) 1/32-inch in diameter composition gritty dry outside (no sweat left) moist inside (tears yes) made out of 70% red cruddy N'Alabamian dust blown into your eye at parade by the hot wind 30% white man's tears (yeah) (saline content) listening to a would you b*elieve* it commencement address oh no!

How about that speech! Brilliant! Original! How about we gotta sacrifice to win brave sum manhood to protect pure white pussies from the nigras (ever see one who didn't slobber clutch after a white c*nt?) carry the war to the enemy put the nigra back in his place make N'Haiti pay for atrocities *and*

and

and grit in your eye. *Sheeh!*

So who ever said commencement was supposed to be fun anyhow tradition is what it is. & N'Alabama is strong for tradition good sum tradition all the way from O'Earthtime days before the furgem Jewrabs conquered the world when O'Alabama was an independent damn O'Earth *nation*

bajeez with independent damn *al*lies: O'Miss O'Jaja O'Boerepublic the nigra knew his place *then* you bet basaintgeorge.

Well he stood there attention he was a good gyrene raring to get into space into war and fight the good fight for god and planet and little baby heads of shiny golden curls (that would grow up to be a *piece* you follow? a *piece*) who ever said he needed—who ever said anybody needed—a commencement speech to tell him to blast the damned uppities out of black space back to their stinking N'Haiti till the papadocs learned their place again . . .

. . . some bigbellied senator from furgem Talladega or someplace? Sheeh! What if it was the furgem governor himself what could he say about the war that everybody didn't know already anyhow? That we better win it or there'd be buck nigras walking free on N'Alabama's sacred soil and before you know it some cunning black nigra kid's playing pop-o with some innocent golden-haired little N'Alabama baby and you know what happens *then!* Minority groups at the polls! Two party elections and furgem minority groups trading off damn *votes* for concessions the same thing that happened on O'Earth before the furgem Jewrabs pushed everybody else out and left the colony worlds to shift for themselves. Who needs speeches?

So after it became overwith he went with Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie. School out, all the eager boy graduates had their diplomae and a handshake from Senator Belly from Talladega (he knuckled his eyes between mitting them) and off to barracks for fresh undustied uniforms and awayaway it's over but he was gone already by then with Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie to Letohatchie for a time.

Down the red rut road to Letohatchie by whining two-wheel gyrocar and Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie said to him—How about it sarge?—and turned waiting for an answer.

He didn't.

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie grunted and looked ahead no use bugging him that was obvious. What if he was just tired. Or grumpy. But if Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie had done something wrong that got him mad, ah, that was another matter and better let sleeping sleepers sleep. He knuckled his right eye it hurt (pull scratch, yes) and his left (yes) and rolled two gummy spheres 1/32-inch in diameter between the last joint pad of thumb and forefinger of each hand and threw them away dustodust they rolled whined down the red road.

Parked in a dirty alley in downtown Letohatchie (don't knock it if you've never tasted Letohatchie fried mudhen) and set a clever device on the gyrocar to set off an electric current and hold any burglar there till

they got back Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie and he would find the bastard there maybe with a few hours of writhing first and see what they would see to do with him. Humane? Keep your nose clean and it won't get tweaked, that's what! Whose rights are you worried about, the victim or the thief, answer yes or no.

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie wanted to go to a bar and no delay but lost out. —Nope—he said—round the block once first.—

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie got very brave: —Why?—

Lucky-lucky, no blastback. He said—Look, tomorrow we're gone maybe, yeh? Got the nice boys their bars now who needs tough sarges any more, who? Use skullpower Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie—direct address no less !yes!—what will we get in the morning, tasty breakfast for jesusakamitey? Maybe!

—Orders!—A long speech that for him Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie felt surprised. Impressed, would you say? He said more!—No sentiment in you Gee Ell Wow Three & Freddie? Round the block once first last look at Letohatchie. Tomorrow who knows deep space off to N'Haiti or someplace else.—

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie shall we say acquiesced. Once around it.

Alquane was down (N'Alabama was Alquane VII dontchaknow) and the sky was a dark park for stark. No moon tonight not ever in fact except when . . . well, don't let it bug you. No moon tonight. Streets of Letohatchie no emptier than usual one fat man brushed by as Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie swung up cruddymuddy sidewalk *with* companion.

Fatman was short (5'2"? 2'5"? 52"? Short!), blondheaded long straggly strips of hair pasted down across his forehead a few tips jiggling delightfully before his *left* eye (not so gritty in the city) perspiration (must have been officer material, eeyems sweat) too on that noble brow helped. Fat fat he jiggled as he waddled as he walked but the sarge (not to mention GLWIII&F) didn't mind, watched his big behind, a find, they jostled for a moment feeling final fast last night in Letohatchie but only *once* around the block fatso goom-bye.

Wanna guided tour? Tag along. He knew Letohatchie inside in did he cadre get to know the towns that way. Here: corner bar (pinkred word startles: B A R) clashing red beersign pick your brand in dirty stapaglass window inside full of smoke, off duty renes sitting at fakewood tables glasses m bottle m soggy nappies all over. Other fakewoods, townies, grumpysullen pyech don't like each other comprehend?

Look: he knew this town. *Knew* it inside in, you know that now. Think he and Gilloowoo3 and Freddie went in there?

Pyech!

Next door Piggy Peggy's Pussy Parlor, big pink sign, local John Darn leaning against wooden doorway whistling sweet and low.

Pass it by sarge and companionship.

EATS next. He knew EATS from first day in Letohatchie. Bad EATS, door in back, oldest established sinking crap game in Letohatchie, run by oldest established ex-spacer in Leto, no crookeder than others, give a man a break he saw that bentfin boomer on his shirt, spacer gyrene trader all, oldest established looked out for deepmen, others beware.

He wore *the fin forgot* how many missions by now (sprickled skin said a lot a lot) Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie had been out too but last night in Leto, last night N'Alaside, who wants to squeeze it out boning for suckerbucks eh? Mean, what goodr bucks on a hotter in deep? *T*h*e*r*e a*r*e n*o w*h*o*r*e*s a*b*o*a*r*d N'A*l*a*b*a*m*a n*a*v*y.* Commercial ships were of course a whores of a different choler. (Same color, though.)

Nice little weapons shop, self-surf washery. Ononon.

—Where we going?—asked Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie.

— —

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie didn't know what to do to say. Don't squeeze that was good policy he was a good man an all white guy but temprous so don't squeeze but what are you going to do stand there on cracked sidewalk (fix it postwarse of course) with your thumb zup waiting—Whatcha wanna do?—

He replied!:—Mmnnph.—

Gilloowoo3&F looked at him puzzled. He jerked a finger over one shoulder, moved his head—Mmnn.—Articulation supreme.

Moved down sidewalk past ugly fronts GorLesWalTriF in tow, looking at ugly town, streetlights yellowbrown (fixem postwarse) some even worked, peep in windows: military supplies (one-fourthmaster was out of stock bentfin boomers two months, three? local merchant had a-plenty, yes: old story, yes); Letohatchie Noozan Sundries selling plenty girlie piks, fukfuk boox, stip strips, You Too Can, noozes.

Noozes: WARGOZWELL ENEMYFALLZBACK BLACASUALTIZRIEZ PAPADOCS LOZING GLORIWHITE SPACEFLEET NEET TREET.

Y Bi Noozes? Headlines allasame allagame allafine allatime. Win win win. So: Why no fixem sidewalcracks, streetlights, build some houses, kill some lowzes, and some schools? Afterwarz uvcorz.

Between Letohatchie Noozan Sundries m Leto Lower Mane St Comp Svcs Inc (kipunx, tab, 9th generation central processor you knit/Y'll U Ate Computing) he stopped *crkk!*

Turned quarter circle on crackedwalk pushed open a dirtywood door with a frosted dirtyglass panel set in its *upper* half turned knob pushed open door walked into hallway (what need to say it was *dingy?*) and started up crikkingwood stairs.

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie followed.

—Going up?—Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie asked.

— —he replied.

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie did not exactly qualify for MOS +intellectual+ where else to go, hey? Open a dingydoor there are steps going uuuuup and he starts uuuuup crikking & Gleewo3+F asks—Going up?—

Pyech! Wrelse Gloowoo Threeneff slidewaze? Pyech!

Up he went crikking every steppina hotdim hall crik followed crik by crik Gordon crik Lester crik Wallace crik the crikcrikcrik and um, Freddie up to the first landing second floor (first floor, European style, O'Earthtime days) reached a landing & stopped.

GLW3&F2.

Nuthermuther dirtydoor loose dingy brass knob stapaglass pane in *top* half frostordirty anyway he couldn't see through (so what he knew) old overpainted mailflap slot set in wood a few inches (European style, O'Earthtime days would have said *centi*meters) below stapaglass he tapped it with starsprickled finger didn't linger door opened just a wee crack he saw a dingy brass chain smoke m people beyond no furners all good surners by their looks glasses m bottles 2 & music thumpathump bump it sounded highly encouraging *as:*

:eye in face opened wide peered through crack at him; eye *his* face peered back in slowly closed (other stayed open) shut didn't stay shut opened again (think a whink?); othereye inside shut-opened (sink a wink?) mustabin the code of the ills door shut a moment *clattk* must be chain coming off door opened again (link a wink?) big fella stepped back let *him* in Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie following close behind they made their way to a nempty fakewood table pulled up chairs saddown *and:*

:over came a waiter nice looking surn boy goodpure N'Alabamian stock short though (5'2"? 4'3"? 43"? Short!) pretty yellow hair plastered flat on his skull perspiration held a few straggling locks on his forehead a few tantalizing tips toppled tepidly toward his *left* eye and fat too a find a big behind don't mind.

Waiter looked at customers.—?—he said trippingly.

—Fine old Jack Daniels charcoal filtered slow-mellowed golden sipping whiskey please with sufficient glasses m napkins you may leave the bottle thank you here—said *he* pointing at the fakewood table top with a finely manicured middle finger (the remainder making a fist).

The waiter said—!—and departed.

He took Gordon Lester Wallace's hands in his own two for a moment, looked into GLWIII&F's eyes, then around the room, found the band (they weren't playing merely staying for the moment): One hornist holding hollowed heculan headbone horn, guava marracist, rhythman with blackskin drumset taptatapa-ing quietly to himself.

Drinks came, sampled same, wartime shame *but* good booze good news. Trues?

Emcee stood up, *he* looked, Gloowoo3&F dida same. Emcee a fat pee, short too, big ass, big mass, yellow hair plastered where on his forehead, couple tips of couple strips hanging over his *left* eye, spotlight spanged on him dressed in plainbuttoned war surplus grays (no bentfin boomer of course) dark gray damp patches at armpits m crotch, perspiring in spangspot waving arms up and down pointed straight to sides fingers extended (don't cough he won't take off) couple times *till:*

:noise level dropped couple deci damn bels emcee worked his mouth couple times perspiration on his forehead glinted in the spangspot he said —and now ladies and gentlemen (no ladies visible present but who ever really *knows,* you know?) Ueer proud to present Miss Merriass Markham (one shrill whistle) to dance our National Anthem!—applause.

Spangspot shot emcee disappears room is all dark a moment sound of rustling here m there surprising shrill giggle from one nearby table rustle too from center floor (emcee departing?) sudden drumroll from blackskin set (rhythman must really love his work *pang* and a *whang!*) fanfare on heculan headbone horn and marracas rattle new spangspot *pows* on and somebody's init:

:Miss Merriass Markham a zoftic miss must be pure N'Ala blood but spangspot color is . . . ? . . . bluegreen gruebleen gives her skin sheen (all glistered) unnatural coloration (bad taste that) standing at attention quivering salute.

What she wear? Tight brazeer on big big bosom, too tight, flesh welts above and below, must be shall we say, ah, uncomfortable for the poor leddy Miss Merriass Markham, cinched in back, bright bruegleen brazeer looks like rubber (?!) two highly attractive cutouts large pink (?) aureoles (howcinya *tell* in this light?) protruberent nips pazowie that must tingle it's too tite see the red (this lite?) line below nothing on her belly but a

wee bit would you say protruberent (pregnant?) actually kind of voluptuous (think of that belly belly-to-belly with your belly—a navel orgasm?) and tights, shorts that is, same blue squeezing gluebreen rubberlooking oh! holdin that roundbottom Miss Merriass run your mind past that behind my! what a lotch of crotch mmmmm! *he* liked that thought *whooeeee!* Miss Markham he gave Gordon Lester Wallace III & Freddie a hand-squeeze apeez watching Miss Merriass Markham stand all a-tremble with patriotic fervor as the three-man band struck up by damn, suh! *Dixie* and in a couple beats Miss Markham *began:*

:quivering for *real* in time to that glorious tune her proud patriotic ass slamming slidewaze in tune to bump-bump-bump-bubu-bump-bump-bumbump feet planted proudly on that fine N'Alabamian wooden floor knees apart m bent her arms extended forward toward the audience and quivering quivering in time to the stirring strains of that glorious old tune soon she began to work her hips her hair (glorious golden waves sweeping over softwhite shoulders the kind of tyke a soul has to like her daddy must be proud to grab a handfull of *that* stuff) swaying too in time and rock that pelvis hey (are we sufficiently discreet do you think?) all day.

He took a drink of golden smooth Jack Daniels sipping whiskey bless the old land N'Alabama's soul must be in there somewhere the patriotic air slammed to a close with Miss Merriass Markham slamming a backbend (she was lithe) hands on floor behind her feet hot in the spangspot all-over wet salty sweat the audience cheering to a man (no ladies *visible* in the audience but do you ever really *know?*) venting pure patriotic fervor *m appreciation* of artistry. Mmm?

He took a Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie shoulder in each hand, shook companionship.—Here,—he said to GLWIII&F—want know where I take you? Here for a last night in Leto.—

Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie expressed appropriate impressedness. Now, wouldn't you?

Emcee was back on the floor now waving arms up and down fingers splayed his warsurp grays (plain buttons of course, and definitely no bent-fin boomer) looking darkwetter where they'd looked darkwet before the spangspot had changed back no more bleegruen yellowbrown now on him (went nicely with his plastered blond hair one might suggest) grinning broadly his fat face but keeping his teeth clenched and making little folding-unfolding motions at the waist and neck (bowing? nodding?)—Thank you thank you ladies and gentlemen—he said (no ladies visible in audience but did you *know?*)—Miss Merriass Markham will be back momentarily I'm sure you want to see more of her much much more (snicker) and I'm sure she wants you to see more of her so in just one moment after

everyone has had a chance to refresh himself for a moment—he stopped lights came back on in the room the emcee disappeared but:

:*he* remained at fakewood table with Jack Daniels (reserve quality) and companionship.—That all?—asked Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie.—That all? Thought she was stripper. This our last night, maybe, on N'Ala, thought we'd get some satis damn faction not a tease.—

—Wait—he said.—Looko there—pointing, table across floor had four men, two sitting, two standing, standing two looked alike, short, fatties, blond hair plastered each over *left* eye, two at table, one tall, palepalepale, agitatedly moving jiggling up and down in fakewood seat, clutching at arm of companion *who:*

:medium size man dark hair lay across table arms on table wearing nondescript business (looked like) suit not moving drink spilled across table washing face in booze (o dream, dream, to bathe in JD Sippin Grade) from nondescript medium sized back covered by nondescript nocolor business suit (looked like) jacket protruded handle he was to coin a phrase turned off. Two fat shorties (blond both) lifted nondescript medium sizer carted him from table disappeared into unknown preserves trailed by tall skinny bobbing agitatedly.

—So?—Getc. said.

—Tomorrow,—he replied.—Ueebee gone, orders for . . . wanta guess, Gordon and so on? Try? Where? More training work? Not likely. Offplanet, hey, bye bye N'Bama hey. Where do you think?—

—?—

—Deepspace? Vacbattle papadocs ready to board? *Killanigra* once a day gyrene hasta earn his pay. Ready to invade N'Haiti?—

—Mmn.—

—Think the warle spread? N'Anguilla? N'Azteca? N'Tonga?—

—N'Haiti probably. Deepspace on a hotter don't think sarge?—

—Mmm. Drink y'booze.—He gestured again. The empty table where the two men had sat and two stood was empty not now.—!—

Bandback *brrrm, c'chkkkk,* sound of heculan headbone horn, lights down spangspot on emcee again waving arms as ever moving mouth—Thank you ladies (do you *know?*), gentlemen Miss Merriass Markham and assistant will now present a patriotic pageant in honor of N'Alabama her glorsy spacerines—sound of applause in room audible through thick smoke also sound in one corner—no no yes oh—(do you know for *sure?*) spangspot off emcee rustle movement in dark and a *pow:*

:light back on babypinkspot playing on golden curls Miss Merriass Markham strolling in center lowcut *low*cut frilly gown tightfitting cloth begins just above nipple showing pink circle protruberence through cloth

every *pore* by bang tight waist and flaring skirt hooped out and ribbons frills to furgem *floor*—Sheet!—loud voice from dark room shuff mumbles Miss Merriass Markham only smiles in circle *as:*

:second spotlight pangs on edge of floor shows a nigra brute Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie and even he do double take—Ha?—but no, look, he's white only daubed, daubed, could they pay *you* to trick out as a coon buck? *You?* How much?

Sheeh, one never knows, does he?

Fake coon in a red red spotlight Miss Merriass Markham prances to and fro looking ever whichaway but not at him he inches up on her audience tense and silent inch there's some quiet tense music how can the headbone horner concentrate inch up on that symbol of pure sum lily lady parasol over shoulder gloves over elbows and the nigra:

:*pounces* from behind drags Miss Merriass Markham to him black black dirty she screams he bats parasol clatters Merriass Markham struggles nigra paws, claws *lookit* him drool smashes Miss Markham to the floor reaches, she screeches, nigra bends, rends, rips Miss Merriass's frilly gown *rip* down the back she rolls cloth falls away from big pink rubies round boobies nigra growls audience howls *and:*

:whimpering half-naked sum womanhood backs away from slobbing black animan backs he lunges an arm claws at hanging cloth at pure white womanhood's waist *r-i-i-p* nigra swings arm away in triumph pink and white shreds hanging from clawlike beasthand Miss Merriass Markham no longer fearing stands straight in spangspot eyes flashing bosom heaving as they say (mmm, bosom heaving) starkass naked pale white flesh pale in now-pale spangspot only spots of color her golden lox, dark eyes, red lips (open, panting, love those bodiorificesheymac?) and red nips and that curly triangle pub hair like night delight and what's that?

Curled around her jelly hip what's that black what's that? Round it goes around that sweet soft crotch that lovie V and up around her hip and and back O Underline the Arse and back between and around and what? A handle it has she grasps and uncoils a whip (a bullwhip a buckwhip) and upraises't in the spangspot and lookit *lookit* that face that joy that maidenhood defended boyoboy o *lookit* that coon *now* willya see him cringe see him crawl

he *knows* his place

but she won't let him off that easy Miss Merriass swings that whip and *tchapp!* lookit that nigra roll hear him whine *phwapp!* O good O God O finefinefine O go Miss Merriass and *crack!* O look o look his back the red the people lose their mind the cheers and screams and hips, hips working,

losing minds, pelvis grinds tears, cheers the nigra falls, Miss Merriass Triumphant calls defiant independent slogan:

Never!

Lights out, rustling sighing moaning and houselights uuuup roomful of men (well . . .) sitting drained, Miss Merriass and troupe not to be seen shortfatblond emcee in centeroom waving arms up and down blinking mouth working no sound at first (but who cares? a great audience, not a dry crotch in the house!)—Thank you thank you Miss Merriass Markham *thanks you please note* ladies (hmm) and gentlemen that the nigra was accredited member Actor's Professional Guild qualified simulator available weddings and bar mitzvahs this is, after all, a respectable establishment drink up ladies (?) m gentlemen thank you.—

Well the Jack Daniels sippin was about done by now so he poured a few drops for Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie and finished up the rest himself and smacked his hand down hard on the table some money in it bills and coins made a good solid sound on the fakewood and stood up, up too Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie, followed him to the door past the (one might so dignify him) *maitre d'hote* a short man with the cutest blond strings crossing his pate plastered with perspiration (or sweat as they say) on his forehead and a couple strands dank dangling before his *left* eye and—Thank you sir O thank you—as they passed through the dirty door with the stapaglass panel (the extra O thank you for a sweet tweak in a sensitive spot) and onto the landing.

—Base now,—he said.

—Yes,—said Gordon Lester Wallace III and Freddie.

They scapp-scappered down dingy stairs out dingy door at bottom retraced steps past quick glimpse at Leto Comp Svcs peered into Noozan Sundries (last edns now on sale N'ALA TRIUMPH BLACKS FALLING BACK RUMOR N'DESERET TO ENTER WAR TREASON TRIAL IN TRUSSVILLE passemby), military supplies (needny bentfin boomers?), Piggy Peggy's (eyecorner glimpse of John Darn entering establishment), and EATs and B A R.

Gyrenes back to two-wheel gyrocar and !whatchaknow! clever electronic device done *caught* somebody (short man and fat with platnum locks) see'm *writhe* willya?

GLWIII&F watch as he keys off clever device, writher falls, he chexm—No fun this bucketkicker—he gets in gyro, G+ in back seat, 'noff we go on the red rut road and to (but of course!) beddie.

Darkness in barracks, he listens:

—Deepspace, do you think?—

—N'Cathay?—

—N'Yu-Atlanchi bet.—

—Invade, invade N'Haiti show furgem papadocs.—

—Think we'll ever get back on O'Earth?—

Sniggers. From sarge's private (well) cubicle:—Orders tomorrow. Now quiet!—

Rustles and sighs.

2. *From the Bizonton Pylon*

The climb from the Rue Margarite to the hoverail depot was long and difficult, and for the thousandth time Christophe Belledor mourned the long discontinued vertiflot service. Discontinued, perhaps, is not the correct word. When there was not the money or manpower to perform routine maintenance, the vertiflot became increasingly erratic in its performance, carrying passengers between the street and the hoverail platform less and less reliably, until it had finally been abandoned as too dangerous to continue.

Already, many N'Haitians, Christophe among them, had had narrow escapes from too-rapid descents or from ascents that had suddenly reversed their direction. A few unlucky Bizontoniers had tried the device once too often, and had not escaped its failure.

Ah, well, such was the war effort. Someday things would be better, the vertiflot would be repaired and restored to service, and patient, hardworking citizens would be rewarded.

Christophe stopped halfway up the pylon to catch his breath. He was no longer the young man he had once been. As well, as well. All citizens could contribute, each in his own way. Too old to serve in the starfleet, still Christophe could fill his desk at the Ministry, freeing a younger man to fight for N'Haiti. And he could bear arms at the regular drills of the Planetary Guard, ready to defend his world against invasion if it ever came. But for now . . .

Christophe shuffled forward, climbing the steps of slowly crumbling concrete, philosophically observing the tired citizens about himself, their shabby clothing patched and threadbare. Ah, another sacrifice for the great effort. When N'Haiti is free to turn her energies to peace once more, things will be better. There will be new clothing, dwellings will be repaired and new ones will be built, and the vertiflot service will function once again throughout the commuter network of the Compagnie Nationale des Chemins de Fer d'N'Haiti.

But today, ah, Christophe Belledor reached the platform at last, made his way to the rear of the crowd waiting at the edge of the flatbed for the hoverail to take them to N'Porprince. Christophe recognized several of his fellow commuters but did not try to strike up conversations. Soon, if there had been no breakdown, perhaps at Bahon or St. Marc, the train would arrive. Then there would be a rush to get aboard, for trains did not run as frequently as once they had and those who missed one sometimes could not wait for another, and had to walk to work.

When the hoverail finally arrived Christophe was fortunate—he managed to crowd into the front car and stood wedged between a fat man he had seen many times but never spoken to, and the attractive daughter of his neighbor Leclerc, Yvette. She smiled at him as the sway of the car moving from the Bizonton pylon forced their bodies together for a moment. Christophe felt flustered, tried to look away and pretend he had not noticed the young girl or her reaction to their accidental contact, then grinned in embarrassment as she giggled at him.

After the hoverail had halted in N'Porprince and the crowd of workers had forced their way off, he relived the brief and wordless exchange as he walked through the stuffy passageways connecting the central hoverail pylon with the Ministry. He stopped at the stall of Maurice in the lobby of the ministry, looked at the morning's *Hatian* and almost purchased a copy. First, though, he counted the few plastic sous in his trousers pocket and decided that someone in the office would have a copy.

He took his hand back from his pocket, walked past the wooden stall with a shamefaced, "Bonjour, M. Maurice."

M. Maurice's reply was a snarl which Christophe did not quite manage to avoid hearing as he started up the stairs. Eh, even the Ministry of Military Manpower Procurement could not obtain repairs for its vertiflot in wartime. The scurrying about that had taken place, the shouted commands and helpless shrugs that had been exchanged when word arrived that none other than the Premier was planning a visit to the Ministry, and would have to climb wooden stairs to reach the office of the Minister!

The Premier had reacted surprisingly. No vertiflot, he exclaimed, well, in wartime we must all sacrifice. And, taking the trembling arm of the Minister he had walked up flights of stairs to confer. Word had spread and with it relief—the Premier had not complained of the broken vertiflot. The Minister's neck was saved. Department heads were spared expected tongue-lashings. Employees breathed easier throughout the Ministry. Such was war, and such was the operation of the Government.

But this day was another day, and with it there came another problem. As Christophe contemplated the staff study he was to complete editing for

the Deputy Minister he clucked in his mouth and shook his head with worry. The pleasant thought of Yvette was eradicated by the stern problems of manpower procurement and the folly of the Deputy Minister's plan.

With the study, the promising career of Marius Goncourt would come to a sudden end as the Minister came to realize fully the nature of M. Goncourt's proposal, and with M. Goncourt would fall his staff, including—most emphatically including—Christophe Belledor.

Winded and perspiring, Christophe reached the landing of his department. He leaned against the door-jamb for a moment and wiped his forehead with a tattered pocket-kerchief, then entered the large room. Most of the others had arrived ahead of him. Madame Bonsard, the secretary and receptionist, greeted him with an unpleasant smile and, "Bonjour, M. Belledor. Madame Belledor, she failed to waken you this morning?"

Christophe tried to smile as he walked past the desk of Madame Bonsard, but did not speak to her. He glanced at the clock as he passed beneath it. Eh, 0700 hours already, he was late once again. He turned to speak: "The hoverail, Madame Bonsard, there is nothing that one can do, you know. Perhaps you will not . . ." He caused his voice to trail off in quiet hope, but already he could see that Madame Bonsard was marking the hour of his arrival on the weekly personnel report.

"Wartime, M. Belledor," she said. "We must all do our bit, eh? Surely you would not wish me to falsify an official report of the Ministry."

Christophe shook his head and made his way to his desk. This day, he could tell already, would not be a good one. Another lateness ticked on his card, and the way he felt, eh, this day would be a hot one. But chiefly, there was the study of the Deputy Minister to be grappled with. Christophe fumbled in his pocket, draw out a group of keys, sorted them until he found the one he wanted and bent to unlock the drawers of his wooden desk.

Again he paused to wipe perspiration. Ah, when the war was over there would again be air conditioning in the offices of the Ministry. Such a pleasure it would be then, to arrive at work on a steaming day and perform his duties in the cool air of the machines now standing idle for lack of service and parts, and for lack of power to make them function even if service and parts were available. On such a day, to go home cool and refreshed to Marie-Auedda, on a hoverail not so crowded as they now were, and down a vertiflot. Well, one must wait for peace.

He reached into a locked drawer, removed a brown pasteboard folder and placed it on his desk. From the next desk a voice asked, "Is that the famous report of M. Goncourt, Christophe?"

"The very one," he replied. "When M. the Minister sees this, we are all finished. Deputy Minister Goncourt, Belledor the staff assistant, Madame Bonsard, all of us. You also, Phillipe." Christophe nodded sadly.

"Come now," Phillipe teased. "It is not all that bad. How can it be, Christophe?"

M. Belledor sat for a moment, his eyes fixed on the cover of the report. Then he turned his chair to face Phillipe. He leaned forward. "You do not take me seriously," he said, "but I will tell you what M. Goncourt is proposing. Then you will not think so lightly of it."

Phillipe looked with mock alarm. "Christophe, is the report of the Deputy Minister not marked with a security level? How can you discuss it then?"

"I am sure that you are a spy, Phillipe. Everything you know goes directly to N'Montgomery, of course." He snorted. "You have the same clearance as I or you would not be in your position one hour! Now, do you wish to know what the Deputy Minister has in mind?"—he tapped the folder with the fingertips of one hand—"or do you not?"

The other nodded. "Yes, yes, tell me what he proposes," he said, a supercilious look crossing his face.

Christophe paused. Then, "You know, Phillipe, the manpower demands of the war and the general effect it is having on our economy. We must support not one but three national efforts at once. To fight the enemy we must man our ships with spacemen of every sort—officers, gunners, maintenance crews, boarding brigades, communications men, medical, supply clerks, cooks, everything!"

"Yes, yes," said Phillipe, "we all know that. So what?"

Christophe continued, undisturbed. "To support that direct effort of war requires a whole economy. Spaceship yards to repair battle and supply ships damaged by the enemy and to perform normal maintenance, as well as to build new warcraft to carry the battle to the *blancs* of N'Alabama.

"Weapons manufactories. Ammunition plants. Training and supply bases for our forces. Medical facilities for wounded. Transportation and supply systems. A constant stream of replacements and support. Do you know, Phillipe, there are between six and seven N'Haitians in and out of the planet's military force to support each space soldier actually in combat?"

Phillipe showed impatience. He grunted a bored yes.

"Well then," Christophe went on, "that is still not all. For beneath our military effort and all that goes to support it, N'Haiti must still maintain its own basic economy. We sacrifice such luxuries as the vertiflot and the comfort of cool air in the Ministry, but essential functions must be main-

tained or there will be no economy to support the economy that supports the military!" He placed his hands conclusively on his knees and leaned back, looking triumphantly at the younger man.

"Eh," shrugged Phillipe, "I still say, so what? You only mouth the commonplace. Everyone knows this. Is this the sensitive report of the Deputy Minister? It is the weekly project of the sixth-year school child. Christophe, you disappoint me. Deputy Minister Goncourt disappoints me."

"No, no," interrupted M. Belledor, "you are always so impatient, Phillipe! Now wait. M. Goncourt sets forth the obvious in his report, true enough, but it is necessary as background for the Minister. M. Antoine-Simone is not too clever, do you think?"

Phillipe conceded.

Christophe went on: "N'Haiti must support three complete economies then. M. Goncourt designates these the pure military, the military support, and the civil support economies. Each requires finance, planning, control. Each requires its share of our planet's resources. Most of all, each requires the efforts of the people. A farmer on La Gonave—"

"What has the moon to do with it?" Phillipe interrupted.

Christophe brought his fist into the palm of his hand angrily. "All of N'Haiti has to do with it! Do *not interrupt*! A man who is farming on La Gonave is not working in the factories of Miragoane! A munitions worker in Miragoane is not serving on board the *Toussaint l'Ouverture*! A marine aboard the *Dessalines* is not tending crops on La Gonave!" Panting, M. Belledor slumped back in his swivel chair.

Solemnly his companion said, "The profundity of M. Goncourt does not fail to astound me. Christophe, we are indeed fortunate to be in the department of the Deputy Minister." He leaned forward and slapped Christophe on the shoulder, roaring with laughter. The office turned and stared. Madame Bonsard clucked disapprovingly and jotted a note.

Christophe fumed angrily. Finally he spoke. "Phillipe, you, an employee of the Ministry above all citizens, should have an understanding of the biggest problem of the war. We lack manpower to support three demands at once. The fleet of Grand Admiral Gouede Mazacca suffers terrible losses. So do the cursed *blancs*, but you know the *blancs*, Phillipe, they breed like beasts.

"Gouede Mazacca demands new troops, La Ferriere does not delay to provide them. The pool is dry, Minister Antoine-Simone is called upon. Ah, well, all the strong men of the planet are at work in the war economy. Out they go, off to Grand Admiral Gouede Mazacca on the *Jean Christophe*, off to fight the *blancs*, off to become casualties. But the military support economy cannot be neglected, eh? Ships, weapons, power plants,

ammunition—they must continue to flow! So—where do the workers come from? From the civil economy!

"Have you seen the reports of Governor Faustin, Phillipe?" Christophe went on without waiting for an answer: "He is running the great agricultural stations of La Gonave with old men, women, school children. No wonder food is short. Without a strong civil economy, the war supplies will not long flow. Then . . ." Christophe shrugged.

Phillipe said, "And Deputy Minister Goncourt has a solution?"

Christophe picked up the pasteboard-covered report. "He thinks he has. I think he is perhaps mad."

Obviously interested at last, Phillipe said, "And his plan?"

Christophe leaned back once more, luxuriating in his advantage over the younger man. "You take me seriously at last, eh? Well then, answer me some questions and then I will answer yours."

Phillipe leaned forward. Christophe said, "Do you know who is Dangbe? Ayida-Oueda? Have you heard of Papa Legba, of Ayizan, Tokpodu, Zo, Heviyoso, Kpo, Agone, Gbo?"

Phillipe sat mystified, silent.

"None of them?" Christophe asked. "Not one?" The other shook his head. "Have you never visited the Gran Houmfort Nationale, Phillipe?"

Again, a shake of the head. "Christophe, I do not know what you are speaking about. Those names. But I have visited the Gran Houmfort from time to time. It is the great museum of N'Haiti. What is the relation of all this to the war?"

"Phillipe, Phillipe, ahh." Christophe paused for dramatic effect; a plain man, still he did not mind the moment of suspense, the attention of an audience of even one person.

"Surely, the Gran Houmfort is a museum. Obviously you have not visited the wing devoted to O'Haitian culture. You have never heard of the great *vodus* of O'Haiti, of O'Earth. You have never heard of Gbo, great *vodu* of war, of Heviyoso, *vodu* of storm, of Legba, *vodu* of fertility. And you have never heard of Dangbe, *vodu* lord, king of all.

"Phillipe, you do not know that in O'Haiti the *houmfort* was the shrine of the *vodus*. You never heard of the rites of *vodu*, the sacrifice of the black rooster, the ouanga bag, the danse calinda, the zombie?"

The younger man broke in. "This is madness, Christophe! Does Goncourt think to provide Gouede Mazacca's fleet with crews of *zombies*? He is insane! It is all insane!"

Christophe sat quietly. He waited for the excitement to pass from the other. At last Phillipe sat quietly, also. "Tell me it is not so, Christophe.

The Deputy Minister cannot be so mad. He does not seriously propose this insane magic."

Christophe tapped the pasteboard on his desk slowly. "Yes," he said at last. "Deputy Minister Goncourt believes that he can make the ancient legends real. Not by magic. He calls upon no *vodu* spirits. He works with the Department of Medical Science. He proposes to use resuscitated space casualties from both our own fleet and the enemy's to fill our needs.

"He claims he can do this by implanting a small sea creature found on an undisclosed planet at the base of the cortex of the casualty. And, Phillipe . . ." He gazed directly into the eyes of the other man. ". . . Phillipe, he has initiated a pilot study of this madness. The parasitic creatures are already being harvested."

Christophe leaned back once again. After a few moments, Phillipe turned away, to his own work. Christophe opened the pasteboard folder on his desk, drew a blue pencil from the top drawer, and began marking punctuation and spelling changes for Madame Bonsard, who would mech-write the final version of M. Goncourt's report to Minister Antoine-Simone. Christophe sighed as he wrote, and his mind wandered to the earlier encounter he had had with Yvette Leclerc.

3. *The Bright Sea of N'Yu-Atlanchi*

Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn writhes slowly, drifting supine in the shallow saline fluid that covers and penetrates all of N'Yu-Atlanchi. Her extended limbs, little more than vestigial after forgotten generations of weightlessness, retain still sufficient muscularity to guide Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn from eddy to eddy as the heat-currents and multilunar tides of N'Yu-Atlanchi carry to her endlessly varied sensations. At times, she turns soft, cartilagenous hands, like rudders, directing herself, choosing to be carried by this stream or that, occasionally meeting a current sideways-on, rolling, the alternation of refracted sky and shallow sea-bottom creating a whirling spiral of visual sensation upon which she meditates long after its cessation.

Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn is small for a S'tscha. Her large, flat eyes have seen the chief moon of N'Yu-Atlanchi die three times, the lesser moons no fewer than twice nor more than four score times. Like all S'tscha, she emerged from the womb of the All-Mother a living speck, little more than a blastula devoid of limb, the many nerve endings which now premeate her epidermis then more sparse in distribution and fewer in number.

She does not know how long she spent in the sea-filled, glowing crystalline caverns and grottoes of N'Yu-Atlanchi. She does not know of the seemingly inexhaustible parthenogenetic fertility of the All-Mother. She does not know of the crippled high-speed traveler of metal that bore her distant, giant, human ancestors to N'Yu-Atlanchi.

Certainly Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn does not think of herself as human. It is debatable whether she thinks of herself at all, or whether she thinks at all.

She senses.

Touch, odor, flavor, these are no longer differentiated. The skin of Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn is populated with nerve-endings. She feels through her skin, feels the warmth of NGC 7007 the sun of N'Yu-Atlanchi, feels the comforting buoyancy and saline intimacy of the nutrient waters upon and to an extent within her body at every point. It is, in a sense, very like sexual intercourse, but endless, except as her life will some day end, and without beginning, except as sensation began for Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn at the instant that she quickened, a fatherless zygote, within the womb of the All-Mother in the buried, drowned centermost grotto of N'Yu-Atlanchi.

Her role is confused. Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn is female, at least in the sense, and to the extent, that the offspring of the parthenogenetic All-Mother inherit all their chromosomes from that undeniably female parent. Is this three-centimeter-long child of the All-Mother then a living yoni, somehow inverted, presenting all of the moist, sensitive membrane of its calling passages to the total caress of the universally-penetrating sea? Or is she a living lingam, male though female, enveloped in the perfectly and wholly receptive sea? Her role is confused.

On the chief satellite of N'Yu-Atlanchi, often visible to Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn, a miniscule blemish marks the soil of one small area that would assay an iron content slightly on the high side of normal, were there an assayer present, which there is not. One of the lesser moons of N'Yu-Atlanchi sustains upon its otherwise barren face a machine that is broken and does not function. The machine has been there as long as the iron has been on the greater moon of N'Yu-Atlanchi, but as the lesser moon is without atmosphere the machine has neither rusted, nor corroded, nor been torn by the green fingers of patiently indomitable vegetation, nor been pulverized by rain, nor crushed beneath snow, nor squeezed by ice.

It will not last forever. It is battered daily by photons from NGC 7007 the sun of N'Yu-Atlanchi. Radiation from more distant luminaries pushes it down into the unyielding rock of the lesser satellite of N'Yu-Atlanchi.

It is, really, a race, were a sufficiently patient observer present to appre-

ciate the competition. Perhaps God watches. Perhaps he has placed an illegal bet at the corner bookie shop.

Consider: radiation batters relentlessly at the functionless machine, the relic. Will it pulverize the metal, powder the glass, crush the crystal, demolish the circuits, cause implosion, dismemberment of molecules, disorganization of atoms? Or will the lesser moon of N'Yu-Atlanchi interrupt the slow, relentless process; will the airless satellite draw close to its primary, closer and yet more close until it disintegrates, hurling its dead burden into the sea of N'Yu-Atlanchi, or, perhaps, into orbit?

More competitors in the race. Will meteoroid arrive, make smithereens of the machine before nature removes it from independent being? Will new intelligence arrive, driven by agonized matter, to retrieve the prize? Will NGC 7007 spoil the sport by flaring all to a crisp?

God had best place his wager carefully. It is a perilous race. Think about that. Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn does not. It is debatable that she thinks at all. She senses.

Touch, odor, flavor, these senses are now one. She has no distinguishable nose. Long ago her ancestors discarded nostrils, lungs; their bodies learned to terminate ontogeny at that point which features gill-slits. Long ago, this was even before the All-Mother came to her fruitful rest in the centermost grotto. Given enough time, perhaps between cocktails and dinner on some non-N'Yu-Atlanchian scale, these too were abandoned. The omnipresent sea of saline warmth could provide oxygen as well as protein. Some distant ancestor of Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn had learned to draw total sustenance directly from the enveloping wet.

With that went the mouth also.

Only remained the eyes of the S'tscha, the large, flat eyes placed proportionately far apart on what was once, ancestrally, a face, eyes that, too, were slowly becoming undifferentiated from the surrounding tissue, their photosensitivity becoming distributed, rods and cones appearing now here and there among the crowding nerve-endings that made up the skin of each S'tscha, and ears, the sensitivity remaining still to an extent in vaguely distinguishable spots to either side of the head, but this function too becoming spread, increasingly with each generation, across the surface of the skin of the S'tscha.

Thus the All-Mother, refining her product, or, perhaps, the opposite of refining.

Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn drifts slowly beneath NGC 7007, sensing visually upward. The star visible above her is green, blazing strongly through a sky of yellow. This Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn has seen many times. There are many clouds, yes; the rich sea of N'Yu-Atlanchi is not exempt from

the law. God has decreed that water, bathed in strong sunlight, shall vaporize and ascend sunward. Humbly the waters of N'Yu-Atlanchi obey.

They vaporize, they rise, they recondense, accumulate into clouds. Clouds are not everyday occurrences on N'Yu-Atlanchi, but Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn has seen them many times. She has seen the major satellite die thrice. She has seen, heard, felt/tasted/smelled rain. That is even more unusual on N'Yu-Atlanchi. It is not wholly unknown.

The rain on N'Yu-Atlanchi is fresh. The salts, the proteins, the free amino acids that characterize the sea of N'Yu-Atlanchi do not vaporize with the water; the clouds are pure, the rain is clear. To any S'tscha, rain is life's major peril. Cold it is, vapid, without the warm salinity to which the S'tschai are accustomed from the moment of quickening, without the nourishing impurities which are for the S'tscha life.

Once has Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn known rain thusly. Drifting, caught in the lifelong surrender of her kind to her kindly environ, caught this day beneath a concatenation of clouds, the glare of NGC 7007 obscured, the warming rays interrupted, refracted, diffused, lost, suddenly cold despite the kindly warmth about her, Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn knew something that might have been fear had her nervous system, surely thoroughly developed but so narrowly experienced, held any encoding identifiable as that emotion, or any other than a mindless content.

Then the drops had begun to fall. The water close above the eyes of the S'tscha was altered, its visual function revised from that of a faithfully planar semi-reflector through which the S'tscha viewed equably the calm sky and luminary of her accustomed day. Now the surface flickered, pulsed, broke into innumerable constantly shifting forms.

Concavities appeared, spread, overlapped, flattened; drops of rain created sudden moments of impact; the sound of individual strikings of raindrops as they violated the plane of juncture between sea and atmosphere impinged upon Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn her ears, discrete explosions yielding to a patter, then a roar as the number of drops per surface unit per time unit grew from the discernible to the indeterminable.

Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn her eyes lost their appearance of calm contemplation of the sky as their view was shattered and confused by the close-falling drops. She felt cold, the withdrawal of nurturing comfort at one with the new absence of nourishment in the sea water about her; in a state conceivably identifiable as desperation the S'tscha flailed about the vestigial centimeter-long limbs left her by distant inheritance.

Unthinkingly flitting through the unfamiliarly cold and characterless fluid she spun one hundred eighty degrees about her unrecognized longitudinal axis, her sight whirling away from the darkened and broken sea

surface, distant images spinning too rapidly for identification past h widened flat eyes, her attention arrested at last by the refractile crysta line sea bed she now faced.

Light from NGC 7007 the sun of N'Yu-Atlanchi, green, returned sl color from the dome of N'Yu-Atlanchi, yellow, cloud tone, gray, menac ing, sea coloration, aquamarine tint, rich, brilliant, darkened now by clou and rain, reflected still and refracted also from the multiple surfaces o partially transparent crystal. Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn, accustomed to th sight of light dancing from the crystals of the sea bottom, now, despite th vastly increased multiplicity of apparent sources caused by the increased diffraction of the rain-broken sea surface, grew more calm amidst the shift ing shafts and glares of turquoise, aquamarine, blue, blue-green, yellow, gray; the movements of the limbs of the S'tscha desisted from their frantic quality, subsided to the calm, stabilizing sway more usually their character istic motion.

Still, Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn was imperiled by the growing concentration of chill and flavorless water produced by the continuing downpour of rain. That she thought is a dubious proposition at best; she was only vaguely self-aware, hardly distinguishing her body from her surroundings, her identity from her environment, her sensations from their sources.

That she determined, as the end product of logical process, to flee the menacing new element that altered her bath, that already was dimming her senses and sapping her vitality, is unlikely. Yet, flight was her course. Fluttering her weak and rigid legs to propel herself forward through the hostile environment, turning the tips of her forelimbs, once ancestrally hands, now soft, paddlelike, unmarred by differentiated digits, holding her gaze on the multiplanar refractive sea bottom she moved, seeking a break in the crystalline surface that would yield escape from the rainwater, entry to a lower grotto of the honeycomb crystal that formed the multiple shells and shorings of N'Yu-Atlanchi, that held the warmer, familiar, comforting fluid of Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn her accustomed medium.

This way and that swam the S'tscha Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn, the roar of falling rain assaulting her ears with its manacing fullness, the cold and deprivation of its waters stiffening the weak musculature of her limbs, slowly inhibiting the function of her countless nerve-endings as it replaced the usual warm fluid interpenetrating epidermal tissue, numbing sensors, shorting out neural synapses as messages to the proportionately large central nerve cluster of Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn grew fewer and fewer.

Ahead at last the S'tscha detected the small nonrefractive patch, the dull absence of reverberating crystal light that must indicate an opening through the sea bottom. Energies flagging, senses growing dim, she strug-

gled forward, drew near, drew at last over the small opening. She turned the paddlelike flexible spatulates that tipped her forelimbs to brake her thin forward momentum, hovered momentarily over the small opening, roughly circular, in the crystal floor of the sea.

Beneath she could see more dimly, her eyes adjusted to the light of the uppermost surface of the planet, relatively brilliant as compared to the secondary grotto despite the dimming influence of cloud and falling drops. Hesitating only briefly as if to grasp needed resolution, she reached downward with forelimbs, down toward the sea-bottom opening, reaching as if to embrace the very fluid core of the sphere, then drew back, upward, simultaneously scissoring her legs, pushing against the coldly invading water as against a brace or truss, forcing her body into a position perpendicular to the concave surface of the planet, her head downward, and moving, now, with strokes of her forelimbs pulling downward, of her legs, pushing, moving down from the new cold world of grayness, of hostile unnourishing fresh water, downward toward the relative darkness, the warm and nourishing salinity of the inner grottoes, like a breach delivery reversed, the neonate longing to return to the protective interior darkness, to become unborn, a foetus, clutching itself, globular, inward turned, safe, unaware, untouched, unknowing, unquickened.

She did not lose consciousness. It is debatable that she was conscious at all. She sensed and reacted. As Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn plunged through the bung in the outermost crystalline crust of N'Yu-Atlanchi in flight from the pursuing chill and deprivation of the fresh water her senses were dimming; as she penetrated to deeper levels the warmth and nourishing ingredients of N'Yu-Atlanchi its sea replaced the rainwater, pressing against the S'tscha, shallowly interpenetrating her tissues, restoring, repairing, comforting; the child of the All-Mother grew calm, her sensors returned to full receptivity and acuteness, her musculature to its usual vigor and strength.

Here in the uppermost refractive grotto of the world, soothed by warming moisture, Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn floated, passive, the final kinetic residue of her escape converted now to a gentle horizontal rotation that yielded a slow twirling movement to her body, the images of crystal above and crystal below alternating with broad corridors, sea-filled, crystal floored and crystal roofed, wall-less, infinitely lengthy, stretching in all directions. From the sky descended daylight, filtered first by rare N'Yu-Atlanchian rain clouds, further tinted and diffused by sea-water, then broken, scattered, thrown in violently varying directions by the uppermost crystal layer of the planet, beneath which floated the S'tscha, turning slowly, escaped from the rain.

Through other orifices in the crystal other S'tschai had escaped downward. Those caught by the rare downfall far from bung-holes, those whose reflexive responses to menace had failed them, they now were already returning their chemistry, in dissolution, to the waters, whence it would nourish other children of the All-Mother. Conceivably, borne by the vagaries of currents, blocked or guided as chance might have by the topology of the ptolemaicly layered globe, some salt, some acid, some slowly decomposing organic molecule might reach the deeply buried All-Mother herself, might become absorbed into her fecund protoplasm, might, in course, be born again, a S'tscha renewed, resurrected, reincarnated, immortal.

And the S'tschai of the uppermost grotto, those uncounted neoaquatics accustomed to the glittering lights of sky-refracted crystalline glare above, faceted radiant below, and new S'tschai arriving, nearing the end of their long, leisure-paced migration upward from the grotto of the All-Mother, reaching this last warm ice-cave, short so little of that dumb and uncomprehending flat-visioned sight of the day-star and the night-stars, the major moon and the lesser moons, the home and the graves of unknown collaterals, and the quick refugees Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn she and her fellows, these shared this liquid shell.

Recollection stirred. The grotto, recognized by Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn, she had been here before, an unknown time ago, but long enough for her to see the greater moon die thrice. That had been as she neared the surface of N'Yu-Atlanchi, had neared the end of her own journey to the top of the sea, of the world.

Drifting, sensing, slowly revolving, the lights above and below endlessly alternating before her large eyes, Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn is the unappreciating beneficiary of random occurrence. Floating, her gaze distracted by crystalline flashes, she encounters a small floating creature: longer than it is wide, vaguely cylindrical, quadrapoidal, soft, carrying a head at one end, flat-eyed, almost earless, densely nerved, floating, emblissed, unaware, it is a S'tscha.

The two observe each other. Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn wavers gently her limbs, propels herself unurgently and without positive intent toward her sister. Likewise the other, easing through sea-water, propelled by cartilagenous spatulates, flows vaguely forward. The two approach each other, align themselves to congruence, drift slowly each toward the other, sense softly epidermal contact, the cylindrical torsoes pressing together with a pressure almost inconceivably slight, the legs pressing, gently twining, the forelimbs, first maintaining the positions of the two, then, as body contact becomes increasingly firm, as legs hold to legs, the forelimbs are low-

ered, unaccustomedly, slowly working themselves into the semblance of mutual embrace, holding closer each S'tscha to the other.

Slowly there follows a mitosislike process; the neural cells of each S'tscha divide, polarize, but, meiotically, producing no diploid chromosomes, spreading themselves, developing spiremes, threads piercing cell walls, crossing, sharing, passing coded memories each to the other, two S'tschai share experiences. Clutched in neural union, bathed in nutrient moisture, twin sister S'tschai renew identical heredity, add now identical lives.

To her sister gives Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn her pilgrimage from All-Mother to the sky, her sensations of day-star, night-stars, moons, her quiet days and nights, the coming of clouds, of rain, its results visual, aural, tactile/aromatic/sapid, her return through the bung-hole, her recovery.

To Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn her sister gives her own life, similar, yet adding a sight uncomprehended: a figure, vaguely, vaguely S'tschaoid, resting upright, the ends of its legs planted seemingly on the upperside of the uppermost crusting of N'Yu-Atlanchi, seemingly made neither of such stuff as are S'tschai nor of crystals nor of liquid, perhaps of the stuff of the satellites of N'Yu-Atlanchi, distorted by the sea, twirling, casting about a thing strange, large, flat, of close-placed lines, into the sea, then retrieving it, again, again, now plucking at it, removing, placing in a protuberance upon its trunk, casting again the thing of close-placed lines, then moving off, not swimming as swim S'tschai but upright, balancing somehow on its legs, and beyond the senses of the child of the All-Mother, the sister of Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn.

The spiremes retract, the cell walls are restored, the neural union of the S'tschai ends; forelimbs unbend, legs untwine, slowly the two drift side by side until a stray movement of water pulls one away, they sense each the other still, drift, make small random movements of the limbs, become separated by greater and greater distances, are lost to each the other.

Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn drifts supine beneath the uppermost crystalline crust of N'Yu-Atlanchi, her eyes absorbing sensory data, new memory now stored in her neural center but not analyzed. She neither wonders nor fears nor is pleased. She senses.

She does not seek a bung-hole above or below her but in time she arrives beneath one. Dimly through rich sea-water she sees lights above: night-stars and moons. Vaguely she arches her form closer to the perpendicular, strokes languidly upward, levels again and drifts.

In time rises NGC 7007 the sun of N'Yu-Atlanchi, brightening the sky, reflecting and refracting off sea and crystal. In time, floating supine, Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn senses almost with startlement the strike all about her of

the thing of lines, feels herself drawn, lifted, carried for a moment beyond the waters of N'Yu-Atlanchi. She is flooded for a moment by new and unprecedented data, as of being removed totally from her world. Her senses flash confused messages to her neural center. She hears sounds she has never before heard, sees visions unknown and ununderstood, feels/smells/tastes as never before she has.

All briefly.

She is plunged, uncomprehending, into yet another environment: close, warm, salt-moist, yes, but dark, totally for the first time in the life of Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn dark, and yet with a tang of a new ingredient, a new sensation, and the feeling of other S'tschai about, more S'tschai than she has ever before encountered, but all quiet, and Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn her own senses become less acute, less vivid, and she becomes less aware and she ceases to sense and to react.

4. *Aboard the Starship Theodore Bilbo*

'Namorning, Alquane up, gyrenes up, N'Alabama redinwhite "colors" up the ole pole, sarge up, shine up, fix up, dress up, twenty-thirty push-up, goodnup, oak-hay, time to break the (reasonably) fast. Gyrenes line up, shape up, count off, march off, couterments off, bow down, chow down:

:grits, lard, corn bread, dawntime lightning (a mere drap), little little talk—passamuffins—mm—jug—mm—mm. Cadre here only, hung a many a man over this dawn this mawn and a bleary eye here or there, one enda bencha rutha seems distracted would you say, or ab-etc., thinking mayhap of a Miss MM or maybe futha nutha bench some gyrene shifting his sore ass thinks of Piggy's. Maybe?

Well get it down sarge, get it down, make a plite little belch and grab another something to swag or swig, it's the whole batch down the hatch act and a sniggery smirk at thought of old John Darn last at Piggy's well sloppies is better as none at all old John, none at all, but then why when better stuff is at hand (if you catch).

Follow up that delightful culination with a quick (but non-optional) visit to the old chapel for a dose of God's own. Shall we be epigrammatic and say mass after mess? No, we shall not.

Nonethenever Alquane that lucky ole sun pushing his rays through stained glass winders depicting heart-rending scenes in the Shrine of St. Lurleen McQueen illumine soul-thrilling ranks of congregators in pew, pew, pew as chaplain heaves into view tew, mounts his pulpit (whatever

turns you up) with visible risibles, gazes across gray-clad all spat and polished rows, officers' section shall sit upon thy rite ham, enceeyos upon thy laff and klenz the ole soul.

Sermon today, same subject as usual. Good to know God is on our side. Thanks, chap old chap, crikies, think of going to war with Him in the ranks of *them*. How many divisions does he have, buy the weigh? Sing a few good old hymns (officers melody, eeyems harmony) like *The Old Ragged Cross* or *I'm Dreaming of a White Kiss, Miss*. Dear chaplain does a couple of costume changes to melloharp and drums, comes out for his big finale in golden robes and pistol belt to introduce—Singing and Dancing His Way into Your Hearts—the ajjerant bird.

Bird stanz up to deliver orders of the day. Ptowie! Thus—This old fort this campa spacers gotcher marching orders here, See-O says to thank the cadre for a splennid job-well-dun, finest bunch of gyrene shavetails ever seed, pride utha fleed, mission over, staff reduced, here you go boys yule delighted to get back into the mysterious interstellar void and slap some punks for the glory of the N'Alabamian Weigh-a-life.—

—Waddeezay, wa-wa-wa?—axes crabby old esseffsee (reserve warrant O 'nee doesn't let anybody forget same you can bet) setting aside our sarge.

Our sarge snarls—Deep, man, we-all gonna gettanutha hotpot on the old bentfin boomer.—

—Oh,—exudes crabby. Not to go uncomprehended he repeats—oh.—

—Y'all find your list of duty stations posted on the company (just as one might anticipate, hath one but possession of the correct background) bulletin board right after Divine Observances,—sez the bird.

—Dis,—beloved chaplain commands unto his flock—missed!—

Cleansed of soul, lightened of heart, filled in the head with thoughts of God and Planet, our old sarge he looks at him's orders on the bulletin (right!) board after kirkey, seize a long row of names, ranks, serial twiddles, along upside of each bespeach a ship of the Crimsy Wabe, new duty stations for most of cadre, ship names m sine meants for each gyrene O m NCO lissed, restum must be stain on as cadre, 'll maintain post facilities pending renoola OCS program.

Our old sarge he looks, maybe not quite with twenny-twennies (no sprig chicken he no more but he keeps in good shape rest assured) but he gets buy with spectacles at leased. There's old friend Gordon Lester Wallace III gonna be a gunnery sarge upboard the old *James O. Eastland*. Our sarge once served upboard the *Jimmie-O*. He muses of nice times there. Yas. Goody, Gordie. Fun for fine. Other cadre buddies here and there doing this and that now and then. Freddie now, he's to be seen on the list

nowhere, must be stain on as permy party. Owell, he'll blast no blacks that way, but it's a soft berth.

Sarge himself? Where's he to go? He won't be on the *Jimmie-O*. No. Sarge looks on list, fines him's name at last. Zippidie-doo-dah, sarge, you gonna be a weapons squad leader upboard the starship *Theodore Bilbo*.

[Aside: howcame smenny N'Ala ships barin' O'Missa names? Ponder that.]

Welletsee, welletsee, who is gonna be in that squad? And who is gonna be the platoon sarge? Squad leader worth his stripes, he *cares*.

Our old sarge he heads for the *TeeBee* stoppin by cadre barracks only long enough to pack a couple parsimonious suitcases [suitcases? well, call em duffles ef you like to] for space duty, grab a military gyrocar, fling him's *Bilbo* bags in, scuddle uccer tarmac to the *TeeBee*, cline upboard m finiz berth. Spacerine hammock's none 2 comphy, one must admit, but like rubbery jello, it'll do.

Sarge stoze gear, check sin, finezeez first man in from his section and dis*TeeBeez* to wait for others. He paces tarmac, gazes back m up at the *Theodore Bilbo* she's a fine figure of a ship. Tall, rounded shaft glisters in Alquane's pretty morning rays. Up at the top and instrument ring girds fuselage and atop that the conical command module replete with tippy-top cat's-iris command viewing station. Master ruby laser station there too, firing stream of hot singeing light to bathe foe when *TeeBee's* aroused.

Crew quarters in the shaft, gun modules in the skin, and down at ground level mounted to the base of the shaft two giant globular fuel modules glistering m gleaming in the warming rays of happy old Alquane light, their contents of supercold liquified compmatter bubbling over surplus through safely valves, it hisses and steams in the Alquane warmth looking like clusters and curlicues of angel's hair around the globular modules and the base of the old *Theodore B.*

Finally sarge's squad trickle in. Nice boys, nice all, from fine ole pure-blooded sum fammies O yes. Sweet blond hand laserman from Echola, articifer's mate from Eutaw, couple pincer-axemen from Coxheath m Salitpa, glow-mortarman from Gasque and a sissant sarge outen Suggsville Center. A good crew all. That's important.

Our old sarge, he checked round summat, found altogether a fine bunch in that platoon of his except maybe one or two. Didn't like a zaprifle squad sarge alongside nohow. Fella name of Raff Slocomb. Knew him from cadre. Basserd wunt drink around, wunt whore around, *mean* SOB if you follow. Gotta watch for Slocomb.

Not too sure of the platoon leader too. Bad situ that, a good leader, he got confidence in the next layer too. An the next leader (platoon sarge was

an ok, thank you) bein a shavetail just outen OCS. One of our boys no less sarge ponders (very thinky today wouldn't you say?), and he didn't like to toe too much for me. Mmm. Now he's platoon shavetail. Shavetail Snarp. Oak hay, will get on somehow.

Our sarge he lines up his men m inspexem good. Then alla board upside the starship *Theodore Bilbo*. Everybody checked in, gear stowed, strapped down, ready for deepspace.

Supercold, superdense fuel flows from those big hairy balls of the starship *Theodore Bilbo* into painboxes. Molecules are energized, atoms are squeezed, electrons are sheared from their primaries, crammed m jammed m slammed, whammed m bammed, shaped, scraped, raped, nuclei ripped apart, smashed into one another, forces whirling and driving madly, something becoming something else, something less, part of that something becoming nothing, energy produced, screams out propulsion tubes crying to the echoing deaf cosmos for relief, release, dying in an attenuating blaze of hyperenergized exhaust, thrusting the *Bilbo* away from N'Alabama into the dark vacuum that surrounds Alquane, thrusting, heaving, hurling her upwards.

Theodore Bilbo heads outward, outward, driven along the planetary plane away from Alquane, shuddering, screaming as she goes.

This is propulsion by agonized matter.

On O'Earth furgem Jewrabs rule the world. Descendants of the citizens of that long-ago Federated Republic of Israel and Jordan ["Dinner in the diner, nothing could be finer, than to have your lox m eggs in Palestine," er, it was a big tourist attraction, that] that grew into a Pan-Semitic Empire, that Neo-Shem that spread and conquered and took. Growing population, *lebensraum* the Jewrabs echoed some forgotten hack politico of earlier times.

Great powers to stop 'em? Who?

The former United States of, uhh, where was that? Well, anyway, they quarreled too much with the old CCCP. Almost blue us *all* up. Happily the old Third Force powers woolen stand 4 that, disbanded them mothers back into independent units. Nation of Iowa, say, inn't rilly 2 scarifying. Nor, oh, Mountain Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast.

Czecho you can bet slovakia sure breathed easlier. Also Iceland. Who's afraid of the big bad Georgians (Murrican *or* Sophie's wet)? Bunchezza farmers both.

Rest easy for a while. Neo-classical Cathay no problem; Innier too busy feeding starving millions for far'n ventures; Japan's new motto "Make money not enemies." Alla little guys rested easy for a while. Then the furgem Jewrabs took over. O'Earth, ta-ta.

Nameanwhile, howzabout colony worlds? Agonized matter goes fas
No, you don't dig, man. Like, *fast.*

Like, think of what fast means to you. Now pretend that means *slow*
NOW what's fast mean? Oak hay? Now, *that's* slow. *Now* what's fast? Yo
still there? Still following? Oak hay, now you have some idea of what's ago
nized matter driven spaceships fast.

So: colony worlds. Nation can't feed its people, can't pave its streets
can't school its kids, can't medicate its sickies, can't solve its problems . .
can always do the prestige things. Once upon a time, could have a jet air
line. Once upon a *time* could have nukie-bombs. Now: everybody who's
anybody, he got agonized matter driven spaceships. He got ships, what's
he got next? Right! He got worlds.

So we got: N'Afghanistan, N'Albania, N'Andorra, N'Argentina, N'Australia, N'Austria, N'Belgium, N'Bhutan, N'Bolivia, N'Brazil, N'Bulgaria, N'Burma . . . yuwanna be bored, read an atlas. Also, we got N'Alabama, N'Alaska, N'Arizona, N'Arkansas and 49 more.

Also we got worlds colonized by religious nuts, diet faddists, hobbyists, political fanatics, sado-masochists, alcoholics, lotus-eaters and a few hundred other kinds of loonies. *Also* we had a few worlds colonized by homosexuals of both types, but they didn't breed true in captivity and they died out.

Also we got colony worlds carrying on the electromagnanimous traditions of their ancestors including their loyalties and their hatreds.

And when the furgem Jewrabs finally take over poor O'Earth en its tirely, them colony worlds is left on their own. *With* agonized matter driven fast spaceships. So N'Alabama hates N'Haiti?

Our old sarge is on his way to war raght now!

5. *Into the Exoneurobiology Section*

"'M. Goncourt, we cannot obtain the technical and fiscal support required to effectuate specified mission parameters!' *Merde!*" shouted Goncourt, pounding his fist on the grimy wooden desk top. "Nobody can get the support he needs, Trudeau! You know it and I know it. We're functioning in a bureaucracy and the trick is to do your job without the official backing you need. *I* give you my support and I'm your chief. I don't want to hear that officialese double-talk. Let's save that for Antoine-Simone and the rest of the clods upstairs. Let's speak plainly to each other."

Trudeau winced at Goncourt's outburst.

Goncourt said, "Well?"

Trudeau said, "I'm sorry, sir. I read and write so many tech reports that I'm afraid I'm beginning to talk like one. I take it you want it straight."

Goncourt grunted an affirmative. "I want a straight report on your specimen, and it had better be good. Manpower is breathing down Antoine-Simone's neck, and he has to produce on this boondoggle or he's in bad, bad trouble, eh? That means *we* had better produce or we're *all* going to find out what the far side of La Gonave looks like."

Trudeau gestured with his brown hands to express his thoughts. "The specimen seems to be operating properly. The control organism has been implanted in a fully thawed composite cadaver. Healing is taking place at an encouraging rate. I think I can get a response to aural stimuli now."

Goncourt rose from behind his desk, took his subordinate by the arm and propelled him through the doorway of the office. "Good! Let us see what wonder you have wrought, Trudeau. We may yet come out on top of this thing."

The two officials passed Goncourt's secretary, marched down drab corridors past frosted-glass lab windows and around corners. They paused before a door marked Exoneurobiology. Trudeau reached over and opened the door and they entered.

"Before viewing the specimen, M. Goncourt, I suggest that we view a film of the surgical procedures already followed." Trudeau rolled a screen down one wall, flicked a switch and the screen began to flicker. On it appeared an operating theater and surgical team. A rolling pallet was brought into the room, a sheet-covered form lifted from it onto an operating table. Throughout the scene the viewing room remained silent. When the sheet was drawn back a cadaver was revealed. The left arm and shoulder and half of the chest were missing, a jagged outline indicating the place where the body had been ripped apart.

Now the camera cut to the doorway of the room, showing another cart. As it was wheeled into position the scene cut back to the overhead view. The body already on the table now showed a clean edge in place of the former rags of flesh marking the extent of its wounds. "This is later, of course," Trudeau said. "The procedure takes several hours at present. That is one of the drawbacks that we hope to overcome with mass techniques."

Goncourt reached into a pocket in his sagging jacket, drew out a small pipe and charged it. "I want to see this fully," he said. Trudeau struck a match for him. Through blue-gray clouds the image continued to change.

"The second cadaver has been prepared as you see," said Trudeau. "The skin is contoured to match the extent of the first cadaver, with sufficient overlap to promote rapid growth. Internal organs are undivided—each is

taken fully from one subject or the other." On the screen the two partial cadavers had been fitted together like parts of a jigsaw puzzle. Surgeons were adjusting bones, stitching nerve and muscle connections, attaching blood vessels like plumbers matching water supplies. The camera cut, cut, indicating repeated time lapses.

Finally the obvious chief surgeon waved two assistants to the task of suturing the skin of the massive pseudo-incision. After a few more minutes the screen became blank and Trudeau flicked on the room lights.

"Very well," Goncourt said, "a clever piece of surgery, a logical extension, however, of standard techniques."

"But the difference," Trudeau exclaimed, "the difference is that we are not merely moving a particular organ from a donor to a patient. We are actually combining parts of two nonviable cadavers to produce a complete individual."

"And he will live? He will function? Will this new patchwork man you have created be able to perform military duties? This is not an academic research grant, you know. We are supposed to contribute to the manpower problem, to the war effort."

Trudeau stood and looked Goncourt in the face. Goncourt's eyes were fixed on the bowl of his small pipe, which had gone out and which he was trying to puff back into life.

Trudeau said, "In the case of space casualties, this surgery is insufficient. When they are wounded in battle, when they are mortally wounded, the wall of the ship and the protection of their space suits both violated, the sudden vacuum and absolute cold produces a double effect."

Trudeau looked again at Goncourt. He had got his pipe going again, was looking into his subordinate's face with apparent rapt attention. Trudeau went on:

"The sudden physiological effects are terrific. At zero-pressure the lungs are instantly exhausted. Vomiting and evacuation occur. The bladder empties. There is danger of damage to the eyes, ear drums, blood vessels, all pressure-sensitive organs.

"But simultaneously the body is plunged toward absolute zero. In vacuum there is of course no conduction cooling, but radiant dissipation occurs at a fantastic rate. Even before pressure damage occurs, the body is quick-frozen. That is how we can obtain cadavers in such good condition."

Trudeau stopped speaking as Goncourt waved him to silence.

Goncourt said, "All very well, but what of the central nervous system? Can the revived cadaver function?"

"Not independently. The shock of death does something to the individ-

ual—we do not fully understand it, although we have tried attaching graphic readout devices to various CNS points in subjects and obtained astonishing results. They are apparently conscious of sensory input and probably capable of essentially normal mentation, but no voluntary functions take place.

"For this reason we have experimented with the creatures from NGC 7007. They seem to have evolved extremely complex and sensitive nervous systems, widely distributed generalized sensors, and yet to be without will or resistance. Also, they are small enough to be implanted at the base of the brain. They acclimate quickly, attaching filaments into the spinal column and brain. The bloodstream provides nourishment.

"Because these organisms are constructed as they are, they can be used as master controls for the subjects. By implanting one in a subject's skull, we can revive him and use him as a quasi-automaton for military or industrial duty."

"A quasi-automaton," Goncourt repeated. "Or a zombie." Goncourt sucked futilely at his pipe, knocked out its dead ashes and returned it to his pocket. He rose from his chair, said, "Very well, now let us see this laboratory wonder of yours."

In the next room the patchwork man lay on a hospital bed, breathing slowly. Clad only in pajama pants, the body showed its livid scar from neck to sternum, turning a neat ninety degrees to disappear behind the rib-cage. The flesh of the attached arm and shoulder was a different shade of brown from that of the rest of the body. From the temple of the still man an electrode fed a thin wire leading to a communication interface. A small computer, fed through the interface, controlled a graphic display screen, its surface a neutral green-gray across which moved sluggish waves of varying density.

At the footsteps of the two men the figure lying on the bed opened its eyes. The display screen flickered. On it appeared the forms of Goncourt and Trudeau. They were approaching the viewpoint from across a rolled-down bedsheet. Goncourt stopped, placed his arm in front of Trudeau to stop him. In the screen the figures seemed to advance an additional fraction of a step. The image fragmented, shuddered back into form to show them standing as they were.

"You see," Trudeau said.

From an audio device Trudeau's voice distortedly repeated, "You see . . ."

Trudeau stopped speaking. The device paused, then repeated a higher-pitched, "You see." Higher, "You see." Higher, "You see, you see—" Trudeau took quick steps, switched off the audio output.

"You see," he said again, "whatever the subject views or hears, we can read back out through the devices. We have a feedback problem with the audio, although there is no problem if we move the speaker to another room.

"At any rate," he continued, "sensory functioning is just the half of our achievement. Watch this."

He stood close by the hospital bed. "Raise your hand," he commanded the figure on the bed. It raised a hand. "Sit up!" The thing on the bed slid its legs over the edge of the mattress, pushed its torso upright with unmatched hands, waited.

"Stand," Trudeau said. The thing pushed itself off the bed, stood swaying beside it. On the graphic screen Goncourt could see himself, Trudeau, the room shifting back and forth as the dead-alive eyes moved.

"Enough," said Goncourt.

"Down," Trudeau commanded. Clumsily, the thing folded itself back onto the bed, guided by Trudeau's hands. When it was again supine the screen showed the ceiling of the room momentarily, then went back to gray-green as the eyelids slid shut.

Walking back to his own office, Goncourt said to Trudeau, "Very impressive. I'll have to strip someone else to do it, but I will get you some people and some money."

"Thank you," Trudeau said. "I'm sure this thing will work, sir."

"I'm sure it will," Goncourt replied. Completing the trip to his office alone, Goncourt again drew the pipe from his pocket.

6. *Into the Great Hall*

Flip calendar pages.

Things happen.

Gordon Lester Wallace III (a sarge himself, you know) scuffs red dust dirt dragging drearily drawn-faced outen the orderly office. —Okay, buddy,—he says to topper,—see you later.—

Gordie-boy m iz pal Adam A. Aiken amble crossen reddish dusty sward of Fort Sealy Mae, Letohatchie Township, Independent Planet of N'Alabama, Eugene Youngerman, Governor, ambling aimlessly around toward the NCO Club, kickin pebbles, spittin casionally and hummin under their respective breaths the Fort Sealy Mae strictly unofficial alma mater.

Adam, he sed—Gord, wappenta *Jimmie O*? Wuntcha poseta join the star fleet, go knock hell outen them nigra pigs on N'Haiti?—

Gord, he sed—Wuhmm—or approximately that, pickin up the taciturn speech habits of a certain friend of his who shall remain nameless (seen as how he's been that to this point).

Gord, hez not sech a bad gyrene you know, ef you like gyrenes, ef you don't then close yer eyes for a while and mebbe hill go away. With Adam A. Aiken. Least ways, Gordie been pickin up some of the speech patterns of his buddy that other guy and he don't say so much at first but Adam he persists—Well, Gordie, well? Off you go, now you're back, wappen? Big space battle? Ja kill any nigras? Ja getta see N'Haiti? Ja getta fuck any nigra broads?—

Gord, hez got that other guy's tendencies now but he don *persist.* —Wuhmm—that was a good answer but now Gord, he gives in, that's iz weakness, he gives in and he sez—Yeh, we went up, yeh the *Jimmie O,* and the rest, we seen some nigra ships, we seen some and we zapped some. They zapped us. Wir back.—

Pretty good, Gordon Lester Wallace III. Not as good as that other fellow would do, but good.

Gord stops walkin and looks at the dirt (some grass too, some grass, not enough to keep a mowing crew busy much of the year but you know how manpower is on a gyrene post, all those guys around to keep busy and not much to do so maybe the topper senzem out to mow the dirt—you get on a dirt-mowing detail you think it's senseless never mind, just mow and keep your mouth quiet about it).

Gord don't say no more right now.

Adam A. Aiken he sez—We make out *bad,* Gord?—

Gord he don't answer but take a look in his face now, look in his eyes they don't look so great.

Now Adam he presses, very very deftly.—Hah?—he sez.

Gord, he sez—It was pretty bad, Adam, I think we lost. Least, we broke off and come home. M now Ole Gene he called in all the friendly planets for that palaver over to Leto. You pull that guard detail too?—

Adam sez yez.

They sprawl up the steps of the NCO Club and smarmily float inside the screen doors, find a table and set down.—Flipia 4 a Stonewall—sez Adam. Out of his grays comes a fine anglo-saxon-blooded hand holding a fifty-boll piece. He flips it in the air, it lands on the table top with a depressing clunk m spins a couple times there, flops over with a boll a cotton m a supered numeral 50 up.

Gordy triziz luck, gets a smiling portrait of some olden time fart lookin up and goes to buy two foamies.

Good many foamies later, Gord m Adam they float smarmily back out through the doors of the NCO Club. One um belches m neither's sure which it was.

Two good purebred surn N'Alabamian spacerine corps nonconditioned officers stumble m clutch at one another back to barracks and into sacks.

Whichever one belched before, t'other one does now so they even. That's good, nobody ahead nobody behind.

Lights off, eyes closed, snores m wheezes m N'Alabama whirls about that old axis.

Clock hands spin.

Alquane zaps brightness through screened stapaglass windows Gordon needs no wakener bettern Alquane. He gets everybody up & eaten their breakfast & back to barracks & spat & polished & into pressed new grays & outside & assembled & lined up & counted off & dressed right & marched around & interposition & reported in.

Captain Cal Koberly commanding, everybody onto the bus & they head down the red rut road, gyros twirlin, into Leto.

Letohatchie Town Hall, meeting place of the interplanetary conference. Wow! Neo-neoclassic architecture, gabled & porticoed, columned & terraced & stepped, & in front a (would you believe this, it's a test) Confederated Worm-morayeel, some old bearded jackass ridin an old hoarse carrying an old flag into some old battle on some old planet who knows where or what for?

N'Alabama spacerines line up making an honor guard, double ranks facing one another (sheee-*eeet* lookit that ugly bassur across from Gord!) all in fine old traditional grays with glistry brass buttons & a crowd of rednecked townies (see that fat old fellow follow a filly fondly facing for a feelup) held back by town *po*-leese.

Town *po*-leese, madgin that! White crash helmets m glistry green oneway eyemurrs, chin straps so you can't swipt that old pretty helmet from that old, that pretty *po*-leese boy. Sideburns m black leather jackets with studs spellin out patriotic mottoes (Rise Agin! No mongrelization! ((That'n barely fits.)) Never! Lawnorder! . . . and other patriotic slogans) silver studs for troopers brass for sarges gold for brass.

Tite pants, real real tite & big shiny boots, flying gloves & billy clubs & cans of insect repellant (or *some*thing). Why, those boys can't even move without creaking.

Well cops to keep the redneck townies (in their civvies & a large but expectable proportion of plainbutton warsurp grays) offen the gyrenes and

the gyrenes to keep whoever in hell offen the backs of the official plenipotentiary ambassadorial representatives of the *friendly* planets.

First delegation rolls up in a siren-howlin jeescout gyrocar, red lights flashin, two-way radio cracklin & that jeescout slews round in the red dirt tween the Worm-morayeel & the Town Hall & the ambassador de-mounts. Hez tall & pale wearn white flannel civvies & a broad-brim planter's hat & he waves t'the gyrenes & the town cops & the redneck townies & he starts up the steps follerd by couple flunkies dressed alike unto him & carryin a briefcase & some other stuff & scurryin about in his dust & up the steps they start 2.

Halfway up Town Hall doors open & out comes Mayor Milburn Mitchum & a couple *his* flunkies looking summat flustered & Mayor he dances delightingly down the steps & seizes thambassador by the hand & turnin around he links up his arms like he prolly saw someone do it oncet in some ole newsclip & heen thambassador clompin up the ole steps & in the doors & outen sight jes quick enough as the ole jeescout soops off through red dirt dust (don't they never think of them poor honor guards standing there stranglin?) along comes another siren-blastin light-blinkin howler-hootin hooter-howlin jeescout with another ambassador & a couple more flunkies & it just keeps *up* like that, poor honor guards, poor town cops, seemin to be like all *morning* till everybody's there in the Leto Town Hall there near unto the Confederated Worm-morayeel (unless you deciden you wunt *bleeve* that, it's your option, buddy) & then something else happens.

Firstall, Gord & t'other honor guards, they haven seed no sine nor cosine of their *own* pure sum N'Alabamian planetary delegation septin for ole Mayor Milburn Mitchum m shee-*eet* who pays any tention to *him* anyhow. Muss be they own delegation may been snuck in the back door r summin. Whose there, secastate, secawar, secacom, who knows mayen the Governor hisself (not so as to mention mayn't been some old senator from Talladega or someplace).

Let ole Gord wonder about that, you, now, you just relax & follow along, okay?

Come on!

Last official plenipotentiary ambassadorial representative delegation piles outen dust-churnin jeescout gyrocar (see that arready, right?) & marches up steps of Town Hall ambassador arm-narm with Mayor Milburn Mitchum & into the Town Hall & the twin ranks of gray-uniformed shiny-brassed spacerine honor guards starten to peel off from the farthest end two steps forward right angle turn & marchen to the old Letohatchie Town Hall themselves marchin now in a double line splittin at the base of the

Confederated Worm-morayeel (maybe it's just a big outdoor garbage bin ef you'd ruther bleeve that) & up the old Town Hall steps to the double doors & some civvy suburbs flunky opennin the doors form & they marchen right into the Hall & into the Great Hall meetin chamber & range theirselfs around the room (as rehearsed—you weren't thar) and standin at pray rest as honor guards (not to mention skeweritty) durin the meeting itsel.

Which is very handy for Gordon Lester Wallace III ef he cares to hear what happens at the meeting, which who knows whether he does or not, hes just a spacerine sarge doin his duty as he seen it, right? But maybe hez interested anyhow.

There's a speaker's table in the front & there's a man settin in't & a couple flunkies around him & facing the speaker's table's a bunch of leetle tables & chairs & things like that & every one's got somebody settin in't & they're all buzzin & burbling around & everybody looken pretty grim spitin' a casional laugh hearn there & each leetle table gotten a pitcher ont fulla *some*thing & some glasses & there being a big one on the speaker's table & a glass for the fella settin there & some for *his* flunkies & the poor spacerine honor guards standing around the room, *they* dryeran all *hell* & nobody gives them no drinks but then who's this meeting 4, the meeters or the greeters?

Fat florid-faced fella at the main place he standen up now & he leanin ford close to a amplifier microphone inconspicuous stuck in fronna his place & he sez firstoff—Ahem!—

Or summin like that. Not really *Ahem,* no, but more of a throat-clear m call torder he'da done better rappen a gavel only nobody brought one (a head will roll for that as if an excuse were needed) so he says instead, approximately at least,—Ahem!—

Everybody looken up, & he sayin—Arr, weccum to N'Alabama & weccum t'Leto, a ben Eugene Youngerman, Governor this planet, & am dlited twelcome you.—

Polite hums and humphs.

—A hopen yall ben enjoin the hospitality, traditional surn hospitality, of N'Alabama m this lovely town of Letohatchie, hopen yall found our commodations satisfactory, little presents to your liking, bedmates cozy & friendly and alla that.—

Polite humphs and hums.

—Now we got serious business to transact. You all know the glorious past history of our peoples, fine surn traditions & practices of the past. No need to remind you of fine glorious past of our ancestors on O'Earth before the furgem Jewrab takeover.—

(No need but he reminded them for a longish while. Well.)

—What we asked everybody here to talk about is this little problem we got with, uh, them black bassurds, uh, N'Haiti. Now any fool knows a white man can lick a nigra in a fair fight, of course, it's natural. Innate superiority. We all learn that from first grade onward. Even O'Earth sociologists knew that. Pahneers like Audey Shooey, Henny Gart, Jawny Kimball, they knew that the human race was the highest creation of nature and that the purebred white man was the highest form of humanity.

—Now we got this little problem going with N'Haiti, & I can well imagine how some of you—Ole Guv Youngerman, he looken around to see who's pain attention & who's more intersted in studyin his fingernails—how some of you—Ole Guv resumes—matt wonder how come we can't smash them nigra brutes with proven superiority of our kind.—

He stops for a smallish swig (depending on your measuring cup of course) of that nice fluid from the jug, looks around, ambassador from N'Missa seems to be asleep, ambassadors from N'Transvaal plane some kind of under-the-table hands-game with the ambassador from N'Maddoxia, ambassador from N'Eensmyth maybe pain attention or maybe just staring abstructionously ahead. Ole Guv, he shaken a mane of white hair (worth many a vote, that, long hair bein okay if it's white one might guess) an resumes (or might we say reresumes):

—Way, lookitit like so: now no one would argue that a man in't superior to a varmint, whetherts a snarlin mean cuayo-peen biggerna plow-horse or a teeny varse. But a cuayo-peen, he gettin a man outen the open, he'll rip him up but good with his tushes & his spines. Or a varse, you get some varse in*side* you, you might be a goner too. That don't make no cuayo-peen nor no varse the equal of a man, but an inferior order a creation can be given special parz to overcome a superior order a creation.

—Now these nigras, you know no nigra never made nothing worthwhile in all of history, not on O'Earth, no, old Jawny proved that sentries ago, nor noplace else neither. Just nature's mistake, tryin out ideas, how to make something superior to the beasts of the field, old nature messed up once with the black man then got it right on the second try.

—But nigras, they got a natural instinct to kill & destroy, and I'll be perfectly frank with yall,—Ole Guv, he looken almost fit to cry now—we taken a thorough *whompin* in this war, and unless yall willing to see a sovereign planet of your own flesh and blood, a world of pureblooded surn white manhood, taken a whipping from a bunch of flat-nosed woolly-haired black nigra *savages* . . .—

Ole Guv, he flailin his hands now but he still in control & he pauses dramatically to let that last word sink in,— . . . yall *have* to give us some help. Now that's all there is to it.—

That's no shit, that's his bit, he done spoke and a down he sit.

Well how long you wanter hang around some dumb-ass diplomatic conference listening to speeches? You can guess what happenin after that. Alla them ole ambassadors, they expressin sympathy for the sacred blood cause of the independent planet of N'Alabama, maken speeches all day long about solidarity and Them Nigras Cain't Be Permitted to Get Away with It.

But the ambassador from N'Missa, he say (summat sheepishlike)—Yall know we with you one hunnerd per cent, Gene, but we get most of our heavy machine tools from N'Ghana. *They* stain outen this war, *we* stain outen it & we get along fine, but if *we* gettin inter it, then *they* gettin inter it, *you* no better off as before and *we* in bad trouble.—He go on like that for quite a while, but you gettin the message by now no doubt.

Ambassador from N'Transvaal, he rise in place, teetern a bit (that jug in front of his table been pretty down by now) and he say summin like this:—You cause is one of destiny, Governor Youngerman, and the white surn-blooded people of your planet have the unquestioning and unlimited support of the white bore-blooded people of N'Transvaal. As you know we haven a little problem of our own in gettin on with N'Kaffirstan. Now nothin we can't handle ourselves, understand. Ole Chaka CVII he a markable smart man for a nigra & we get along all right. And you know ole N'Kaffirstan, they happen to have the biggest & fastest space fleet in the entire N'Afrikaans sector.

—But I'll tell you the honest truth, Governor Youngerman, wud really rather not tread on ole Chaka's sensitive toes. Besides, now, we haven full faith and confidence in the ability of N'Alabama, proud, free m white as she is, to hole her banner unstained & her purity unmixed.

—A thank you.—And he sitten down and everybody kind of looken at him and applaud a teeny bit, and then looken at Ole Gene Youngerman and blushen a teeny bit and then the room getten to be pretty quiet once again.

Ole Gene, he don't give up but all he gets from anybody is expressions of solidarity (how much JD sippin quality will *that* buy you?) & maybe a half-headed pledge of some financial credits, which are nice but that's not what Gene was really tryen 4.

Well they marchen back out past the Confederated Worm-Morayeel (or garbage bin, whichever you prefer to believe . . . if you don't like either, how about a bicycle rack?) & gettin back into their jeescout gyrocars & Gord-3 & the rest of the gray-uniformed brass-buttoned spat & polished up honor guards, including their commander Captain Cal Koberly (soon

to be lieutenant) and GLW's pal Adam Aiken, they marchen back to Fort Sealy Mae bus & out to the fort & take the night off boys.

Gordon Lester Wallace III m Adam A. Aiken stain grays, they two bentfin boomers burnished, Gord haven a new hotspot on his boomer courtesy *James O. Eastland's* recent (albeit unhappy) encounter with nigra spacefleet; they climb into Gord's gyro & head down that beloved ole red rut road to Leto, past familiar places, seen familiar faces, parken in the street where the elite meet t'eat (or EAT, that's near the B A R the longer-recollected set will recall). Gord puts a chumly arm around A. A. Aiken's gray-covered shoulders m takes him up that certain staircase & they get t'the dirtyfrosted doorway Gord winks conspiratorily at Adam & goes:

:a-rap-a-tap-tap, a-rap-a-tap-tap, tap-tatty-rap-rap, rappy-tappy-tap:

:or something like that. Anyway, it don't really matter none because nothing happens. He repeats the tarradiddle-de-de survural thymes, summat as he recalls his "erstwhile guru" (heh!) and friend, our ole sarge, having done, but is it a false recollection? Is it some smuggled half-bole dreadful Gord read behind the barn manly years ago rising t'cloud his mind with memories of unoccurred experiences? Leave us not spectorate on that subject too much.

Adam doubting, Gordon Lester he attempts to laugh it all off, maken a fist and on the wooden frame of the door pounden:

:ker-whumph:

(twicet)

:m footsteps inside, door opening a crack (chained) m thoo the crack peeren out a face, not holy unfamiliar, fat, cornsilky colored hair pasted flat to forehead wid perspiration, huffin in his plainbutton warsurp sweat-stained grays,—What can I do to be of service to you two obviously fine gentle, uh,—his eyes flicker down Gord, across at shuhite, up Adam A., lite on A's face, smiles, cuts horizontally to Gordon's mug, m he completes syncopated word—men?—

Gord speaking:—Wanna show my buddy here your fine floor show, haven't seen Miss Merriass Markham in a long while, off in space fighten nigras, now I'm back . . .—Gord does rattle.

Blond feller:—I'm really sorry, sir, I don't know you and this is a private club.—

Gord:—Whadaya, etc.—

BF: (in essence)—Amscray before I call the uzzfay, oysbay!—

Adam A. Aiken: (not in these words)—Let's blow, Gord.—

Gord gives assent grumpily & down the creakies they creak.

Adam:—Howzabout a visita Piggy Peggy's Pussy Parlor, GL?—

So they do, picking respective ways through crapped-up broken side-

walk & crossen rotten busted streets beneath busted streetlights (Letohatchie has *not* been bombed). Outsiden the good ole 4P Gord sees that same ole Letohatchie town John Dam plain with his can of insect repellant (or whatever), leaning as usual against a (n even nonfunctional) lamppost.

Inside, G&A are greeted by Piggy herself in finest old tradition of surn hospitality.

—Mighty busy night, boys, alla these visiting firemen in town for the big meet over ta Town Hall,—Peggy sayen, fixin her little-girl blonde curls (they been slippin all around her face as she talks, noddin her head continually)—but we aim to please. What's your pleasure, boys or girls, S or M, plain or fancy, twosomes or whosomes, now or later, lesser or greater, front or back, top or bottom, bed or board, anal oral or genital, thin or fat, this or that, etc.—

(Peggy, she always tries to provide her customers with what they want, that's her formula for a successful retail enterprise.)

Gord, aside to Ad—Leave this to me, Ad.—To Piggy Peggy:—Just a dark room, PP, a soft floor, open the door & a pleasant surprise.—

Gord & Adam shortly lyen side-by-side, stark naked & all up for excitement (assisting one another in the preparations). Lights low, door opens slow, in comes someone maken a show.

She's a biggish lady, you bet; Gordon Lester's eyes at the moment are somewhat shut but he hears appreciative noises from Adam; Adam he says —Willya lookit that, Gordon.—But Gordon bein capable of delayen gratification he squeezesis eyes shut m says—I wanna feel it first.—

Gordon waits in his homemade darkwomb & in a minute he feels something very surprising doing something very surprising someplace very surprising. He sayen something very original like (these are not his precise words)—What the fucken shitmother's going *on* here?—

From Adam Aiken an unexpected bit of inarticulation.

Gordon opens his eyes and speaks with shock:—Miss Markham!—

All hell breaks loose in which Gordon Lester Wallace III, Miss Merriass Markham, Adam A. Aiken, and one or more surprising objects are variously tangled & tied, conjected complected & connected, interspersed interjected & interspected, banged balled blowed & throwed, socked cocked & knocked, rolled cold & holed, dabbed grabbed & jabbed, permutated germutated & spermutated, dipped tipped cripped & whipped.

But no details. If you think this is a story off over which to get your rocks you're mistook.

Anyway, in the morning Gordon puts in for space duty again.

7. *To the Nation We Know*

Marius Goncourt personally verified the completeness of each conference kit shortly before the arrival of the first invited participant. Each had the usual lined pad and short pencil, the conference folder, the report of the preliminary taskforce on the experimental manpower resuscitation project, the meeting agenda and the departmental *chit* good for one free meal at the ministry executive cafeteria. Seating was carefully arranged, nameplates present at each place, refreshments at hand.

After checking arrangements Marius waited in the hallway for the early participants. The first to arrive was Mme. Laveau. Goncourt greeted her, then asked a question: "Your superiors at Propaganda are willing to see this through? No last-moment hesitation?"

Madame nodded.

Goncourt continued: "As long as it's just talk, they like to sound creative, aggressive, open to new ideas, radical thinking, but when it comes down to committing to action, you know how they are. Suddenly they go with the tried and true."

"Bureaucrats," Mme. Laveau said.

Goncourt nodded.

"Then what are we?" Madame asked.

Goncourt grinned ruefully, took her arm to guide her into the conference room. "Of course, of course," he said. "But N'Haiti is starting to fall apart. If some plan doesn't get us past this manpower crisis the *blancs* will be in N'Porprince within 18 months!"

"What makes you think they are any better off than we?"

"Perhaps they aren't," he agreed. "But then, shall we fight the N'Alabamians until both planets collapse from sheer exhaustion? Be assured, Mme. Laveau, I lose no sleep worrying over the fate of the poor enemy, but I also take no comfort from envisioning N'Porprince and N'Montgomery equally in ruins, both planets decimated, both worlds in chaos, unable to raise and distribute food even, for inability to put workers where they are needed.

"A modern planetary society is a complex and delicate structure. You cannot just remove a few pieces and say, 'Well, most of it is still there, it should keep running nearly as well as it has.' That won't work. Take away too many of the skilled people who make the economy, the government, the law continue to function, and the whole thing won't just slow down a little or go a little out of kilter.

"We're pressing our luck now, both we and the *blancs*—they *are* human beings, you know. We have to get this thing cleaned up and return our attention to developing our planet and its trade and cultural relationships with others, or we're going to find ourselves back in some kind of hunting and gathering society. Well, maybe not quite that bad but . . ." he permitted his voice to trail off.

"I know all that, Marius," Mme. Laveau said. "Whose side do you think I'm on? It's just that resuscitation is such a radical solution, it's hard for people to accept. And our plan for selling it is even more radical. But . . . as you say, we are approaching a state of affairs where only a radical solution can save us. I think it can work, I have the backing of my Ministry, and if we can get through this committee, we're in business."

"The man who invented committees," Goncourt said, "should have been contraceived."

As he spoke the remaining participants in the meeting arrived: Goncourt's own deputy for Exoneurobiology, Trudeau; representing Grand Admiral Gouede Mazacca, Captain J.-P. Girard; from the office of Governor Faustin of La Gonave, Deputy Governor Laurence.

At last, Jean-Jacques Adolphe Antoine-Simone, Minister of Military Manpower Procurement. Short, balding, round-faced, huffing as he strode to the front of the room self-importantly.

All rose. M. the Minister gestured them to be seated once again. He spoke:

"Madame, gentlemen—you are all aware of the problem. Captain Girard can tell us how badly the space fleet of N'Haiti is in need of additional men. Space warfare produces casualties in alarming numbers. For obvious reasons we cannot rob the munitions industries of workers to meet the military needs, so farmers are drawn away. Now M. Laurence can tell us that La Gonave is stripped to the bone. Agriculture on N'Haiti itself is equally as bad off.

"M. Goncourt tells me that Doctor Trudeau and his people in exoneurobiology have devised a method of reviving space casualties and returning them to duty. Now I am only a simple man, a simple servant of the government and the people of N'Haiti, but even I can see that such a program, if it is successful, will still have very serious overtones in the area of, ah, let us say public relations. So I have asked M. Goncourt to work with the Ministry of Propaganda to prepare a strategy for gaining public acceptance of this use of, ah, let us say reanimated corpses. Goncourt?" He waved a hand at his deputy and seated himself.

Marius said only, "Madame Laveau has represented Propaganda in this project. I will let her present our plan."

The five men followed with their eyes as Mme. Laveau walked to the front of the room. She looked about, smiled slightly as her eyes locked with those of Goncourt. Then she began to speak, at first hesitantly, then less so as she worked into her presentation.

"We have all seen the remarkable work of M. Trudeau and his staff. Although his first subjects were only crudely animated, later experimental resuscitees have proved capable of performing routine military and industrial duties under supervision of normal persons. A certain percentage of space casualties, we have found, can be returned to useful assignments by the application of M. Trudeau's implantation procedure. A far larger number can be reclaimed by the application of salvage techniques.

"Our surgeons have long held that there is no reason for an otherwise healthy person to expire when the implantation of an artificial organ or the transplantation of a natural one to replace a single nonfunctional organ could return him to health. We have now applied this principle more radically. Providing only that the size and general tissue structure matches, and with the application of anti-rejection techniques, we can take extremities, trunk, head, internal organs, from any number of casualties, recombine them, implant one of the NGC 7007 organisms—and have an effective soldier or worker. These resuscitated individuals—" she stopped as Laurence interrupted her sentence with a single word:

"Zombies!"

"Yes," Madame Laveau resumed. "Zombies. Sooner or later everyone associated with this project comes to that. Zombies. And that is our problem in public relations. Will N'Haitians accept this seeming return to O'Earthian primitivism? My Ministry has studied this question, and we have reached conclusions in three areas, leading to a proposed course of action.

"First, we must consider the reaction of our own general citizenry. The war is less than overwhelmingly popular as it is, and a major program which was rejected by the public would place the government in an untenable position.

"Second, the reaction of the workers and military personnel who will be in regular contact with the resuscitees. Because the subjects seem to manifest no will or personalities of their own, we have concluded that it would be best to isolate them into units of their own—field crews, industrial work gangs, even complete space ship crews, with only normal humans as supervisors. The latter will of course have to be selected for special psychological makeups facilitating this type of assignment.

"Third, the effect on the enemy. This is probably the most difficult aspect of the problem to consider, and yet potentially the most significant. If the

enemy regards this program as evidence of desperation on our part, it will only encourage his war effort. But we believe that if we approach the resuscitation program from the right direction we can actually convert it into an effective psychological warfare weapon."

Madame paused. From his chair Minister Antoine-Simone, squirming with eagerness, called out, "Zombies, yes! Tell them the plan!"

Mme. Laveau gestured placatingly. "Very well," she said. "Yes, after long consideration we believe that this aspect of the procedure should be neither denied outright nor downplayed, but should be the main focus of our entire publicity campaign regarding resuscitees. We propose the full-scale revival of the O'Earth traditions of *vodu*, with public ceremonies emphasized, to gain support for the program as an authentic Haitian tactic. Further, we propose to broadcast information on the resuscitations—omitting, of course, clinical data of potential value to the enemy. We contend that this will make the space ships manned by resuscitee crews, which will carry special markings to make them visible to the enemy, objects of such terror that there will be a significant advantage to our forces."

M. Antoine-Simone said, "You think there will be full acceptance of this, Madame? Intellectuals, philosophers, the religious minority . . . they will all go along with this?"

"Perhaps not without difficulty, but all can be convinced. The intellectuals are aware that our war with N'Alabama is of the enemy's making, not of ours, that we are at war for our survival. They and the philosophers support the war, except for the total pacifists, who are opposed to it anyway, so their attitude toward the resuscitation program does not matter. We plan to emphasize the cultural and nationalistic aspects of *vodu*, the ties to O'Haiti. This should gain us their support as well.

"As for the religious, the problem may be more severe, but we must again emphasize the cultural ties to our O'Earth heritage. We may have to permit a few trappings of other mythologies to be grafted onto our *vodu* rites, but my ministry's researchers assure me that in the historic practice of *vodu* there was a cross-mythologic flow anyway. The old *vodu* cult was based on a pantheon of nature gods originally found in a country called Senegal on O'Earth.

"*Blanc* slavers raided Senegal and its surrounding states to capture workers, and transported them to the nation we know as O'Haiti, our ancestral home. The slaves wished to retain their religion but to fool their masters they adopted some of the forms of the slavers' religion, and grafted them onto their own rites. So you see—" she paused and looked about the room like a lecturer making a point in an undergraduate class "—*vodu* was a mix from the start, and we can use the same tactic as the O'Haitians to

make *vodu* live again, serve again as the tool and focus of our national struggle against the descendants of the Christian slavers."

* * *

Circling the green luminary NGC 7007 deep in God's tri-di toy (called "The Universe" by the clerk down to Plenum's Fine Toy Emporium where God's fat old Uncle Dudley bought the thing for his sometimes bratty nephew), several pieces of junk. Dirt, slime, plasm and protoplasm, assorted fluids and gases and the rest of the crap God built with his tri-di toy. (Boy, did mama and papa let fat old Uncle Dudley have it after he gave their kid *that* little present . . . in the privacy of their connubial slime-vat, of course.)

One of those hunks of crap, remember, the shiny one. Ahh, N'Yu-Atlanchi. Or so its first human inhabitants had called it when they found the place a while ago. Of course their descendants don't remember that. They don't even remember their names, either singly or as a race. God does, though. Hey, otherwise who could have told you that Ch'en-Tch'aa-Zch'uwn, that was her name?

Blessing be upon thee, Uncle Dudley.

Circling *that* piece of crap (the shiny one where the S'tschai live) two more. On the lesser one, something metallic stands, complex, involuted, circuitously formed within, lands and grooves of micromolecular thickness woven into patterns of incomprehensible function, power inputs ready to accept any available energy source, radiant, material, nucleic, chemic, kinetic, telepathic, monatomic relays awaiting their signal to perform tiny tricks, flip-flops ready to flip (or flop), storage arrays in order, functional capacitances at the ready, with only a crimp here, a gap there to show that something not intended had once happened to the metallic something. Daily the metallic something is bombarded by (on the average) maybe four or a thousand cosmic rays, no or some micro-meteoroids, some light, a spectrum of other radiation; it is pulled and pushed (simultaneously) by tidal gravitation; blown (when facing in the right direction) by solar wind; and maintained, as a figment of the imagination of old Uncle Dudley's pet nephew.

Moving in a complex orbital dance with that piece of crap is a similar but larger one. Large enough to retain an atmosphere of sorts. Once it too had a magical mystery machine on its surface but you know you pay a price. Take the air for a while (fifteen pico-seconds or some aeons, what's the difference?) and all that nice shiny metal turns to red dust. Ah me, and so it has.

But in that atmosphere walks our old friend from the N'Haitian Ministry of Military Manpower Procurement, Phillipe. Now chief clerk, reclamation section, S'tschai harvest project, planet of N'Yu-Atlanchi, NGC 7007. Office of the chief clerk is located on the greater moon of N'Yu-Atlanchi. The planet, fer Dudley's sake, would be too *wet* for a comfy working space.

Phillipe checks his weekly report to the Ministry back on N'Haiti, thinking, Oh, why did I ever leave beautiful downtown N'Porprince? Actually he left because his boss told him he was leaving. That's life in the ministry. But he got a better job code out of it, so it wasn't a total loss.

The weekly report indicates the continuing high yield of S'tschai is holding up. Apparently the All-Mother (although Phillipe has never met the, uh, "lady" himself) has some kind of built-in mechanism for increasing her own production rate to meet the ecological balance required by the planetary chemistry of N'Yu-Atlanchi. Somebody comes along and harvests a few thousand S'tschai a week, All-Mother just gears up a little more, produces a few thousand more S'tschai a week, balances her little family neatly.

Phillipe and his superiors know enough not to push the All-Mother too hard. That would be killing the goose that lays the golden egg, if you'll just take your superelectronic stylo and go back and change a few nouns and verbs around.

Phillipe is far from overjoyed with this assignment, but it's all right. For the war effort, you know. Only temporary.

8. *Aboard the Starship Jimmie-O*

An NCO's bunk in a N'Ala starship is bigger than a breadbox, smaller than a phone booth (laid on end), shaped a little bit like a condom for a giant about 70 feet tall with a teeny-weeny baby bonnet attached to the open (or "non-business") end. You slide into it (if you're an NCO aboard a N'Ala starship) as if your feet were the head of said 70-feet-tall giant's dork and your head its base; then you put on your teeny-weeny baby bonnet.

This is all worked out because gravity is a variable rather than a constant in a starship. No matter how you mounted that bunk, sometimes it would hang you like a hammock, sometimes like a salami in a kosher delicatessen back on O'Earth. (You'd be surprised how many of those there are in these days of the furgem Jewrab hegemony, Yitzak ben El-Makesh,

prexy.) Sometimes "up" is relative to the head of the starship, sometimes to its tail, sometimes to its longitudinal axis and sometimes to its skin.

Sometimes it's in free-fall. Those bunks work regardless.

Gordon Lester Wallace kept his three V's and top-rocker when he gave up shore duty and went back on board the *James O. Eastland* with the spacerine detachment, but he lost his position—no squad leaders were needed and he wound up assistant squad leader in Lt. Jimmie Rainie's platoon, working for Sarge Bo Fallon. It wasn't a bad squad or a bad platoon, and what the hell, gyrene casualties do tend to get a bit heavy so there was a good chance that there'd be an opening for an experienced squad leader one of these days.

Mean, not that Gloowoo *wanted* to see Bo dead. Hale, a leetle wound would do it, providing it wasn't *too* leetle. Bo out of action for a while, Gord would be squad leader again, then when Bo came back from sick bay *he'd* be out of work! That was the way to do it.

There hung Gord sumpin up in the sack (bonnet tied neatly neathiz chin) merrily dreaming away of some nifty N'Alabama baby (Miss Merriass Markham perhaps or then again perhaps not) not too many hours outen Fort Sealy Mae Spaceport, chowed down, settled round, gear stowed, weapons checked out, checked in with CO, leader Bo, ship's records, chaplain, quartermaster, company clerk & a necessary minimal few others, happily snoring up a storm much to annoyance of a few early risers (?) when an eyeball-smiting beam filled the gyrene embunkment where he was embunked and poor old Gord he flinched away, eyelids squeezing together trine to make that light stop only it wouldn't and then a let's call it sound started & worked its way up into his ears from a point so low he more felt it in his teeth (danged back molars needed some dental attention but the N'Ala spacerines were a mought short of dental talent these days) vibrating his whole danged skull & working its way up into his crany danged um and shaken the whole thing until he felt almost as if the whole banging noise was pouring *out* of his ears instead of in and he shook his head nearly like a dragonfly flicking sideways through some summery sunlit air and even in that tied-on teeny-weeny baby bonnet he somehow managed to whomp hisself upside the haid on some kinder stanchion or beam anna *wham* he donged hisself unpleasantly, clicked his teeth, flung defiantly wide those previously tight-clenched eyelids staring into the damned ultra-blue reveille light and mumbled unintelligibly something to the effect that tough is tough but you'd think they'd find some gentler way of waking the spacerine detachment aboard the goddam *James O. Eastland* when it was time for chow in the goddam standard ship's time morning.

After chow they had a shape-up in the troop-marshaling area and the

detachment commander, Colonel-General "Pissfire" Pallbox, addressed the men.

—Umen—Colonel General "Pissfire" Pallbox (his real first name was not spoken allowed in the N'Alabama spacerines, you can bet your *ss) —Umen—(being somewhat repetitious)—are the finest fighting force in the N'Alabama spacerines.—

Up went bajeesus & saintgeorge a loud cheer.

—M the N'Alabama spacerines bein the finest fightin force in the en dammit tire planetary military establish fuckin ment.—He spit on the deck. Some swabby wone like that!

(Prolonged & stormy applause.)

—M the N'Alabama planetary military establish fuckin ment—his voice rising—being the finest fightin force among the pure surn white planets under God & His Son Jesus George Christ!—

—Yay!—everybody said to that, loud & with enthusiasm.

—M the pure surn white planets—ole Pissfire hollern rantin now, snappin his official spacerine issue galluses m turnin from side to side—bein the toughest, meanest, wild-spit-in-the-eye-&-kick-em-in-the-nuts bunch of ball-barren *men* in the entire furgem galaxy!—He jumped up & down with a red face & shoutin.

All the spacerines likewise.

Gord, he like to piss his pants when he heard that speech. That old Pissfire, now there was a leader bajeez, none of this weakwater and julep-jippin wheezes like you got from Milburn Mitchum or Eugene Youngerman or them other pansy-assed parlor ticians. Gord, he just stood there hoping to hear more.

Pissfire, he said—Now these here swabbies—and he paused for reaction, being a man who knew how to play to an audience, even of enlisted men —now these here swabbies, they got a certain technical competence, we gotta hand them that much.—he said, then paused again while a titter (pardon) swept the ranks.

—An ole Admiral Yancy Moorman, he tellin me this morning that these swabbies spotted some blips on their lookin glasses. Now some of them blips, we know what they are. I can tell you men now—he leanin forrard comspiracarily & emphasizin that word *now*—that we haven a general fleet mobilization & rendezvous today, m we been plannin, right, we been plannin what we all been trainin for m hopin for for all these years, we going to land on goddam N'Haiti m teach the nigra papadocs oncet m frall they *place*!—

Spacerines cheerin an whoopin an huggin each the other (sometimes with a leetle more hug than you might think for spacerines, but what the

hell, they wuz a long way from Leto) when they hear *that*, you can bet your sweet a*s. But then Colonel General "Pissfire" Pallbox, he had summin else to add:

—But those *other* blips ole Yancy's boys seen—he let that *other* sink in a little bit—those *other* blips, they a bit farther off, m they straight on ahead, m unless ole Yance, he fooled mightily, he says he thinks they bein the N'Haitian damned space fleet! Now you men, you know what that means.—He stoppen & looken around once more.

—You know what that means! We can't go pissin away our military cream on their bap-a-lousy two-bit crummy planet m let their cruvvelin damned forces have a free pass at our sacred homes! Nossir! No cruvvelin black animan nigra goin lay one filthy paw on some innocent defenseless little golden curly-headed surn baby while Pissfire Pallbox draws breath. Are you with me?—

Oh, he played a audience well. They been howlin yet if he didn't raise his hand for quiet.

—Oak hay, men—Pissfire wrapped it up—we goin rendezvous as planned, but then we goin head straight at them cruvvelin black papadocs m smash the daylights out of that bunch of floating tin they call a space fleet. Before another sun sets—(he was talken meta damn phorically you realize of course, out there in the big glittery dark)—ole Goody *Maz*accy'll wish he been a waiter or summon else a nigra's fit to be, an not play-act at bein a admiral.—

He finished up his speech & walked off & the lesser brass took over & made speeches & then the damned company grade officers took over & *they* made speeches & finally the NCO's took charge & got everybody to fixing up their packs & spacesuits & practicing battle stations & calling out raider detachments & boarding parties & making sure they had their weapons at hand & ready to go & ammunition supplies okay & the chaplain went around & prayed over everybody & gave em all a tweak below the belt & finally everybody had chow again & grabbed a little sack time cause you never know when you'll get a chance once a battle starts.

By late afternoon (according to standard ship time, you can never tell in space of course except on a civil liner where they keep dark & light hours but on a military ship it's light all the time & ready to go) Gord was "up" again, everybody was giving his lase-axe a final cleaning, everybody was talking in a kind of nervous undertone & Gord kind of quietly drifted off (one of the advantages of being a 3V & rocker without the responsibility of command) & headed for a window hoping to see the fleet rendezvous (he was still that much of a boy at heart & loved to watch space ships land & take off & all that stuff) & kind of hoping that the swabbies would be

trying out their holo projectors in preparation for fooling the poor stupid apes in the impending battle & at the same time wondering if he'd be fooled himself & not be able to tell the projos from the rest of the real fleet. Well, one thing for sure, if he saw another goddam *James O. Eastland,* agonized matter exhaust pouring out her asshole & red lase streaming out her slit & gun ports zapping & bapping, at least he'd know that *that* was a projo, that was for sure.

Found himself a nice window, part of a big old gun blister right there in *Jimmie O's* flank. Gun crew'd been there & everything was all clean m polished nice the emplacement was a big ole bapper, Gord figgered it for a 60 megapower go-go mounted right there to the deck & emplaced into the blister for better sighting & maneuverability, plugged in & charged up & ready to go when the whistle blow. Gun crew must all been in their bag-m-bonnets trynta grab a last nap m only one guard was left at the blister, nice chubby blond boy with a perspirey complexion & a tendency for his hair to get plastered onto his forehead name of Leander Laptip.

Gord he walked up m Leander said—See them points Gord?—m Gord nodded m grunted m Leander said—Ain't stars.—m Gord made a kind of grumphy noise m Leander said—They *ours* Gord!—

Gord he crawled into the blister with Spacerine Corporal Leander Laptip brushing maybe not nearer than necessary to get past and get a good look at those points and he said, full of patriotic fervor and enthusiasm —You right, Leander, they our fleet oak hay.—

Arms around each other and holding mutually onto that 60 megapower all shined up & ready for action go-go bapper for steadiness there in the stapaglassene blister & their heads close together four wondering eyes perceived the assembly (weren't they lucky to be on the right side of the *James O. Eastland!*) of the en just about tire N'Alabama military space defense force, swabbies & gyrenes alike.

How many ships? Gord, Leander they tried pointing out & keeping count, calling out names when they knew em m types when they didn't know names: sleek m speedy hit-m-runners darting ahead, destroyers, bigger, heavier armed but still light m maneuverable, tenders, communication ships, supply ships built like giant plasmetal balls:

:m sister ships of the *James O. Eastland,* giant elongated shafts bearing instrument rings m command modules at their heads, giant fuel balls at their bases: *Orval Faubus, Theodore H. Bilbo, Lester Maddox.* Gord picked out *Voerward.* Leander picked out *Goebbels.*

Forming up, forming up, commo beams crackling almost audibly, data sensors humming, circuits m generators throbbing, troops preparing for the battle to come: *Long, Lee, Davis, Perez,* on they came. The pod-bearing

States Rights, her bulging belly packed with daughter ships ready to spring into battle, gnats that would spread havoc among the enemy fleet. The space ram *Jackson,* N'Alabama's weapon of last resort, a space-flying shaft of almost solid plasmetal, crew quarters buried deep inside macrometers of padding m protection, if all else failed, lasing m zapping m bapping, *Jackson* could smash, headfirst, into any enemy ship, nothing in space could survive that impact m the *Jackson's* crew padded m strapped inside there would just wait for a retrieval team if they could make it outside themselves, m the flagship of the N'Alabama fleet, pride of a planet, painted pure glistry white with a giant portrait six decks high m a hundred meters long:

:*Lurleen McQueen,* flying out of N'Montgomery spaceport, proud m pure m altogether sure, bearing the finest of the finest, armed to the hilt, surrounded by a swarm of tenders almost audibly buzzing m bounding at her every move. Oh, that ship she was proud of her ass!

—What you think that ship cost, Gord?—asked Leander.

Gord looked, shrugged (rubbing up a little bit on Leander as he done so, but unavoidably let's be quick to note) m didn't say nothing.

—What you think this *fleet* cost?—asked Leander.

Gord took his free hand off the go-go bapper for a moment m rubbed his head, then he said—Dunno. Must be close on three thousand ships here, big ole battlebottoms down to those little pizmaiers zoopin around out there. Them damn parlor ticians planetside (he liked to pick up space talk when he got off the ground, being a boy at heart) surely know how to squeeze the ole taxes out of us, but they hardly do nothing with all the money but build ships, buy zappers m bappers, train soldiers m the like, for about as long as I can remember. Lemme see now . . .—he got deep in thought but didn't get through it cause the ship rocked:

:*kerwhup!:*

:alike to send him m Leander sprawling m struggling if they didn't have a good secure grip on the bapper m onto one the other. Then they heard a ship's siren sounding m in a minute ole Admiral Moorman's voice a-whipping through the ship's voice system:

:—Moorman here tention crew stations medially furgem papadocs clearly got some kind of longer range weapons as we calculated still beyond pickup gear but they gotta be northeast quadrant between 30, 34 degrees, holos *on,* gunners ready m I turn command over to section CO's.—:

:m off he goes m there's bumping m bitching sounds m voices, noises, thumps m sommon sounding like a *urrkh!* m a familiar voice coming on:

:—Pallbox here listen all spacerines we gettin moren we an fuckin tici-

pated soonern we ex hubbadubba pected everybody to assemly areas goddam *now* by ee-vee-ay detachments we gonna augment firepower ex shittin ternally till the nigras get close m then we gonna go across m take the furgemothers assall!—

He shutten up, voice system crackled a couple-three times m shutten off, feet pounding, whistles sounding, people shouting, Leander he yell at Gordon—My crew coming now m you gotta go ole buddy.—he given G. Lester one sweet tonguing m away Gilwoo swooped coming round a corner passed Leander Laptip's gun squad pounding down the plasmetal corridor m Gordon Lester he making his way at top speed past his condombunk picken his pack m on his way fastern you can say Jackie Robinson m he going so furgem fast m he so sucken scared he don't know whether he mess his pants or just let a little nervous gas but he knows it smells bad in that sealed-suit but he's in place for a quick tense countoff.

Lt. Jimmie Rainie he's zoopin around in front checking who's there (everybody is) m all the squad leaders are dancing up & down making sure everybody's got his equipment, no use being present if you don't have your gear right, weapons ready, sealed-suit proper; everybody's okay though spacerine drill being what it is they've been through this beau coup times in barracks on drill field in the boondocks bivouacced away from camp and you can bet every time they ever hit black deep space.

:*kerwhupl*:

:that ship gives another shake, gyrenes jarred but everybody keeps his feet Lt. Rainie he hollers, his voice comes out crackly-plasmetally in everybody headphones—You all oak hay? Stand fast men!—

They do.

Ship starts to buckle across her beam, ole *James O.* being in bad trouble, in perilous shape and those poor white boys they haven't even *seen* no black-as* papadoc ships yet but now everybody standing in unsteady slowly tilting ranks wobbling m wavering as gravity slips around up goes down m heavy-light swapping around m only grabboots holding those gyrenes steady to the deck but leaning m swaying m Gordon Lester Wallace the one two three he looks up m:

:*Great Balls of Fire!*:

:the core dinged ceiling/wall/hull utha ship's got a rent in her up there thirty feet above his wondering head half a football diamond long m nearly as wide m on the other side of it up/down/out there [Gord he feel like he falling/flying/swooping out/up/down into that hole/flat black pool/sky/plane m he swooping in circles his head wobbling on his suddenly rubbery neck m his stomach sending up sour warnings of the taste of things to come meanwhile churning/burning inside m a humring in his ear (phone)s as Lt. Rainie's voice hollering (to be continued)]:

:gigant shapes huge glistry another *Jimmie O.* beside the *James O.* beside a ghosty wavery *Eastland* behind a bigabigabiga battlewagon oozy fat letters honor prow proclaiming *James O. Eastland* uptop a glowing gleaming phanty *J. O. Eastland* surrounded by a clustra *JamesJamesJames O.O.O. EastlandEastlandEastland* some solid some lucent m beyond Gord can see a *Bilbo,* another, another, waving, dancing, bapping m zapping away m *Longs* m *Lees* m *Faubuses* m *Maddoxes* m one *Lurleen,* two, three, whee! m:

:faway, faway, wayway past the holos visible at last the shiteaten N'Haitian nigra fleet:

ships m ships m ships
ships m ships m ships
ships m ships m ships
ships m ships m ships
firing, firing
swooping m dodging

rays, missiles, rams, coming from the nigras' ships, coming from the N'Ala ships,

noises in the headphones, sum um words, sum um not, loud m *Creesacappery* screaming m now a break, now a second unscreaming m now coming across the headphones Lt. Jimmie Rainie's (continued now!) voice —You gyrenes, you surn men, nowsa time, on the hull, weapons up, now, now, up, lezgo!—in command still, Gord he's trained, he obeys, kicking his grabboots, shloop! off the deck, up, outen that hole, ee-vee-ay time, out/up/down onto/into black deep/flat swoop/tumble m a quick spin, most a mini-orbit m clank! splank! onto the hull, onya belly, look up, through holos (*you men bin trained!*) m a one-man lase-axe ready to augment ship's firepower, looking up at nigra ships, *Creeso!* how many they must have holos too but even so how many they must have us five-to-four, four-to-three, three-to-two m now the two fleets they intermingling m:

:zapper m bapper fire crossing, singing m zinging, singeing m twingeing the ether itself, lighting streaks red, yellow, orange, glaring magenta, blood colors, flesh colors, missiles barreling by, striking *us*ships, *them*ships, silent glarey detonations, impact demolishments m:

:kerwhup!:

:the *Eastland* took another shot someplace Gord didn't see where only felt the whole sucken hull buck m thud beneath him m just as she settled down a might Gordon he readying his lase-axe once more there's the most incredible:

:B-L-O-O-M-I-N-G:

:as the *Lurleen McQueen* she musta taken a direct full-force blow right to the vitals m she goes *splowen* in all directions, plumes of fumes m

chunks of guts m hull m hardware, guns m control gear, power plants m fuel supplies (that lady she had the biggest damn balls in the whole furgem fleet packed *full* of agonized matter!), sealed-suited spacerines blown out, twirling m snapping through blacuum some clearly dead, some not so, some clearly holed, some still looking sealed m now:

:sliding silently upside the *Eastland* Gord sees a shape, a hardlooken plasmetally thing, huge, biggern the *Eastland* even, close even to the blowed *Lurleen* m she's a clearly she's he knows he can identify her from Fort Sealy Mae dayroom ID posters she's a she's no doubt about it a a gigantic damn nigra ship she's in fact that superwagon *Oh! Oh!* N'Ala spacerines call her, the *Annie Eyes,* the *Oginga Odinga* m on her hull Gord sees vast rectangular pullbacks inside battle-dressed armor-glinting starshine-lit black-suited black-skinned N'Haiti colleagues-in-arms Gord's co-pro's no mistakenem nigra spacerines m with a helmet-shaking common *roar:*

Lt. Jimmie Rainie's spacerine platoon kick off from the hull of the *Eastland,* grabboots shloop up off the hull, that blattering bunch of old Pissfire's finest, lase-axes light-lining m illuminated only by multi-originned stars-light m the glints of their own lase-axes they see black-suited nigras leap fly/fall from that pullback opening in the *Oh! Oh!* sweeping up/down/out to meet them m with a crash the first two foes meet, lase-beams missed, chest-plates giving a radioed *clank,* pants m gasps of *Creeso* can you tell the sounds of killing from those of coitus!

Now too late, forget that interlocked murdering pair, Gord too flying up/down a blacksuited papadoc falling up to meet him, Gord sends a lase-beam, *sppsspl* across meters of blacuum, papadoc keeps coming but starts to fold, spindle, mutilate, Gord takes a good two-hander on his lase-axe, feels his own chest heaving, deep breaths demanded, adrenaline spurting through hot moist vascules, sweeps his weapon overhead in two hands, feels null-weight trained habits acting unconsciously, hips jerking into involuntary thrusts and a:

:whapl:

:Gord's lase-axehead comes down on the nigra's back armor with a pacifying thukky noise, armor m bone conducted right up Gord's arms to two much-gratified ears m Gord wrenchesiz l-a free m kicks papadoc's body spinning infinitely away m Gord looks around for new worlds to conquer m comes face to face with another nigra spacerine m:

:he brings an axe around m:

:he brings an axe around m:

:he opens his mouth in a silent shriek m:

:he opens his mouth in a silent shriek m:

:the axe, blooded m starlit, swings gracefully m:
:the axe, blooded m starlit, swings gracefully m:
:smashing, m blood gushing, m a sound:
:smashing, m blood gushing, m a sound:
:a scream too loud too shrill m:
:a scream too loud too shrill m:
:red:
:red:
:black:
:black:
: :
: :

9. *Aboard the Starship Oginga Odinga*

: :
: :
:black:
:black:
:red:
:red:
:a scream too loud too shrill and:
:a scream too loud too shrill and:
:smashing, and blood gushing, and a sound:
:smashing, and blood gushing, and a sound:
:the axe, blooded and starlit, swings gracefully and:
:the axe, blooded and starlit, swings gracefully and:
:he opens his mouth in a silent shriek and:
:he opens his mouth in a silent shriek and:
:he brings an axe around and:
:he brings an axe around and:

* * *

The inside of his black space-armor stinking of terror and his own vomit, Christophe Belledor recovered from momentary unconsciousness. The body of the *blanc* marine had gone into a mad binary orbit with him, the two of them, the live and the dead, holding captive millions of tiny red glinting globules. More globules continued to pour from the axe-rent in the armor of the dead N'Alabamian.

Christophe kicked away the corpse, as he had been trained, using the equal-but-opposite force to drift back toward the main concentration of troops, his comrades and their foe, struggling and hovering between the *Oh! Oh!* and the *Eastland.* Corpses hung balanced in the small gravitational fields of the two great ships, or swung in long elliptical orbits away from the battle. Survivors on both sides dodged frenetically, alternately seeking to assure themselves that they were not about to be attacked and seeking enemies to attempt to beam down or axe.

Of the hundreds of N'Haitians and N'Alabamians who had entered the battle, only the untouched and the dead remained—non-fatal wounds were all but unheard of in a vacuum-environment battle. Self-contained resealant systems in space-armor could handle the occasional micrometeoroid strike that might occur in hard vacuum, or might even close off a tiny puncture from a glancing beam or point, but any significant hole in space-armor produced quick death from decompression and fast freezing.

Christophe, circling in free fall, found himself again startled, face to face with another enemy marine. He valved slightly, thrusting toward the enemy. The enemy remained stationary, as if not knowing what to do. Christophe aimed his lase-axe, fired at the enemy's chest. He missed.

By now they were very close. The enemy raised his own lase-axe; as he did so Christophe saw the jagged shards at the laser end, where some blow must have been blocked, saving the *blanc's* life but also destroying his laser. Too close to beam again, Christophe raised his weapon to port, blocked the enemy's swing, attempted to come under it and jab to the pelvis but the N'Alabamian twisted and Christophe's blow landed harmlessly on the man's flank, sending a ringing vibration through his armor.

The *blanc* leaned sharply backward, spinning on his own axis, checked and started forward and down again, his axe a gleaming streak of white starshine as it sped murderously toward Christophe's helmet. Christophe tried to get his own lase-axe handle above his head to block the blow but he miscalculated and his mass slid "downward" leaving an open target.

The gray-dull chestplate of his opponent's armor splashed into sudden glory, glowing momentarily rust-red, then scarlet, yellow-orange, then back with equal speed through the spectrum. Even through his own insulated plasmetal suit Christophe felt the heat of the radiant energy. The enemy now floated away, performing a series of graceful back somersaults, lase-axe still strapped to one wrist, arms thrown backward and knees spread and buckling. With each revolution of the body Christophe could see the circular black opening where the laser had seared away the N'Alabamian's armor.

Too late to counter an attack upon himself—if one was coming—Chris-

tophe whirled to face the unquestionable source of the laser beam, but saw no possible origin of it.

He shrugged, checked his weapon, valved again toward the mass of space-armored figures that floated between the *Oh! Oh!* and the *Eastland.* For him the battle was over. For thousands of cubic kilometers around N'Haitian and N'Alabamian ships maneuvered and fired, rammed and dodged, disgorged miniature hornet-ships to harass the enemy and marines to board or to place skin-charges on enemy craft.

If this battle ended like most, it would go on for hours, even for ship-standard days. Then each fleet would withdraw, the well ships guarding the withdrawal of the crippled, towing away what salvage they could scour from the wreckage of those ships, both their own and the opponents', that were too far gone even to stagger away under partial power and post-combat conditions.

One difference this time.

The *Oh! Oh!* was little damaged. *Eastland,* a hulk. Her command module had taken a partial ram. It lay crushed and opened against the instrument unit, itself hanging against the distant stars with one chord sheared completely away, the remaining ring lifeless, data-acquisition circuits silent, storage banks dead, processing modules hopelessly fused by fantastic overloads of random heat and power surges produced by monstrous laser rakes.

The long shaft was crumpled, drooping where some surface charge had blown in a jagged section, orbiting flotsam circling the equator of the ship. At the base of the hull one huge fuel tank was torn away, flung out of sight by the residual energy of whatever force had torn it from the shaft—an internal explosion, perhaps, set off by intense heat from a N'Haitian beam, or a ram where the globe was seamed to the cylindrical hull of the *Eastland.*

Dead. Perhaps salvageable. Whichever force was stronger in this sector, whichever fleet retained sufficient strength to board *Eastland* with a salvage crew, make fast for towing, protect their prize from the opposition until they had withdrawn out of range, would return to its home base with whatever weapons and equipment, engines and communications gear, intelligence data and flight-and-battle records as she contained.

The hulk itself would be examined and evaluated. If reparable—she would spew her exhaust once more between the stars. As the *Eastland* if salvaged by N'Ala, as something else, *Duvalier* perhaps, or perhaps *Cleaver* or *Newton* or *Seale,* if by N'Haiti. And if *Eastland* should prove to be beyond repair, then still the plasmetal of her hull would be rendered and recast and emerge someday as something new, to lance down the styg-

ian star-tracks and fight again for the eternal glory of N'Alabama. (Or N'Haiti, as the case might be.)

But one difference in this salvage operation.

Not merely the hulks of battered starships this time. Not merely the metals and esters and silicons. Not merely the fabricated goods. This time the men.

Between the star-glinting *Oginga Odinga* and the dead and crumpled *Eastland* the unit of Christophe Belledor was beginning once again to form. Christophe moved toward his place in ranks, noting the gaps in the disc-shaped free-fall formation. Far, far in the distance he could see other salvage-ready situations, illuminated ships nestled triumphantly near to dead hulks like triumphant beasts of prey near the dead bodies of their victims. Here Belledor could recognize the form of a N'Haitian victor, there a N'Alabamian. In the aftermath of interstellar battle a strange truce seemed to fall as the survivors, gratefully wonder-struck by the fact of their own survival, concentrated only on their own withdrawal and on the rape of their own victims. They did not choose to jeopardize their status as survivors with any foolish picking of fights with other survivors, of the other fleet. Belledor gazed into the distance: N'Haitian plundered N'Alabamian; N'Alabamian plundered N'Haitian. One hulk swung about and for an instant, by some odd trick of optics, her name, marked in huge letters, caught a glint of light and became visible for the briefest instant: *Bilbo,* then was lost.

Inside Christophe Belledor's helmet the voice of his commander spoke, synchronized with the movement of the commander's arm. The instructions were clear. In company with his fellows, Christophe set to work gathering the shattered and frozen cadavers of the two space marine detachments. White and black, burned and axed, he collected them all. Those with only punctures in their armor to let in the drowning ocean of nothing, and those with organs roasted, and those with torn-away limbs and heads and chunks of torsoes.

What could be salvaged would be used or banked. The remainder, well, at least would not remain behind to leave a cluttered battlefield.

For a moment, Christophe entertained a stray wonderment: Now that the battle was ended, who had won? But then, the admirals and the captains, the generals and the intelligence staffs, were paid to determine such abstruse mysteries. He, Christophe, was paid to do as he was told, and to try to stay alive until such time as he could return to his comfortable desk, his comfortable wife, and his occasional pleasant encounters with the daughter of Leclerc. Meanwhile, Grand Admiral Goude Mazacca probably knew who had won the battle.

10. *At the Gran Houmfort Nationale*

Perhaps as Papa claimed it was all nonsense. Still, Yvette would not miss the great ceremony. A row at dinner, Mama trying ineffectually to mediate, shouts, angry gestures, and Yvette sent to her room. All for the best, all as if she had herself made the plan.

She locked her door from the inside, vowing to answer no question or plea that penetrated its heavy wood, and flung herself onto the bed to fume. The more she thought of the argument the angrier she became. Did they think her a child? She was a young woman, her days of pigtails, pinafores far behind. She looked at herself, her figure. She had seen how men looked at her—grown men, not merely the coltish boys at the *ecole,* half-eager and half-timid in their own new hungers, but grown men. Even their neighbor M. Belledor, before he had been called to military service.

Yvette rose from her bed, turned on a small light. She drew the shade of her window and stood before the mirror, slowly removing her school dress. If Papa forbade her to attend the *danse calinda,* she would go anyway. He might think the newly revived *vodu* mere nonsense, but all of her friends at the *ecole* knew better. No boy or girl in Yvette's class was without some macandal, caprelata, vaudaux dompredere, or ouanga. She herself had an ouanga of goat's hide, filled with the ingredients of the ancient prescription: small stones, a vertebra of a snake, black feathers, mud, poison, sugar, tiny wax images. Normally it was kept hidden in her room. Tonight she would wear the ouanga.

Out of her dress now she stood naked in the center of her room, feet spread, arms raised, breathing deeply in anticipation of the ceremony to take place at the houmfort. Ah, such a fool as Papa deserved his ignorance. Again Yvette looked down, studying her own form: the graceful breasts and sharply pointed nipples so admired by the boys at school; the slim waist, the swelling pelvis and thickly curled, glossy arrow of black pubic hair pointing unerringly toward its precious goal. She ran her hands once over her smooth sienna-colored skin, feeling alternately waves of hot and cold at the thought of the hours ahead.

Still naked she removed the ouanga from its hiding place, for a moment held the rough skin bag against her cheek, then kissed it and placed the leather thong about her neck so the bag hung between her breasts. Standing again before the mirror Yvette crossed her arms beneath her breasts, forcing her breasts together so that the ouanga bag, between them, was

held tightly, the protruding evidence of the objects within pressing and rubbing on her sensitive flesh, exciting her so that she ran one hand down her belly, threading her pubic hairs and kneading her labia for a moment.

Then she whirled, ran barefoot to the closet and removed her clothing for the *danse*. A satiny blouse of brilliant stripes, yellow, green, blue; tight trousers of white, cut low to come beneath the navel. She slipped her arms into the blouse, drew it about herself, leaving the front open to reveal her talisman, then drew on the pants and tied them at the front. Sandals now, and now she turned out the light in her room and raised the window shade.

In a moment she had the window open and had eased herself through it, slipped softly to the grass outside and moved quietly away from the house. She ran through dark streets, silently, a light mist in the air coating her skin, each droplet seeming to stimulate her further. At the appointed spot near the house of her friend Celie she looked around, found Celie waiting beneath a tree.

She hissed for silence and the two of them dashed off silently toward the hoverail depot. Once away on the train they would reach the houmfort without interference.

At the houmfort Yvette and Celie found a crowd assembled already. Great torches ringed the open plaza before the houmfort; above them in the black sky La Gonave hung huge and dully glowing, adding its light. In the misty air the light of La Gonave was fractionated, making tiny nocturnal rainbows when Yvette looked toward the sky. The torches wavered in the night air, the orange-red flickerings making the shadows of the people dance even though they themselves as yet merely stood awaiting the commencement of the ceremony or milled about seeking friends or positions from which better to see the proceedings of the night.

On the low portico of the houmfort, backed by the scrollery and pillars of the building, the carven serpents and gourds, crucifixes and thorn-pierced hearts stood row on row of low catafalques, each surmounted by a long shrouded unmoving manlike figure. Before these stood the three great drums, the boula, the maman, the papa. At either side of the plaza stood other drums. In the center, an altar.

From within the houmfort was heard a drumming and chanting. Lights flickered and figures advanced from the building. Papa Nebo, the hermaphroditic guardian of the dead, a silken top hat ludicrously perched on his head, his black face solemn, solemn, then cracked by the rictus of a tic, shirtless but wearing a tattered black dinner jacket and a ragged white skirt, his bare feet held alternately off the ground, wavering as if undecided before plunging ahead with each step. In one hand he held a human skull, in the other a sickle.

Behind Papa Nebo, reeling and staggering, robed and turbaned, in one hand a glittering bottle, in the other a silvery flute, Gouede Oussou, his eyes dull, his face flaccid, ready to perform the role of the Drunken One.

Finally the woman Gouede Mazacca the Midwife, her traditional garb trimmed with naval decor in honor of her namesake the grand admiral, the Midwife's serpent-staff in one hand, her bag of charms and implements in the other.

More figures, robed, hooded, turbaned, followed from the houmfort bearing torches and bags; some moved. They made their way to the drums at the sides of the plaza, three others accompanied Papa Nebo, Gouede Oussou, the Midwife Gouede Mazacca to the three great drums, then retired. They began to beat the drums rhythmically, supported by chanting and the tapping of the smaller drums. Then they began to chant, the deep voice of the Drunkard, the high voice of the Midwife, the contralto of the Oracle blending as they repeated over and over:

Legba, me gleau, me manger:
Famille ramasse famille yo:
Legba, me gleau, me manger.

Over and over the three chanted, drumming, shuffling their own feet as they drummed; before them in the plaza the crowd began to respond; Yvette began to move her feet and her hips, and to join in the chant to Legba, *Legba, food and drink are here, family gathers with family, Legba, food and drink are here,* over and over, at first self-consciously, almost giggling at herself and her friend Celie, then more confidently, moving her body in the torchlight until perspiration began to mingle with the droplets of mist on her skin, her voice rising in the chant, *famille ramasse famille yo.*

From somewhere a young man had appeared, very black, very strong, wearing only sandals and trousers so tight that his genitals showed as a graceful swelling in the flaring torchlight; around his neck an ouanga hung, swaying against his chest as he danced. He stood facing Yvette; together they moved, together they chanted, *Legba, me gleau, me manger.*

From the houmfort came a fresh clamor. The chanting and drumming changed to a new rhythm, a new chant. Acolytes bearing giant black tapers descended the steps of the houmfort, passing between the rows of catafalques on the marbled portico, then came others bearing each a black rooster, the birds strangely silent, then a black goat led on a rope halter; at last, bearing cups of hollowed gourd, the mamaloi and papaloi.

Papa Nebo, Gouede Oussou and Gouede Mazacca continued their

chant. The crowd now stood silent, waiting. Yvette Leclerc felt a thrill jolt through her body as the black dancer took her hand; she leaned against him, feeling his sweaty skin against her face.

Papa Nebo greeted the mamaloi, took a black rooster from an acolyte, bowed to the mamaloi and whirled about, the drumming starting again as he did so. Papa Nebo held the rooster by its feet, stretched his arms to their full length, threw back his head and spun, spun, toward the mamaloi, toward the drummers, toward the crowd, around, around. The rooster flapped its wings impotently trying to escape; Papa Nebo spun more and more rapidly; finally the rooster, its head filled with the blood pushed there by centrifugal force, gave a piercing, jarring cock's crow, an instinctive scream of terror and despair.

Papa Nebo stopped, held the rooster above his head where all could see, grasped its head in one hand and its neck in the other and pulled and twisted. Again the rooster crowed, crowed, then stopped. With a convulsive jerk Papa Nebo tore the black head from the black neck. Blood gushing from the rooster's neck onto his ludicrous dress, Papa Nebo ran to the mamaloi and the papaloi, offered each a drink of the hot spurting blood directly from the rooster's neck, then began filling the cups.

A new chant sprang up, wild, frantic:

Eh! Eh! Bomba hen hen!
Canga bafie te
Danga moune de te
Canga do ki li!
Canga li!

Chanting, dancing, shuffling, the crowd moved forward, each kneeling in turn before the mamaloi or papaloi, receiving the chalice of hot, fresh blood. Papa Nebo took rooster after rooster from acolytes, tore the head from each to replenish the supplies of the two gourds. Yvette danced impatiently, holding the man she had danced with, moving slowly forward toward the sacrament.

At last they reached the head of the line. Yvette knelt before the papaloi. She looked upward, her arms spread to the sides. Papa Nebo had just refilled the chalice. The papaloi held it forward for her, steam rising from the hot blood into the night air, the rippling surface of the blood throwing back flickering glimmers of torchlight as the drums throbbed on all sides.

The cup came forward. Yvette clutched her ouanga bag with her two hands, plunged her face into the steaming blood, drank once, deeply, then rose from her knees. She felt hot exaltation flooding her body. She danced,

danced, the drumming filling her brain, turning it to a single, throbbing tambour that resonated in a steady, compelling beat.

She turned back to see her black partner rising from before the papaloi, a triumphant look in his eyes that must match that of her own, blood streaming redly from his lips to drip from his chin onto his naked chest. Yvette ran to him, kissed the gleaming red, licking the blood eagerly from his chest as he held her crushingly in massive arms.

Giddy with eagerness, she flung herself with the man onto the hard ground, vaguely aware that scores of couples were duplicating their act all around them in the torchlit plaza. Yvette wriggled from her brilliant blouse, struggled to open the front of the man's pants as he tore hers from her hips. Unable to wait even for him to claim her she managed somehow to push the man onto his back, crouched above him, felt his hands grasping her hips, pulling her down onto him as he thrust, thrust up into her.

The taste of the fresh hot blood still in her mouth, the feel of the man inside her body, she writhed forward and back, eagerly, excitedly, feeling him filling her, stretching her until she thought to burst with the size of him in her, then clamped convulsively to him as his two hands on her back brought her helplessly forward and down onto him, meeting a final mighty heave that filled her loins with a bursting, screaming ecstasy.

She fell forward, lay with her breasts warmed against his chest, her legs still spread wide to hold him, her lungs heaving great breaths in and out as the drums still throbbed in her head and the man's arms held her to him.

Now Yvette became aware that the drumming and chanting had changed yet again. The drumming was no longer abandoned but solemn, powerful. Yvette rolled off the man, sat up, felt him beside her. She saw others all around them sitting now, looking back toward the houmfort. Once more a torch could be seen, once more someone was emerging.

The chant rose again, now a single line, repeated over and over:

L'Appe vini, le grand zombi!
L'Appe vini, le grand zombi!

Carrying a flaring torch, advancing slowly from the houmfort, came the bloody god-figure Ogoun Badagris, dressed in traditional mock-military jacket, huge tasseled epaulets glistening, beret mounted rakishly, high-collared, his skintight trousers pure white, his jackboots a gleaming jet black.

Before him the others fell back: the acolytes, Papa Nebo, Gouede Oussou, Gouede Mazacca, the mamaloi, the papaloi. The chanting ceased, only the drumming continued.

Ogoun Badagris advanced to Papa Nebo, took from him his sickle. Ogoun Badagris seized the still-tethered goat, severed its rope with a single stroke of the sickle. The beast seemed paralyzed with fear. Ogoun Badagris lifted the goat in mighty arms, walked with it to the end of the rows of catafalques, lifted it high in one hand. With the other he flicked the sickle lightly, gracefully, so quickly that Yvette could hardly tell what had happened.

Even the beast gave but a single exclamation, a half-bleat, half-moan. Then its life-blood was pouring from its opened jugular. Ogoun held the spurting corpse over the first catafalque, then stepped to the next, the next.

At each bier, as the drops of hot blood struck the still form that had lain unmoving throughout the *danse*, there was a stirring. The shrouded figure rose, first to a sitting position, throwing the grave-cloth from itself. Then, body after body, they rose, stood dumbly beside their biers. Yvette stared in chilled fascination. Each body was a patchwork of black, white, brown. Here a face of pale white flesh rested on a neck of ebony, pale yellow hair cropped short on the scalp only adding to the bizarre sight. Here a hand of black on an arm of white. Here a torso neatly divided by a vertical line, one side dark, the other pale, as if two bodies had been blown in half, the ragged edges of each trimmed neatly away and the remaining halves sewn back together.

As Ogoun Badagris reached the end of the rows he threw the drained corpse of the goat to waiting acolytes, then turned back to face the rows of motionless zombies.

"After me!" he commanded them. "Into the houmfort!"

He did not look back to see that they obeyed, but turned and advanced once more into the building. Behind him, after a moment of hesitancy, the zombies began to move forward, forward.

Behind the last of them the doors of the houmfort closed with a monstrous reverberation. Yvette Leclerc forgot her black man, the blood, the chants and the *danse*. Wearing only her leathern ouanga bag she rose and ran frantically from the plaza.

11. *Across the Cislunar Vacuum*

Yellow stragglebangs pasted across his sweaty forehead Gunner Corporal Leander Laptip tried to figure out hownell *he'd* got alive into a miniship m away from the *Jimmie-O* when she'd got creamed by that big futhermucker nigra ship in the battle of whatever it was. Shorzell be

called the battle of something someday. Those big ones always did get names m smartass light commanders or gyrene majors were always reconstructing them and fighting them over and writing books about what this commander did right and what that one did wrong that made the battle come out the way it did.

M bajeez m bageorge that was one *hell* of a battle!

How many ships had N'Alabama lost in that battle? Leander couldn't even begin to calculate, but there must of been a hell of a lot. And the nigras must of lost a hell of a lot too, from what Leander could see from his go-go-bapper blister. Even counting off for projos.

M then something had got *him*. Something that . . . Leander tried to remember. Not a beam. No, that would be sudden and silent and. . . . And not a ram. No. He'd seen it coming, seen it but not in time to do anything about it. A projectile. A miniature, self-propelled, unmanned thing like a ship. Coming, coming at him, a black shaft in front of a burning behind, coming straight at him and his bapper and before he could try to knock it down—*krunk!*

Krunk, and then what?

Lucky for Leander that battle stations *meant* space armor, or he'd of been a vacuum quick-freeze case on the spot. Instead, somehow, in the mess and the tumble that followed . . . *Jimmie-O* must of took some worse hits than that little smack on the blister . . . Leander was into a miniship and away. Unconscious or hysterical. Out of sight of the fleet. Lost.

Headed at random for anyplace. Low on food and air.

* * *

Phillipe looked up from his endless paperwork at the sound of the opening door. He recognized his friend Raoul and gestured him to a wooden chair.

"How is production?" the visitor asked.

"Well enough. Harvesting continues. The supply seems to be holding up also. As long as we do not attempt to go too fast, I think this planet will continue to meet our needs. But I think we would all rest easier, both here and at home, if we could find some secondary source of the creatures." Phillipe leaned back and edged his shoulders once up and down the back of his chair, then folded his hands on his slight paunch and looked at Raoul.

Raoul lifted a trinket from Phillipe's desk and toyed with it silently. Several times he appeared about to speak but each time stopped short of the first room.

Phillipe hummed.

Raoul cleared his throat.

Phillipe said, "Well."

Raoul said, "Mmm, yes."

Phillipe said, "And how are things over at the site?"

"No progress," Raoul said. "You know the vacuum over on Vache has preserved the artifact nicely. Here on Cayamitte it wouldn't have lasted very long—you know Captain Bonsard thinks that stuff the metal detectors picked up on Cayamitte might once have been a similar device."

Phillipe nodded.

"If he is right, though, there is nothing left that could possibly be salvaged. Now the Vache artifact . . ." he trailed off with a pregnant gesture of the two hands.

"Is Bonsard at the site now?"

Raoul grunted an affirmative.

"I knew his aunt back in N'Porprince," Phillipe volunteered. "She worked in my section at the ministry. Grumpy middle-aged woman. Liked nothing better than giving unfavorable reports on everyone. Like a child tattling on his fellows. M. Caneton dozed at his desk this afternoon. M. Belledor arrived late again this morning. Well, it must have an effect. See, here I am on this little moon, and poor Belledor found himself drafted. Can you imagine Christophe as marine?" He chuckled ruefully.

He recovered from the moment's reverie. "Raoul," he resumed, "why all the fuss anyway, over the artifact? Ancient objects have been found before. Is this one so special? Why do we not ship it back to N'Haiti if it is?"

Raoul rose from his chair and began to pace about the office. "Credit the clever Captain Edouard Bonsard for that. He thinks it is a weapon. He thinks that it can be repaired and used as a defense in case the enemy attack us here."

Phillipe rose, dismayed. "But the whole N'Yu-Atlanchi operation depends on stealth. Everyone agrees that we cannot fortify that entire planet. The conditions there—the crystal barely sustains the weight we place on it now. If we brought in weapons—" he shook his head.

"Right. So we have some weapons here on Cayamitte and on Vache, but mainly we rely on stealth. The *blancs* are busy defending their own world and trying to attack N'Haiti, as long as they do not know about the N'Yu-Atlanchi project, it should be reasonably safe."

"So?"

"So, still Bonsard wants more defense. And he believes that he can repair the Vache artifact and that it is a weapon."

"And you think—what?"

"I think he is right!"

"Then why do you oppose him?"

"Because, first of all, I am not *sure* he is right. The artifact might prove to be—anything—once it is repaired. *Probably* it is a weapon. But what if it is a beacon that will communicate with someone incredibly distant and alien who left it there on Vache? Or a vehicle? Or some sort of automatic manufactory? Or—" again "—anything? It should be studied with the utmost caution, by qualified researchers. And Captain Bonsard has just taken it upon himself to try to repair it.

"Second, if it is a weapon, what kind of weapon? Does it fire projectiles? Beams of some sort? What if it is a bomb, a dud, and once repaired it will blow itself up and half of Vache with it? Bonsard is risking too much!"

* * *

Alone in its miniship coffin, the dessicated corpse that had once been Gunner Corporal Leander Laptip of the N'Alabama spacerines floated serenely among the stars. An automatic pickup beacon in the miniship broadcast its distress call, but with limited power and at mere light speed, it was unlikely ever to be picked up by a potential rescuer. And if it were, what good would that do?

Leander Laptip didn't care if he *ever* was rescued.

But the beacon went out, and the ship continued to float, coasting along in a more-or-less straight trajectory as it had on its small self-contained power charge. Too small for an agonized-matter system, the miniship couldn't get either the speed or the powered range of a big starship, but coasting it could go forever.

It might have headed anywhere. Leander Laptip didn't care that his body happened to be headed toward the star designated NGC 7007.

* * *

Captain Bonsard accepted the micro circuit-layer from the ordnance sergeant and bent over the last remaining gap in the circuitry of the artifact. His eyes felt tired and his fingers trembled from the fine work, and to relax he hunkered back on his heels and looked up at the sky.

"Good to be rid of those overcautious busybody civilians, eh, Sergeant?" he said.

Agreement crackled back through his helmet radio.

"Now, we'll get this thing finished and see about testing it out," the captain went on.

The sergeant said, "Yes, sir."

Captain Bonsard stretched his arms to get out any kinks. Overhead he

could see the tiny blob of Cayamitte and huge globe of N'Yu-Atlanchi, glowing and glittering, turquoise and sunflower, as always a beautiful sight against the black sky. Distant NGC 7007 glinted dull green.

Bonsard returned to the artifact. A tiny line, clearly a circuit running between two nodules that projected slightly from a rounded, glazed cylinder, had had a gap gouged in it, how long ago, probably (Bonsard thought) by some glancing micrometeor. Now he, Edouard Bonsard, would repair the tiny bit of cosmic mischief. He flicked on the circuit-layer, adjusted its tip to a tiny aperture and applied it to one broken end of the ancient circuit.

The tool adhered to the micro-circuit. Bonsard drew the tool slowly, meticulously, toward the other severed end. The circuit extended in the path of the tool, moving slowly toward the other end. Finally only the tool itself separated the ends of the circuit. Carefully Bonsard withdrew the circuit-layer, waiting until the two threads of material were joined before turning it off and handing it back to the ordnance sergeant.

Only then did he heave a huge sigh of relieved tension. "Finished!" he said.

"When will we test it, sir?" the sergeant asked.

* * *

Uncle Dudley, after a period of near-ostracism, was being readmitted into mother and father's good graces, and this afternoon, while they visited old acquaintances in a place (the term is used loosely, more to suggest a concept than to represent a specificity) really quite, *quite* distant in terms of space, time, and, uh, "fnedge," Uncle Dudley was left in charge of Junior, who would only have grown bored and unruly during a long ride and a dull visit.

Uncle Dudley was prepared to bribe Junior into good behavior with something nice he'd bought down to Plenum's, that mother and father didn't know about and if Junior wouldn't tell neither would Dudley.

Junior accepted the gift.

Uncle settled on the parlor couch for a nap.

Junior used the new toy to diddle with his last gift from Plenum's. ("The Universe.") It was great fun, and Uncle Dudley slept soundly, poor old simp. You know how kids are when their parents are away and they sense that the baby-sitter isn't too sharp about discipline.

* * *

Captain Bonsard looked into the black sky above Vache, his hands still on the now-repaired Vache artifact. Suddenly he pointed in the direction of Omicron Sigma XXIVa. "Sergeant!" he croaked. "Look!"

The ordnance sergeant turned to follow the captain's gesture. "It's a ship, sir! One of theirs!"

After only a moment's stunned hesitation Captain Bonsard said, "There's your answer, Sergeant. We test the Vache weapon now! I don't know how those white devils ever found out about the N'Yu-Atlanchi project, and they must be total idiots to send a single ship against us, but this is our chance to prove the worth of the Vache artifact!"

The N'Alabamian ship was approaching the zenith of the sky over Vache. A miniature dart, graceful, pointed at its fore end, bulging and then tapered again to a wasplike waist, then flared tail fins, the miniship was silhouetted against the glowing, sparkling disk of N'Yu-Atlanchi itself, N'Yu-Atlanchi where black men labored in warm saline seas to harvest S'tschai.

Captain Bonsard knelt beside the Vache artifact, sighting through devices built untold ages ago, his hand inside its articulated armor indirectly setting control devices of equal antiquity.

At last it was done. The artifact may have vibrated gently; Bonsard could not be sure whether the slight tremor that gripped him was the product of the artifact's restored life or of his own excitement. He watched the interloper coasting silently, intercepted by invisible forces across the cislunar vacuum that separated the small moon Vache from its primary N'Yu-Atlanchi. The ship seemed to vibrate in its course, then slowly to fade, as if disintegrated outright, or as if shaken into pieces too small to be seen at this range.

The resonations of the Vache artifact continued at light speed until they reached the surface of the planet, working their silent and unseen changes until . . .

A bit of crystal chipped away. A hairline crack appeared, lengthened, opened wide. A bung hole was enlarged. A lazily flowing current of saline fluid turned into a churning, roaring flow.

A tide arose, sweeping outward in a circular path, growing rather than attenuating as it advanced. Behind its heightening front naked crystal was exposed for the first time since the planet's strange equilibrium had been attained.

Larger and larger areas of crystal shook, cracked, crumbled. More fluid was exposed. The huge wave grew larger and larger. More crystal, new layers exposed, destroyed, swept away before newer waves of gloriously sparkling enriched sea-water.

Hundreds of black workers were swept before the flood or plunged into the shifting, crumbling crystal.

Billions of tiny unthinking homunculi died.

Deep within the centermost crystalline shell of the planet a great, fecund, bloated travesty of womanhood was rent by shifting, violent forces.

Millions of miles away NGC 7007 shone on its baleful green. In due course it would feel the great resonation.

Somewhere else (loosely speaking) Uncle Dudley dozed contentedly while his nephew was barely able to restrain his shrieks of glee.

12. *A Distant Pearl-Tinted Horizon*

Marius Goncourt picked his way carefully through the rubble on the Henri-Bourassa, peeped around the corner onto the Rue Cote Vertu. It seemed clear. He slipped around the pockmarked edge of the building and started up the last few score paces to the Ministry, attache case in hand. He was well up the street when it happened.

From above there came the crackle of superheated ozone. Marius flung himself into an opening, not stopping to see what it was. The Rue Cote Vertu was suddenly filled with crackles, hisses of steam where laserifle beams struck late standing puddles of water, occasional snaps and crashes of broken glass when window panes were suddenly heated to a thousand degrees.

Marius looked cautiously from his hiding place, trying to detect the source of the laserifle fire. The beam which had nearly burned a sudden hole in him must have come from a window high across the Rue Cote Vertu. Fire had been returned from several points in and around the Ministry.

Again the air crackled and a circle of cement sidewalk near Marius' hiding place charred and crumbled. The fire was returned—two, three laserifles were discharged into the window. From across the thoroughfare came a sound between a gasp and moan. A form appeared in the window, tumbled forward into the morning sunshine, somersaulted into the air, spun downward toward the sidewalk spinning and twisting with surrealistic slowness until it struck with a solidly satisfying thump.

Two soldiers started forward, running across the Rue Cote Vertu toward the body. Marius rose and started from his own position. Again the air crackled as a second sniper took up the work of the first. One soldier fell to the pavement, black smoke curling upward from a wound, neatly

drilled and cauterized by the laserifle beam. A second beam struck Marius' attache case. As he dropped it and flung himself flat on the macadam he saw the second soldier fall to one knee, raise a laserifle to his shoulder and hurl a beam at the window. Again came the sound of a man pierced by sudden white heat. A laserifle tumbled from the window and clattered onto the street below, but the body of the sniper fell this time back into the upstairs room.

Marius and the surviving soldier ran first to the soldier's comrade, then to the sniper on the sidewalk. Both were dead. The two men looked at each other, the surviving soldier recognizing Marius from the Ministry. "M. Goncourt, were you hit?"

Ruefully Marius held up his case. "It was close, but he missed me. Can you summon the guard and check out the other sniper? I thought this area was cleared!"

The soldier said, "We thought so too, M. Goncourt. It cost us a man. Yes sir, I will attend to this."

Marius turned away and entered the Ministry. Past the self-service vending stand where Maurice had formerly held court, up wooden stairs now cracked and shaky, he reached the office of Minister Antoine-Simone. Marius entered the room. The Minister looked up from a table surrounded by representatives of government departments.

"M. Goncourt, you are late, you know. Punctuality is the hallmark of the efficient man. We have already started."

Marius said, "I am sorry, sir. There was a sniper incident—."

The Minister cut him off. "No excuses, please. To business. Captain Girard was briefing us on the current balance of forces against the enemy. Please resume, Captain." He waved toward the naval officer.

Girard, neat in undress khaki, spoke wearily. "I was nearly finished anyway, M. le Minister. To summarize, then, the deep space battle of Omicron Sigma XXIVa left both fleets, the enemy's and our own, severely decimated. We believe that the enemy is in even worse condition than we.

"However, the surprise invasion of La Gonave and N'Haiti proper further complicates the problem. Our counterattack from the bastions at La Ferriere and Dajabon has been highly successful. We have retaken all major population centers on the planet, and only scattered bands of blancs wandering the back country remain."

The naval officer looked sheepishly at Marius, then said, "Of course there will still be isolated incidents here and there until we have cleared the enemy completely from the planet, but they are to be expected."

M. le Minister broke in. "Very well, Captain Girard. We have full faith in Admiral Gouede Mazacca and the rest of the military. We know

that N'Haiti itself is being secured. But what of La Gonave? We cannot survive without the agricultural imports for very long."

"Ah, very good, yes." Captain Girard ran a finger around the inside of his uniform collar. "Well, as you know, the N'Alabamian attack on La Gonave succeeded because we did not have sufficient forces to defend the moon. Governor Faustin is a prisoner of the enemy. They are apparently using him to force the populace to remain docile. Deputy Governor Laurance has set up a resistance capitol at Jacmel, using the authority of the traditional queen of La Gonave, Ti Meminne, to counter orders that the enemy puts out in the name of Governor Faustin."

He stopped. Antoine-Simone said, "When can we get a force onto La Gonave?"

"The fleet is in good condition again. There was plenty of salvage after Omicron Sigma XXIVa. The only problem is manpower. That is why we are appealing to your Ministry, m'sieu. What has become of the resuscitee program?"

Marius opened his attache case and removed a sheaf of papers. They were marked by a neatly bored hole in one corner, surrounded by a narrow charred area. Using the papers as notes he spoke briefly.

"The resuscitee program is completed, as far as we are able to determine. The experimental phase of the program was completely successful. Large-scale operations were inaugurated at N'Yu-Atlanchi, with a harvest rate of approximately 6,000 S'tschai per local day. This rate would supply us with controls for salvaged casualties as rapidly as we could use them.

"Unfortunately, as you are aware, the N'Yu-Atlanchi disaster occurred before the full harvest rate had been effective very long. One of the military personnel assigned was responsible for the disaster." He looked at Captain Girard, who looked the other way.

"We can supply a sufficient force of resuscitees to outfit a full-scale assault on La Gonave in hopes of recapturing it. But there will be no further resuscitees after that. Once the present supply is expended, no more. At least, our people have not been able to achieve resuscitation without S'tschai, and we have not found S'tschai anywhere beside N'Yu-Atlanchi."

Minister Antoine-Simone looked to Captain Girard once more. The captain spoke. "M. Goncourt's assessment of the situation agrees with our own. Since our fleet's recovery from Omicron Sigma XXIVa we have set up a picket line and prevented the enemy from reinforcing their garrison on La Gonave. We believe that the tide of battle has turned and that we shall be able to invade the enemy's home world. But first we must regain our own food supply. We will use the resuscitee troops to mount a counter-invasion and retake La Gonave.

"Further, let me say that the N'Yu-Atlanchi disaster was not a disaster entirely. The Vache artifact—let me call it the Vache resonator—is being duplicated. Our fleet is being equipped with resonators and they should prove highly useful in the attack on N'Alabama. We do not wish to use them against La Gonave for obvious reasons, but if we take out some large chunks of the enemy's home planet it should do much to encourage him to make peace."

* * *

He stood in line with the others, R troops stretching to left and right in checkboarded ranks, clad in combat jeans and boots, each R trooper carrying weapons and spare charge-paks, helmeted and infra-goggled. Before each platoon stood a black NCO. Somehow, deep in his mind, there was an awareness of who and where he was, a pride in military bearing and readiness, but these were buried deep beneath a thick layer of indifference.

The NCO was facing away from the R troopers, toward a N'Haitian spacerine officer who stood farther away. The trooper heard the N'Haitian officer shout a command to the platoon NCO's. He saw his own NCO face about toward the R troopers. The NCO shouted a command. The R trooper, ego remote and tranquil, sensed a momentary delay, then felt a control cut in. His body turned ninety degrees. As it did so his eyes saw the R troopers about him do the same.

There was another command from the NCO. Again the control operated. The trooper felt his arms and legs begin to move with a rhythmic regularity as he and the rest of the unit marched forward.

There was no point in trying to override the control, whatever it was. This he had long since learned. Avoiding the hopeless struggle he was content to stay, an observer in his own body, feeling the rush of air in and out of his lungs, feeling the movement of his marching body, hearing the unison tramp of hundreds of feet, seeing the backs of the R troopers ahead of him as the control marched his body, swinging his neatly spliced arms so that the unmatched hands swung into the bottom of his field of vision with each pace—left, right, black, white, left, white, black, right, black, white . . .

More commands, turns, halt and wait, then face and march again, all at the commands of the N'Haitians, all at the control of something other than his ego, he watched and experienced but did not act.

The R troopers sat now on benches in the hold of an ill-smelling ship. On command, controls moved hands to clamp safety hooks around feet

and waists. Whichever way the ship pointed, wherever the gravity of the moment dictated was up, the troopers would keep their seats.

For a seemingly long time—he had no way of measuring it—the ship remained unmoving, as did the R troopers on their benches. Their N'Haitian commanders were not to be seen. He wondered impersonally why they were on the ship, where they were to be transported and for what purpose, but then it was not really very important.

He looked through his eyes at the trooper ahead of him. His own hands were again in his field of vision, clasped near the muzzle of his weapon, black fingers and white fingers interwoven to steady the weapon against takeoff and gravitational irregularity. The back of the head his eyes were fixed upon showed white skin and longish blond hair. At the base of the skull a long and livid scar was visible. The trooper was sitting stationary, as stationary as he himself. Beyond the blond trooper he could see another and another. Each one, regardless of skin color or pattern, bore the same long scar at the base of the skull.

After unmeasured time the bench and floor beneath him seemed to shake gently. A bass rumble filled his ears and the image in his eyes jiggled before returning to normal. Again it happened. This time the rumble grew to a roar and the shaking of the bench and floor turned to a steady vibration. The bench and floor pressed upward against him for a long time, then the roaring ceased, the room became still, the floor and bench ceased to press upwards and he felt himself trying to float this way or that, held in place by the straps at his feet and waist.

He floated against the straps.

His eyes saw backs, a wall beyond, an occasional gray slab of floor or ceiling.

His ears heard ship noises, breathing, creaking.

His body felt weight, pressures, textures.

In time his body felt the spinning gravity of a gyro maneuver, then there was the rumbling and vibration again.

The NCO stepped into his field of vision and issued a command. He felt his body responding to control by loosening straps, rising, proceeding with his fellow R troopers through the narrow aisle between benches, through a port, down a corridor. On command his hand reached out to take hold of an extensile cable, hooked it into a ring on his battle pack.

On command the file of R troopers moved past a bin of oxymasks. On command his hand took one and fitted it to his face. On command the file of R troopers moved into a ready crouch. His eyes saw a space door slide back. His eyes saw that they were in night, high above land but within an atmosphere that twinkled the lights of distant stars.

On command the bodies of the R troopers moved forward, through the space door, leaping out one by one, the extensile cable playing out behind them. In his turn he leaped into the blackness. Falling, tumbling, his eyes saw far below small concentrations of city lights. As the extensile cable jerked against his battle pack his head snapped upwards and his eyes saw a distant pearl-tinted horizon, then tracked upward and saw blackness, blackness sprinkled with millions of points of light. At the edge of his field of vision his eyes caught a brief glimpse of the planet from which the ship had come.

His skin felt air shrieking past as the cable lowered the R troopers deeper and deeper into the atmosphere. Finally his ears began to hear the sounds of troopers landing—thumps, involuntary exclamations. Now a voice as some NCO landed and began issuing commands. Then footsteps and sounds of R troopers moving about under control.

With a jolt his own feet struck ground. Momentum pitched him forward into a rolling tumble. When he stopped his ears heard an NCO's commands. Then the control brought him back to his feet, raised his hand to disconnect from the extensile cable, checked out his equipment. On command his eyes found the nearest trooper, his legs walked to him and their hands checked each other's condition.

Quickly under command the platoons of R troopers formed up. His unit spread into battle formation, moved forward with others toward a nearby farming village. As they approached the village his eyes saw the glare of laser fire. He heard NCO voices issuing commands, felt his body obeying. Watching through his eyes he was distantly aware that there were heavy casualties. R troopers fell, fell, but more continued to move up from the rear. Always there seemed to be NCO voices, always the control moving hands and feet, eyes aiming, fingers firing, and again moving forward.

Now they were into the village, and from somewhere he saw that there was heavy weapons fire. Houses were exploded, streets blocked, fronts of buildings ripped away. His eyes saw bright objects flashing overhead, followed by sounds of roars and whooshes followed by explosions.

Through the night they moved and fought. By dawn R troopers occupied the town. His eyes saw incredible numbers of R trooper casualties lying about. Far fewer corpses of N'Alabamian occupiers, but no live prisoners.

For days the bodies of the R troopers fought the N'Alabamian occupiers. No reinforcements came for the occupiers. R troopers came, came, fell in hideous overproportion to N'Alabamians but came, came. Finally the trooper's mind, distantly and without involvement, analyzed what his eyes and ears had observed.

La Gonave was in N'Haitian hands. N'Alabamian forces were wiped out. Perhaps, his mind speculated, a few N'Alabamians might have escaped into rural areas. For years to come, perhaps, there would be occasional skirmishes between local nigras and leftover blancs. But no matter really.

On NCO command surviving R troopers dug long trenches. Under control they dragged to them bodies of dead N'Alabamians, N'Haitians, R troopers, began filling the trenches and covering them over. When all the corpses had been attended to there remained some R troopers and some trench space.

On NCO command and under control the R troopers filed along the remaining trench space, their legs pitching their bodies into the trenches. Following R troopers covered them over. At last the trooper reached open space. On NCO command and under control he pitched his body in. As it tumbled and struck the side of the trench it twisted so that it lay at the bottom of the trench facing upward.

Distantly and without involvement he watched with his eyes as another trooper pitched in upon him, then another and another until only a few gleams of light penetrated between the piled-up R troopers. There was a gentle tap from above as still other troopers, following along behind in the line under NCO command and controlled, covered over the trench.

At last all was dark and the sounds of tumbling troopers and tamping soil moved beyond range of his ears. Distantly and without real concern the trooper's mind wondered how long it would be supplied with oxygen and blood. But no matter really.

13. *The Lower Half of Hir Face*

After enough nothing Ch'en-Gordon began to achieve a fullness of aware. Not any longer a pink vermiform sea-dwelling post-hominoid monstrosity, not merely a S'tscha. And not, oh absolutely not a man.

Something new.

Ch'en-Gordon could feel the clamminess and slight pressure of unpacked shallow soil, the press of other abandoned R troopers around hir torso and limbs. Se tried to open hir eyes, found them held shut by hir own arm, flung across them, perhaps reflexively, before the dirt had begun to fall.

With an effort se was able to raise hir arm sufficiently from hir eyes to open them, but was met only with utter blackness. Se strained upward with both arms, then with hir knees. Se was able to move hir four macrolimbs sufficiently to clear a small space above most of hirself, and thereafter to

move hir macrolimbs at will, although for a short distance only, before encountering the dirt above.

Hir breathing was difficult but not dangerously so. Se was clearly close enough to the surface that sufficient air penetrated the loose dirt to permit breathing.

Straining once more to obtain additional free space around hir hands, se clutched the hand of another immobile R trooper, felt it respond to hir touch with a desperate grasping, tugging of its own. Ch'en-Gordon ceased hir pulling but continued to hold the hand. As if assured that se was not to be abandoned by hir new discoverer, the R trooper also abandoned hir frantic activity, but continued to grasp Ch'en-Gordon hir hand.

Ch'en-Gordon took as deep a breath as se could, then began to work hir way upward through the soft and crumbling soil. To do so se released hir grip on the hand of the other R trooper, who seemingly understood Ch'en-Gordon hir purpose. Almost immediately Ch'en-Gordon could hear the other struggling, digging along with hir.

Se used hir macroknees, pounding them again and again upward into the loose dirt, striving not merely to pack it tighter above hir and gain a little more room, but to lift it, to raise the dirt above hir, eventually to break through the surface to the free air above. Hir hands too, aided vastly by the strangely unfamiliar *fingers* of the macroappendages, relying on the Gordon portion of hir personality for the right neural connections and commands.

Dirt jammed beneath hir fingernails, entered and pained hir external eyes until se was forced to hold them squeezed closed against the crumbs and grains; when se gasped for air it filled hir mouth and se struggled with hir only Gordon-familiar tongue to push the dirt back out, shoving with hir tongue, blowing and spitting before most of the dirt was cleared, forming a gritty mud that plastered the lower half of hir face and neck.

Straining upward, clawing through the cold dirt, grunting and heaving with effort se managed finally to thrust one dirt-crusted hand out of the all-grasping soil. Se braced hir weight on hir other elbow, gathering hir strength for another thrust that might bring hir arm and shoulder above the ground. Instead se felt hir hand grasped, felt a powerful pull. Se pushed upward with all hir remaining strength, aiding hir unknown rescuer, felt hirself rising, the flesh all but torn from the bones of hir macrobody, then with an intensely painful wrench felt hirself rise from the mass grave of the R troopers.

Se stood in the cool night air of La Gonave, swaying slightly. The field in which se had lain was lighted to nearly daylight intensity by the brilliant glow of N'Haiti, hanging monstrously huge in the dark sky, its

heavy mass threatening as if at any moment it would fall to the ground of its own moon, obliterating all that existed there, perhaps disintegrating the body of the satellite itself.

Ch'en-Gordon was shaken by the grasp of another R trooper. Hir gaze dropped to be met by that of hir fellow, who moved hir head sideways, gesturing forbiddingly at the bloated globe in the sky. Ch'en-Gordon moved hir head also, as if to give assent. The other R trooper removed hir hands from Ch'en-Gordon hir shoulders. Se pointed at the tumbled earth which rustled and heaved as hands, feet, faces, brown, black, white, poked upward.

They returned to the nearest furrow, together seizing a death-white foot that protruded from the mass grave, pulled at it until a complete patchwork corpse was exposed. They dropped the leg and the body rose, slowly and painfully, from the soil. The new figure gazed about as in wonderment, then stood staring skyward as hir eyes were captured by the giant bulk of the planet. Again the charade of shaking and gesturing was performed, and the three R troopers set about freeing comrades from their mutual tomb, their graveclothes R trooper uniforms, new but covered with the soil of La Gonave.

Those corpses which failed to move of their own power, they left.

Ch'en-Gordon looked around, seeking the faces of the patchwork troopers around hir. At last se advanced to another, one whose body was huge, a uniform, glistening, muscled black. Hir face was a mottle, the eyes a glazed blue, the hair a lank, straggling yellow, the skin a sickly white except for a masklike swath of black taking in what was left of the nose, the lower cheeks, mouth and jaw.

Ch'en-Gordon tried to speak. Se moved hir mouth, hir throat trembled, se heard hirself produce a gravelly moan.

The other R trooper made the same attempt, achieved no more success.

All around hir Ch'en-Gordon saw R troopers attempting to speak but succeeding only in uttering painful inarticulations.

Ch'en-Gordon stood with macroarms hanging at hir sides. The dual nervous system, interconnected by spiremal filaments penetrating the medulla oblongata of the larger brain, their almost monomolecular acid-chains stretching throughout the nervous system of the patchwork corpse, strained to devise some way of communicating with the other R troopers.

At last Ch'en-Gordon advanced to hir mottled fellow. Se opened hir mouth, gestured the other to do likewise. Se stepped forward, grasped the other with hir palms on the cheeks of the other, tilted hir head to the side using Gordon-synapses to control the movement, and clasped hir mouth onto that of the other.

Se thrust hir tongue into the mouth of the other, feeling the cold moisture therein. Within Ch'en-Gordon's tongue the millions of spiremal threads writhed, snakelike; like feeding medusae they plunged into the icy tongue of the other R trooper, growing micro-inches downward into the wet flesh, contacting spiremal nerve filaments, exchanging data, telling, learning, planning, feeling the cold breath of the two as it rasped from throat to throat.

At last se felt that se had learned and told enough. The filaments detumesced. Se drew hir mouth from that of the other R trooper, turned and shambled across the field to find others with whom to share the plan. By the time N'Haiti had passed its zenith, decades of R troopers had received the plan.

By the time N'Haiti had reached a point halfway down the sky toward the horizon of La Gonave, the R troopers were moving on the Jacmel tarmac.

By the time the Jacmel tarmac was fully alight, the brilliance of true daylight replacing the murky glare of N'Haiti, the R troop landing ship *Lumumba* had left behind a seared and scarred concavity.

By the time N'Haiti again glared down on Jacmel, the gigantic fleet of Grand Admiral Gouede Mazacca had been augmented by the addition of the R troop landing ship *Lumumba* and her cargo of patchwork corpses.

* * *

In the sky of the Independent Planet of New Alabama the R troop landing ship *Lumumba* took position in a N'Haitian picket line. In stationary orbit *Lumumba* effectively hovered, day and night, the glare of NGC 7007 alternately appearing and disappearing from behind the red dirtball constantly below. On board, R troopers alternately watched watches and slumbered, nourished by minute quantities of hyperconcentrated food modules.

Ch'en-Gordon during one watch opened hir mouth to another R trooper, then a third, a fourth.

Hours later a glittering dart dropped from formation in the black sky over N'Alabama. Lower and lower its orbit dropped, the planetscape below slowly beginning to move forward as it rose and grew toward the *Lumumba.* At an appropriate height above ground the *Lumumba's* propulsors spurted briefly; her descent leveled off. An orifice appeared in her hull and the familiar extensile cable, smooth, rounded and gray, dropped toward the surface of the planet.

At a selected point an R trooper hooked onto the cable, slid downward,

halted momentarily just above the surface of N'Ala, then dropped silently into a nighted field.

The *Lumumba* continued across the planet, R troopers checking invasion maps against familiar landmarks, returning, returning to familiar farms, to villages and cities in every semi-autonomous megacounty on the planet, to Abbeville and Albertville, Boaz and Bay Minette, to Citronelle, Carbon Hill, Dixiana, Eufaula, Goodwater, Huntsville, Jasper and Lipscomb and Letohatchie.

Ch'en-Gordon climbed down the cable at Letohatchie.

The first N'Alabamian Ch'en-Gordon approached looked once, double took, exclaimed—What the shee-it!—and drew a revolver. Ch'en-Gordon, hir reflexes slowed by the double consciousness of S'tscha and Man, was taken. Halfway to town, se found hirself riding the rest of the way in a whining patrol gyrocar. In the Letohatchie town jail se gazed out a barred window into a dusty square, contemplating something that might not have been a multiple-slot bicycle rack.

Interrogations produced no answers.

Se was locked up for the night, fed a bowl of slop and guarded by a deputy who slept in a chair at the end of the sparsely populated cell block. Hours later Ch'en-Gordon lay on hir cell floor, face to the bars, mouth open, tongue lolling on the cement floor. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, filaments grew, spiremes were thrust through the surface of hir tongue.

The sleeping guard snuffled in his sleep; his jaw dropped onto his chest as he began softly to snore.

Ch'en-Gordon hir spiremes lengthened. Se did not smile, but hir spiremes lengthened.

Before the guard wakened he betrayed his trust. Then he did not waken after all.

Ch'en-Gordon stepped past the dead guard, let hirself quietly out of the Letohatchie town jail, walked unhurriedly past the perhaps bicycle rack, making quietly for the less lighted and less frequented portion of Letohatchie familiar to the Gordon portion of hir personality.

Over the weeks that followed se lived unobtrusively in shadows, sleeping days in abandoned shacks, prowling nights in ill-lit alleys, preying on occasional stray citizens. From sleeping derelicts se learned, via filaments provided by hir Ch'en component, of the progress of N'Haiti's siege of N'Alabama. The Gordon component of hir duality was not pleased by what se learned.

Still, the Ch'en component remained aloof, unmotivated, devoted only to life and to experience, striving only at the command of some unobliterated instinct, to survive.

And Ch'en-Gordon hir N'Haitian conditioning settling over the two components, the S'tscha and the human, the spell of the *vodu,* the influences of the Goncourt treatments, the blended ancient memories of sparkling blue-green seas and red rut roads, nourishingly pervasive warm salinities and spacerine training, blended to produce a creature whose craft assured that survival, at least for the time being.

14. *His Sweetheart's Loving Arms*

Freddie checked his plaingrays, okays, some days anyways, brass buttons plain too (no star zm braz) buddy had his bentfin boomer on, polished up, proud of that, still a sign of exclusive prestige, helped a bit clearing dinner dishes, gave his roommate a farewell hug na little peck on full soft lips, a nice cheery friendly helpmeet, slightly chubby m perspirey blond Bayou La Batre boy, turned m got a nice cheery friendly little goose in response m started for work.

He closed the door behind him, gave it a quick locking, heard dear roomie do same inside, plus a slide bar latch, m started downstairs. Outside thugly wooden pile Freddie tooka looka either side tillie spied all clear (no fear), no gangies tubie scene. Offie stepped along the cracked m pitted sidewalk, lookina round, no gangies found, notta sound, flishing his handcranked flishlite. (Few anteek lampposts still standing, but who remembered what they were once for? Fyadone like dark carry a flishlight, bebay.)

Past pinkred B A R past Pigpeg's Pusspar (John Darn all garn) past EATS. Weapons shop close to stock-out, got only stickers left m boppers. Any what zaps, baps or whaps sold out just about. Self-wash surfery. Ononon. Military supplies gotta lotta craponie.

Letohatchie Noozan Sundries still there selling plenty boyboy books, prixpix, nookies bookies. Nooz? Fews. Not so big now, lookin like mimeo work: NIGRA GO HOME PAPADOCS GET OUT R SKY PISSFIRE WHERE R U NOW?

Y Bi Noozes? Headlines allasame allagame allasize allalize. Stick stick stick. So: Why nigra picket fleet up there constantly? How cum spacerines demobed? Wassamatta Pissfire Pallbox, wassamatta Yancey Moorman, wassamatta Eugene Youngerman, things ben going from worse to worst laylyn Leto.

—Yech!—sayn Freddie napproachesiz place of employment.

Up the old ricketycricketys, through the old wooden with the cracked m taped stapaglass, into the back room m—Ello emcee.—Ello Freddie.—

Ello emem.—Ello Freddie.—Ello boyzm band.—Ello Freddie.—m outen plaingrays m into costume m drinkadrink (not such great stuff these days but who was any more?) m peek out at the floorn see cussomers coming in now mostly chubby blond boys (no ladies visible but who could notarize that?) m soon very soon to work.

== SHOW TIME! ==

After, out back door (avoid hostility, plate safe, mister emcee's disclaimer should work but who can be certain?) m stroll a bit (dangerous that but wudda hake, a man (mmm) garra live). Past PPPP couple times, tempin, tempin, but who got the price m besides, is that nice? Thinka sweet chubby little tubby from Bayou La Batre waiting at home, all snug in bed m waggin that head waiting for Freddie.

He takes a couple looks at the old pickets up there, first making a big circle with his eyes (many a fellerz fallen prey to desperadoes while gaping at the skies with his eyes) m then looking at them shipfeeding papadocs if looks could kill beggars would be risers you new.—Yech!—he sayn m goes tizzome.

A little fun there okay but shortish before sunrise poor old Bayou La Batre boy he's awakened by Freddie yobbeling iniz sleep. Freddie he yobbels for somebody, some old gyrene buddiepal Bayou La Batre boy don't catch no name m a little snubbelin m bubbelin m more yobbels from Freddie for this time Gordon somebody m poor Bayou La Batre boy he gets jealous. Freddie wakens up alone in bed, puzzled. That's a mought distressing.

And the morning and the evening were the (so who's counting?) day.

Freddie he worked nightly, wept slightly, kept sprightly up with B La B boy, bebay, so don't you surlymouth him, leesee stayed outen Pigpeg's (beside he couldn't afford it).

* * *

Manother night Freddie gets to work late. Late? Wait! Almost not at all. Crowds in Mane Street! Rumors! Shouts m fistfights! Summony crashes by accident (mmm?) threwa store front. Sullenly everybody—spoosh!—into the store, onto the floor, back out the door m everybody got a new pair shoes, blue jeans, sweatshirts, wotnot.

Look! Uppina sky! Issa turd! Issa crane! Iss nigraships!

They been there too long. Nobody gets onta N'Alabama, nobody gets offa N'Alabama. Nigra pickets. Protest, protest! To (let us be correct, m?) whom? N'Ala's allies don't want to get involved. Hey gang, we all faw you! Zokkituum & Rossaruck! But we stain clean!

Rumors, rumors, yoladywarez bloomers! Where's old Pissfire Pallbox these days, where's old Yancey Moorman? Finally somebody pops outen City Hall wiffa nounce meant. It's, now this is serious, bebay, Leto's own beloved mayor, the white honorable Milburn Mitchum. Zez:

—Sizzens, sizzens, gotta make a big announcement. Word comen from N'Mongummy just now, just now. Old Gene Youngerman—Mayor Mitchum he turned his head m spat in the red dirt—been thrown out m placed under arrest for badfeasance m treason. Gomma be on trile right away. Meanwhile we gotta temporary provisional interim acting transitional gumt. Old Admiral Moorman, hez temporary provisional and et cetera governor of the independent planet of New Alabama. Old General Pallbox, hez tempo cetera principal executive.

—Troops comen from old Fort Sealy Mae to help us keep order. Ah asken all sizzens telp, keep calm, maintain law norder. Now remember we got a primary election coming up in a few months so you all just remember who saw you through these trying days. Ah thank you.—

And he bowed, arms spread, yellow hair flopping over sweat-sticky forehead, and he turned around m went back into City Hall. (Near the old wormy moray eel.)

Crack your back, mac, who wouldn't be late for work! They lucky anybody even showed up to work, but customers were plentiful you can be certain, those Letohatchie sizzens weren't sure what was coming but they weren't going to let this night get past without a little fun just in case there wasn't any left to have later on.

Freddie, he was lucky to get out alive that night, so home to old tubby yellow-hair from Bayou La Batre m Freddie cried himself to sleep in his sweetheart's loving arms. (Look, bebay, you don't like that stuff, you go do it with an alligator or somebody, just make sure she's a lady, and Freddie m his pal, just leave them in the privacy of their bed.)

* * *

—Think we otter ask for terms?—
—What, knuckle under to the papadocs?—
—Ida lykit but face facts.—
—Trust Yancey.—
—It only gets worse. Gangs m riots, nota nuffood.—
—Pissfirell do summon.—
—What so far?—
—Welleez . . .—
—Tooken a whompin. Spacefleet's shot. Lost all them men.—

—Hey, you a . . .—
—Realist.—
—. . . nigrasucker!—
—Face facts!—
—Traitor!!—
—Face facts!—
—Lynchiz ass!!!—
—Face facts!—
—Get a rope!!!!—
—Face facts!—
—Over that, uh, wuchacallet, um, lamppost!—
—Face facts!—
—Uppy goes!—
—Fae *urk!*—
—Nigrasucker!—
— —
—Traitor!—
— —
—Right!—

* * *

Up, up goes a ragtag fleet of leftovers m rejects, cripples m trainers, cargo ships m normally unarmed couriers m whatever the hell old Moorman can scrape up carrying whatever the hell old Pallbox can scrape up and down it comes again in chunks & cinders & anybody survived the zapbap crap uppa high turns to jelly when he hits ground as fast as those poor bastards hit it.

Couple hours later some old town shakes m breaks m that's the end of it. Probably it was Bayou La Batre but no matter really.

* * *

New gumt.

Up goes the leftovers of the leftovers, rejects of the rejects, spastics & amputees & idiots & tiny tots m down comes jusssst dusssst.

Fsssssssl

* * *

New gumt. They face facts.

* * *

Freddie wakened crying as usual. Somehow they missed him in both combouts but old Bayou La Batre boy, he didn't do so well, not so well, one day troopers rang the bell, oh hell, ta-ta B La B b.

Now Freddie wakened crying. Well, nobody ever said it was all Jack Daniels and cheesecake. Into the old plaingrays m off to work.

M now the old emcee was introducing the act. Boyzna band made a big thing plane Dixie, heculan headbone hornist givena wow-wow-wow heren theren marracas brrrpin m drummer whanging m banging on the old whiteskins m now Freddie listened fruck you.

—Ladies m gentlemen, ladies m gentlemen—(some familiar faces m some unfamiliars out there tonight)—mespecially our honored guess from offworld—he made a little bow m fluttery movements wivviz hands, Freddie saw—zmai great pressure to welcome you to our little show, the finest in Leto m we believe sincerely one of the best on the whole (ahahaha) of N'Alabama.—

He taken a little swing around the floor looken at customers. Then—Mnow folks, sgreat pressure present the star are show, dancing for your sthetic ratification, Miss Merriass Markham!—

Rowna plause. Lights down. Music up.

Miss Merriass prances onstage to marraca scrucks m headbone honks, Freddie watches her through misty-dim eyes, sniffles a snuffle or two. Ah, Miss Merriass, she's a beauty as ever, maybe a few pounds heavier (most everybody else is lighter these days) but she still got that old swaying grace.

Those blond locks they're a tiny wee darker now, proximately space black one might sight, m that beaches m clean complexion getting fashionably otherwise these days, what with lossa sunning m certain pills thatter not exactly talked about too much but very very popular. Miss Merriass she's hardly no darker than most of the grinning tourists ringside, mind, but fashionable, fashionable, N'Ala ladies (don't split no hairs bebay) mostly all looking a wee bit suntanned these days to say the leastest.

Miss Merriass she stands there in her old costume, summat weatherbeaten m ragged but still worth looking at m serviceable (that's the costume) (also Miss Merriass) m that stretchable halter with the cutouts *wooeee* how that must cut in but it does, it does draw the eye to those two openings wherein Miss Merriass demonstrates her devotion to the Way Things Are Today.

And panties, well, just dwell, rivet your attention on that lovely third dimension Miss Emem displays. Nudity? She's got it licked all holler, has Miss Merry.

Well she starts inta moving m the band starts inta zowwing m vooming m she starts inta swinging her shoulders around m they matcher in sound

m Miss Merriass gizzema little bump m a snicker circles the dark audience m she gizzema little grind, watch that behind, m they find that sommenta cheer over m Miss Merry she calls out a couple squeaky-high questions (surprising still to sweet Freddie but what) m back come a couple answers, accented a bit yesss, but comprehensible enow m Freddie (doesn't this surprise?) actually blushes there backstage m Miss Merriass:

:gr-r-r-r-i-i-n-n-d-sem another grind, swinging those hips around m around, knees bent m spread m hands out somehow managing to gimma-little titshow simultaneous m:

:w-h-a-m!:

:comes the bump you can see the heads jerk back like she smackedem every one square between the eyes with that old precious thump m before they recover Miss Merriass is turned around m doin something m *splook* that halter's gone m she's facingem again somehow bedecked m doing the ancient tassel trick a swinging m a swirling m the old tassels a twirling m up goes a big cheer (generous these tourists, with their praise; their money's another matter) m Miss Merriass keeps doing that trick for a while m then she somehow slips outen the tassels m tosses m to a couple front row Pierres clearly making do with local talent m lights off m music up m Merriass offstage m emcee on m intermission m trine sell some cazzappie booze m make a few rupees.

Nabackinna room behind patrons tables Miss Merriass spots as she's headed offstage one of them bloodcurdling weirdoes you see nowna gain since the New Thing began: standing silent, lankblank hair hanging down, pasty-faced with dead-looking eyes m one hand, she can see, black as the space of aides and the other like the face m a spot of chest another shade, is this thing even a spade? It don' talk, it don' spend. But the New Visitors (to euphemize not excessively) have made it known, leave em lone.

She does.

* * *

Ch'en-Gordon slowly turned hir head, causing hir Gordon eyes to scan the room. Se moved slowly now, carefully: hir seams were sore, sore, movement was difficult, Gordon parts were slow to obey Ch'en commands, lying at times almost as if dead. At times Ch'en-Gordon had to swing a shoulder to move an arm and hand, flailing them as virtually inanimate extensions of hirself.

In the dimness and wafting smoke se saw tables of black men and women, those farthest to the front of the room, and couples mixed, the

white, whether man or woman, seeming subservient, eager to curry favor of the other, and in the back, farthest from the show space, a few, few tables of N'Alabamian natives nervously darting glances at the backs of the blacks.

At one table in the front row a N'Haitian in casual dress leisurely draws a small pipe from one pocket, a small glassine envelope from another and begins to pack the bowl of the pipe with fine greenish shreds from the glassine envelope.

His companion, a black girl in fashionable striped trousers, a rough leathern bag hanging between her glistening breasts, reaches forward and touches his hand. He spurts a flame into the bowl of his pipe, in a moment Ch'en-Gordon sees gray-blue cloudlets rise; the man holds the pipe for the black girl who bends to draw on it, her naked breasts resting on his arm.

She leans back smiling; both looking around the room, expressions of scorn appearing as their eyes encounter the N'Alabamians in the rear.

Ch'en-Gordon, pain and weakness in every seam, locks eyes for an instant with the man. Transfers attention to the girl. Back to the man. Something se sees, something se recognizes.

Pain crying from every part, Ch'en-Gordon lurches between tables, falls to macroknees, elbows resting on the table of the two blacks. Se looks into eyes of the man, hir mouth opens and shuts trying to cry for aid, for aid from him who alone can provide it. He looks pityingly, uncomprehendingly. Se turns to the girl, mutely appealing. She draws back.

Se falls forward, hir head lolls on the fakewood table. Se moans, hir mouth falling open, tongue lolling, spiremes emerging, writhing, screaming mutely to speak, to be understood, to be aided.

Rejection antibodies dance, swirl, rush joyously.

Ch'en-Gordon falls from the fakewood table, clatters onto the floor, seams opening, dark fluids rushing out and spreading under the table.

The man shoves his pipe into his pocket, takes his companion, her face buried in his coat, quickly from the room.

* * *

Backstage Miss Merriass pisses m moans a little m starts into her other costume, Freddie helping. Half-dressed Miss Merriass sits down m supplements her pills with a little body makeup m Freddie checks himself all out m he's ready m now Miss Merriass finishes with her costume m now theykn hear the music coming up again m listen, listen, here's Mister Emcee's voice:

:—A dramatic interpretation ladies m gentlemen, music m drama m

dance combine to present a traditional reenactment m again we prowly present Miss Emem—:

:plite plaws m a drumroll m Merriass she steps onstage again m a pure-brite spangspot spangs onta her, dark tresses swaying m shining, dark skin soft looking m ladylike in a somewhat revealing dashiki red m blue m yellow m green m out she strolls m around she rolls, music clipping m pipping m Miss Merriass she makes it look fine m then it's Freddie's cue m he:

:slithers onstage wearing traditional N'Alabamian dress m wivviz hairnskin a bit lightern natural m Miss Merriass she struts about m Freddie he slinks after hern suddenly:

:wham!:

:Freddie springs m Miss Merriass she shrieks m Freddie grabs m Miss Merriass struggles m Freddie he gets a hand down the backa Miss Markham's special breakaway costume m:

:rip!:

:it does, m Miss Markham she struggles shamedly to cover up her big fat boobs but Freddie:

:(on cue) growls m slobbers m rips m suddenly, music thumping m roaring, spangspot bobbing m audience throbbing they freeze in a tableau:

:Miss Merriass Markham standing there feet apart hands on hips naked m black in the spotlight, head thrown back, black hair glistening (light roots showing just a little) here m there, wherever one wishes to point the orbs, bare ass aquivering waiting for the tableau to break while:

:Freddie, plane his role to the hilt, the N'Alabamian animan crouched m slobbering, fingers like claws reaching for the pure black flesh of that noble figure m the only sound in the deathy club is now Freddie:

:sobbing:

:m *crack!* goes the drummer m *mrow-wow-ow* the heculan headboner joins m the tableau breaks as Freddie leaps forward but Miss Merriass has something startling what is it what can that be something lookie, lookie, curling around one leg, follow with your eye bebay around, around the sweet soft fleshy thigh, making a thick underline for that classy ass of hers, around through the crotch (ooh, that's smart!) m around the leg ontce more, looping around, ass-crotch-thigh-ass-crotch-thigh m after a certain number of revolutions coming from behind sozeta protrude horizontally forward from that delightful lady's pubes this *handle,* some half a foot long give or take a couple centimeters m about as thick as a baby's ankle m made of hard rubber m ridged, sozeta offer a good grip:

:m Miss Markham stares down that crouching beast for the few seconds as it takes to unwind that thing from around her leg m pulling forward on

the handle it follows from between her legs m she raises it high in the spangspot m there's another roll of drums m Freddie:

:yowls!:

:m the drummer gives a loud *Ktakk!:*

:m Miss Markham's whip gives a *crack!:*

:m Freddie *howls* (it's part of the act, right, but Miss Merriass do you gotta make it so *real!*) m grovels m:

:the whip comes m:

:Freddie writhes m:

:the whip comes m:

:Freddie screams m:

:the whip comes m:

:Freddie falls tooz knees m:

:the whip comes m:

:Freddie grovels m:

:Miss Merriass gizzin just one nice thunk wivver naked foot m:

:stagelights down, houselights up, actors off, emcee on, waiters move, business goes, music plays, money circulates m:

:life is sure not much fun for Freddie, but what the hell, the boy hasta earn a living.

Afterword:

Having grown up on Heinlein, Bradbury, Clarke, Asimov, Simak, Schmitz, Pohl and Kornbluth, Kuttner and Moore, Ray Jones and the rest of the 40s-50s crowd, I found myself in an odd place starting around 1962. That Burroughs project that you already know about was then underway, and to get a better handle on Burroughs I set out to read not only his complete works but as much of the stuff that *he* was likely to have read as a boy back in the 1880s and 90s as I could . . . and then to read as much of the output of his contemporaries as I could, works running up in fact to the Heinlein-Bradbury-etc period but mostly concentrated in the years before 1920.

This went on for years, and even when I came up for air in 1966 and wrote my first novel, it was very much in the traditional mold. Following which I plunged back into the works of Garrett P. Serviss.

A year later Sid Coleman, Terry Carr, Carol Carr, Boyd Raeburn, Patricia Lupoff and I were savoring a bottle of St. Emilion in La Cave Henri IV on Third Avenue in New York. Terry and Sid were carrying on something awful about something called the "new wave." After a while I made my contribution to the conversation: it was "What's that?"

Sid and Terry exchanged glances, hemmed, hawed, offered to defer to each other, and finally said "It's what Ballard and Disch write, and Delany and maybe Zelazny."

"Oh," I replied, duly illuminated, and when the opportunity next presented itself I picked up a book by Zelazny, read it, put it down, and remarked to nobody in particular, "I see what it is, he plays a few little tricks, that's what it is." And I sat down and started a story with a few little tricks in it.

Nobody would touch it, though, so I put the fragment away until Harlan bought the thing. For the record, I resumed work at the start of chapter four, on January 1, 1969, and finished the story on March 3, three days behind schedule due to a three-day excursion to Kansas City in February, courtesy of my then-employer. All the writing was done in the evening or on weekends. Which may be more detail than you care about.

Soon as I finished I ground out an afterword about science fiction saving the world (with me in the vanguard) but when I saw galley proofs almost three years later I chucked that afterword in the garbage. It's just a story, pals.

And as for the style, what I guess is going on is an attempt to get away from the notion of "using" the language to "tell" the story, and instead to *make* the language the story. I don't know that I'd ever write another one this way: I try never to write two books the same: it's a lot more fun when you don't know what's coming.

But I'm a little bit upset by the new wave-old wave struggle, not because I'm against any particular style or attitude in fiction, but because I don't like to see people attempting to *suppress* styles or attitudes. I suppose this story will get me labelled as a "new waver" or whatever they're called these days, and that's all right because my favorite science fiction writer these days is J. G. Ballard and my favorite writer who writes science fiction is Tom Disch, and I'm very fond of the works of Moorcock (when he tries) and Delany and Zelazny (most of the time).

But I'm also pleasured by the works of Doc Smith and Edmond Hamilton and Otto Binder and Jack Williamson . . . and Larry Niven, by the way, who is indeed fit for that company.

But what the hell, gang, that guy from Stratford was the greatest of us all, and what we're all striving to do is just write a good one this time out.

I sure do wish that something would happen to unfreeze that book that Harlan mentioned, *Thintwhistle*, that's in inventory up at Dell. (All together now, "Come on, Dell, *publish* the damned thing already!") See, it's set in 1884 and the plot is a little like that of the boys' books of that era, so it's written in the *style* of the boys' books of that era.

The style is not something that the author has lying around, that he sticks onto the work at whim; the style is an organic part of the story, as much an aspect of the whole as the characterization or the plot itself. John

Brunner knows this, Brian Aldiss knows it, maybe Doc Smith knew it. Hmmm.

To get back to *The Bentfin Boomer Boys* for a moment, I should mention that the *vodu,* or voodoo, lore in the story is reasonably authentic. The sources for it are *The Magic Island* by W. B. Seabrook, *Voodoo Fire in Haiti* by Richard A. Loederer, and *Voodoo in New Orleans* by Robert Tallant. In places I did compress and combine various beliefs and practices, but the elements themselves are all based on the reference works, including the *vodu* hymns and their translations.

As for all the fuss that Harlan talks about, concerning this story . . . well, I don't want to get into raking that stuff up in here. I just wish that I could write my stories and ship 'em off, and get back a little money for them (not greedy, *hungry*) and with reasonable dispatch see 'em in print.

The opposite has proved so consistently to be the case—hassle, hassle, hassle with agents, editors, publishers, accountants, what have you—that I wondered if maybe there was a plot against me, or if I was just being paranoid about things (which was hardly a perferable choice).

Then just the other day Paul Williams the critic/essayist/founder-of-rock-journalism dropped in and . . . (In fact he's still here, he's sitting in the living room listening to Dylan while I'm stuck in here typing.) . . . in the course of catching up on recent events began telling the story of *his* several books.

Nope, it isn't paranoia.



Introduction to

LAMIA MUTABLE:

I've never been to England—a trip I lust to make—and hence have never met M. (for Michael) John Harrison. Further hence, I won't trouble you with conjectures or maunderings about Mike, save to note that he writes lovely stories of considerable muscularity, sensitivity and impact, not to mention some of the friendliest letters an editor could conceive of receiving. This year I will be going to England for the first time—thereby making Moorcock and Brunner and Aldiss wish they had never extended the invite—and I will make it a point to meet Mike Harrison. For those of you concerned by the lack of Ellisonian viewpoint on this author, along about 1973 a self-addressed, stamped envelope sent to me via Doubleday, asking for the minute *précis* on Harrison, will net you a dandy typewritten insert for this volume.

Moving right along, folks, here is Harrison:

"Born 25 years ago in Rugby, a place where aristocratic children are educated. Nobody else ever goes there. *I* was educated with unbelievable ineptitude at a meat-factory of a school that guaranteed to turn a teenager into a horn-rimmed research chemist in no less than eight years. Nobody aristocratic went *there*. I loathed it. I was a failure. I spent a short time working with horses in a fox-hunting stable, where I learned that a feudal system still operates in rural England, and that the New Peasantry *like* it. Or maybe they're the Old Peasantry, still dizzy from learning that the world is round and that Jesus has pretty much had it. I spent an even shorter time at a teacher-training college, where I learned that 90% of all teachers are dedicated to producing clean, short-haired adding-machines, using children for raw material. I got sick of the whole glossy educational machine and came to London, simultaneously robbing the college of its best female student. I've been here ever since, learning to write and getting progressively hungrier.

"I began to write when I was sixteen, turning out veiled sexual allegories that got consistently banned from the school magazine. My first short story was published in 1966; I won't say where, because it embarrasses me. The story, that is. I can't tell you what direction my writing is taking because I don't know yet."



M. John Harrison

LAMIA MUTABLE

TRACK ONE: AT THE BISTRO CALIFORNIUM.

The burning takes place next day, on an amethyst and emerald lifting-platform, high up in gray turbulent air, drifting. The gathered crowd—in Happy-Day motley: yellow pantaloons, jewels, flame-red saris—roars and whispers, an inland sea of laughter, as oily smoke begins to rise from the gaudy pyre. Birkin Grif and Lamia, the woman without skin, are amused but unimpressed.

"I was burned at Pompeii in such a jeweled gown. Man, these plebs have missed much, having been lost all these puritan centuries." Her dentures twinkle, her beautiful arteries pulse. Birkin Grif eyes her patronizingly: skinless, she is not nude but naked, more naked ever than a woman can be when merely divested of clothes. He possesses her every function with his single eye, piratical.

"True," says he. "But Gomorrah was best, there was a good burning there." She laughs, and her laugh is naked too. Sparks issue from the gemmed platform to an appreciative roar from the crowd. Birkin Grif slaps his titanium thigh in huge enjoyment.

"Jeanne d' Arc," says the skinless woman.

"Hiroshima," he counters.

"Virgil Grissom," she laughs.

"Buchenwald," murmurs Birkin Grif.

Lost in delightful reminiscence, they watch the platform with its cargo of burning emperor, two ancient lovers in a crowd; he old with debauchery, she young with it. A drunken woman, her head bejeweled from crown to forehead, staggers from the press.

"Whoop!"

"Indeed, madam," says Birkin Grif, always the wag. "Were you not at

Nagasaki in the Spring? Did I not see you there?" The drunken woman narrows her eyes.

"How d'you spell it, baby?"

Birkin Grif ogles her with his good eye.

"G-U-I-L-T," he intimates.

Skinless Lamia sniffs petulantly and nudges him in the ribs.

"Why are we here? Why are we here at all, this is not where it's at. We have a date in Californium."

They leave the crowd to heave and sweat. The platform is being lowered so that the burning emperor's retinue of harlots can be put aboard. Birkin Grif limps plausibly; his skinless sweetheart is a distillate of timeworn nakedness: false teeth and bijou eyebrows her slight concessions to fashion.

PAUSE THE FIRST.

Welcome to the chrome-plastic uterus of the Bistro Californium, haunt well-beloved and dear watering-place of all the intellectual parodies and artistic mock-ups of the splendid city.

See: here is Kristodulos, the blind painter; a brush dipped in cochineal is placed behind his ear. He is listening to the color of his Negress, Charmian with the scarred ritual breasts. Here too is Adolf Ableson (Junior) the spastic poet of Viriconium. See how his chromium hand grips the pencil with metallic fervor, how his head nods, driven by some bent escapement in his neck. And here; here at *this* table, thirsting after the hungry snows; here is Jiro-San, the hermaphrodite lute-player—shut in a tower of loneliness, separated by the accusation of mutability from Mistress Seng, she of the lapis-lazuli eyes—carven, nay (no no no) graven, from a bronze sunburn.

O you pedestrian seekers-after-color: come, gaze . . .

Enter Birkin Grif and Lamia his skinless lover. They sit at a table of translucent rose glass, wink and nod knowingly at companions-in-knowingness. Faintly, the whisper of the crowd at the Incineration sifts into the Bistro Californium, soft little flakes of sound. Kristodulos colors it black, makes a mental note. The chromium poet scribbles *and having writ, moves on.* Only our lute-player is deaf, because—suntanned—he is occupied with his head full of snow.

"Shall we take tea?"

Smiling, they take tea out of gold-leaved porcelain.

TRACK TWO: WHO IS DR. GRISHKIN?

"It is I will conduct you."

Birkin Grif looks up. This voice owns a fat and oily face, faintly gray. In the face is placed with artistic but ungeometrical accuracy, a small rosebud mouth, attempting to beam. One understands immediately that the mouth is indigenous to this kind of face, but that the smile is not. There are violet oblique eyes; no eyebrows or hair. The voice has a body too: pear-shaped, draped in plum-colored suiting, and very plump. The plum-colored suit is slit to reveal a surgical window set into its owner's stomach. Behind the window, interesting things are happening.

This voice—along with its corpus—is the essence of every brothel and fornication of the universe: the voice of a glorious, immortal and Galactic pimp; the ultimate in carnal, carnival, and carnivorous invitations.

"My friend," says Birkin Grif. "Mon ami: have I not seen you before? A whorehouse in Alexandria? Istamboul? Birmingham? No?" The newcomer smiles with a sort of lecherous modesty.

"Perhaps . . . ah, but that was a millennium hence, we have progressed since then, we have become . . . civilized." He shrugs.

"Does it matter?" asks Birkin Grif.

"Nothing matters, my piratical friend: but that is not the point: I am Dr. Grishkin."

"Is *that* the point?"

"No, that is something altogether different. May I join you?"

And he sits down, leering at the woman without skin. This is a leer that makes her *feel* naked. There is a hiatus. He pours himself tea. He has a strong sense of drama, this Dr. Grishkin: he is well-versed in the technique of the dramatic pause. Birkin Grif becomes impatient.

"Dr. Grishkin, we . . ."

Grishkin raises an admonitory finger. He sips tea. He points to his surgical window. Birkin Grif watches it, fascinated.

"The ash-flats," intones Dr. Grishkin: and, having dropped his conversational bomb, sits back to watch its effect.

Horror. Silence. Tension drips viscous from the Californium ceiling. Far off, the crowd whispers. Nothing so dramatic has happened in Californium for a decade.

"I am to take you to the ash-flats of Wisdom."

Skinless Lamia shudders ever so slightly. Into the silence fall three perfect silver notes. Jiro-San has taken up his lute.

"I think I have changed my mind," she whispers.

"It is too late, all is arranged," says Dr. Grishkin. "You must come, now: it is inevitable that you come." There is the slightest edge of annoyance to his voice. This annoyance is persuasive. One feels that Dr. Grishkin has gone to much trouble to . . . bring things about. He does not wish to be disappointed.

"But will He be there?" asks Birkin Grif, anxiously. "There is little sense in risking so much if He is not there."

Comes the answer: "There is little sense in anything, Mr. Grif. But He will be there. He has sent me." He sips tea. It is so simple, the way he puts it, it seems already an accomplished fact: but then, his oily job is to simplify, to smooth the way. Lamia leans forward, speaks from the corner of her mouth, the perfect conspirator. Dr. Grishkin finds her skinned proximity delightfully disturbing, her aorta distinctly beautiful.

"The Image-Police, Dr. Grishkin: what of them?"

"Pure paranoia, dear lady. There is nothing *very* illegal about a little trip to the edge of Wisdom. Just to the *edge,* you understand, merely a sightseeing trip: a little pleasant tourism . . ." He leers. "Shall we go?"

They leave. The fat man waddles. Birkin limps. The skinless lady is sinuous. As they pass Jiro-San's table, he gazes wistfully. He finds Birkin very handsome.

TRACK THREE: THE ASH-FLATS OF WISDOM.

Wisdom is a wilderness. Long ago, there was a war here; or perhaps it was a peace. Most of the time there is but small difference between the two; love and hate lean so heavily upon one another, and both are possessed of a monstrous *ennui.* Certainly, something destroyed whatever Wisdom was: so well that no one has known its former nature for two centuries. From its border one can see little but sense much.

Birkin Grif and the skinless woman stand shivering there in a cold wind, peering through the mesh fence that separates city-ground and forbidden ash. Their cloaks—black for him, gray for her—flutter nervously. Soft flakes of ash fill the air about them with dark snow. Grishkin is huge in voluminous purple, talking animatedly to a grayface guard outside his olive-drab sentry box. Meanwhile, the desolation seems to whisper, *You have no business here, everything here is dead.*

There is a bleak sadness to this waste, a bereavement: it mourns. Eidetic images of ghosts flit on this wind: women weeping weave shrouds at ebb-tide; famine-children wail to old men at twilight. Here there are two kinds of chill, and cloaks will not keep out both.

Abruptly, Grishkin takes out a small silver mechanism, and points it at

the guard. There is an incredible blue flash. The body of the guard drops, improbably headless, jetting dark blood from the venturi of its neck. Dr. Grishkin vomits apologetically: a sick valediction. He returns, wiping his mouth on a canary-yellow handkerchief.

"You see? There is no problem, as I have said." He retches, his fat face white. "Oh dear. Excuse me, do excuse me. *I grow old, I grow old* you know. Poor boy. He has a mother in Australia. He was exported."

"How sad," says Lamia. She is gazing at Dr. Grishkin's heaving stomach through the surgical window. She feels quite sympathetic. "Sympathy is so quaint," she tinkles. "Poor Dr. Grishkin."

Poor Dr. Grishkin, his spasm over, takes out his little glittering mechanism again, and aims it at the fence round Wisdom. The incredible-blue-flash performance is repeated, whereupon the mesh curls and congeals like burning hair.

"Pretty," observes the skinless woman.

"Impressive," admits Birkin Grif. In the charred sentry-box bells begin to ring.

"Now we must hurry," intimates Dr. Grishkin, and his voice is more than faintly urgent. "Leg it!" He begins to waddle hurriedly toward a charcoal dune. They follow him through the broken mesh. The wind rises, whipping up small, stinging cinders. Cloaks fluttering, they top the rise and drop flat, facing the way they have come. A great turmoil of ash-flakes hides the sentry-box.

"The wind will have erased our tracks," says Birkin Grif.

"Correct as ever, *mon frère*," returns fat Dr. Grishkin. "Officially, we have just died, nobody will bother us now." He leers. "I have been dead these ten years." He laughs mordantly. His stomach trembles behind its window. Birkin Grif and his skinless mistress are unamused.

"Why does the ash never blow into the city?" asks Lamia.

"Come," orders Grishkin, eyeing the weather with distaste.

PAUSE THE SECOND.

FOR NARRATIVE PURPOSES THE ASH STORM ABATES.

Led by the seraphic murderer Grishkin, they flit like majestic moths—purple, gray, black—over the long low swells of ash.

This land is empty, composed visually of utterly balanced sweeps of gray, shading from the dead cream to the mystic charcoal. Slow watercourses cut the ubiquitous ash, silting swiftly, meandering, beds infinitely variable. Wind and water make Wisdom unchartable: age and the wind

make it cripplingly lonely. Time is overthrown in Wisdom: its very mutability is immutable.

Thinks Birkin Grif: *This land is the ultimate vision of the Ab-real Eternity. Across it, we scuttle like three symbolic beetles without legs.*

TRACK FOUR: I REMEMBER CORINTH.

Flitting minutiae on the broad back of the waste, they finally achieve their Heroic goal.

Dr. Grishkin stops.

He and Birkin Grif and the skinless woman stand—at the end of an erratic line of footprints—at the apparent center of an immense, featureless plain: the hub of a massive stasis, a vast silence. The horizon has vanished, there is no obvious convergence of ash and sky: both are flat, monochrome gray. Because of this, environment is shapeless; dimensions are unclear; the three suddenly exist without proper frame of reference, with the sole and inadequate orientation of their own bodies. The effect confuses; they become dream figures on a back-cloth of ab-space: unattached, divested of every vestige of their accepted and appropriate reality.

"It is here we must wait," says Dr. Grishkin, his fat voice devoid of expression, drained of expression by the single-tone emptiness.

"But He is not here . . ." begins Birkin Grif, fighting to prevent the visual null from sucking up his very thoughts, speaking precisely only through mammoth effort.

"We must wait," repeats Grishkin.

"Will He come, though?" demands Grif, thickly, struggling with the silence. "If this is a fool's errand . . ." His implied threat falls flat, negated by the vacuum.

"You have lived a fool's errand for a millennium: why quibble now? Here we wait." Slow steel in Grishkin's voice; again he will not be denied. They wait. At this point of minimal orientation, without movement or sound, it seems that eons pass. They wait. Nothing happens for a million years. Finally, Grif speaks, his words harsh and congested with a sudden aged, neurotic ferocity. "I think I may kill you, Dr. Grishkin. He is not coming. All the way to nowhere, and He is not coming. I think I will kill you . . ." His face is distorted; his good eye winks, manic; this is a senile fury.

"Shut up." Grishkin is smiling his rosebud parody. "Shut up and look!"

". . . I think I will *kill* you . . ." hisses Grif, like a machine running down fixedly through a series of programmed spasms. But he looks.

Skinless Lamia is dancing on the ash, magnificently naked once more.

Her feet make no sound. She moves to a muted hum of her own making; an insistent, droning raga. She dances possessed, smiling in introspective wonder at her own movement, antithesis of the greater stillness. Her dance is a final destruction of orientation: almost, she floats.

And she is *changing.*

"Is this not the ultimate in body-schema illusions?" breathes Grishkin. "See: she is *living* her hallucination!" He is quite overtly touched by the poetry of it all.

Her body elongates . . . contracts . . . flows . . . diminishes. A tail appears, flips archly, disappears. A jeweled dolphin exists whole for an instant, dissolves. The modal hum rises and falls. A golden salamander weaves, sloughs off its skin . . . becomes a bright proud bird, falters, shimmering at its edges . . . disembodies reluctantly . . .

By turns the plastic Lamia is fish, fowl and beast, myth and dream. Then one shape steadies—

And Lamia is no more.

Dr. Grishkin releases his breath in one long sigh of artistic pleasure. Birkin Grif screams.

For on the ash—cinders and dust adhering to its wet membrane—there lies a live human fetus.

It kicks a little, stretching the membrane . . .

Birkin Grif retches and moans: "O my God . . . what . . . ?"

Dr. Grishkin is apologetic but unhelpful. "Don't ask me, Grif *mon vieux.* I expected a snake. But O what poetry; such a metamorphosis . . . !" The fetus jerks. Grif whirls on Dr. Grishkin, hysterical, whining like a child.

"Cheat! Liar! This is not what we came here for, this is not it at all, you have cheated . . . it isn't fair!"

Coldly, Grishkin, galactic pimp extraordinary, appraises him. His pleasure is quite gone away. His eyes impale the blubbering Grif.

"Fair? *You* have yet to learn the rules of the game! Fair?" Grif is pinned to the inert landscape by those bleak, oblique eyes. "There is no fairness to inevitability. This was inevitable, Mr. Birkin Grif; inevitable because it has happened. Accept it because of that. Do not look to me for *fairness.*" He finds the word distasteful. He pauses to gaze speculatively at the drying fetus.

Then: "You expect too much, my friend. You desire: and expect the universe to provide. But that is not the way of things. No indeed." He appears pleased with this summary. Then he frowns suddenly, as if rediscovering an unpleasant reality. "It is a pity you have learned so late. Too late, in point of fact."

And his glittering, malevolent little device is out in a micro-second, as Birkin Grif throws himself frantically forward, horrid realization contorting his features. Thus dies Grif, last of the archetypal sybarites, while the fetus of his skinless lover lies twitching on the ground. He scarcely has time for a second scream.

His enigmatic slayer shrugs and turns to the feebly struggling fetus. Gazing, he shakes his hairless head. Such poetry. Reluctantly, he steps on it. For all his sensibility, he has a tidy mind. Casting a last glance at the smoking Birkin Grif—titanium thigh his sole remnant of personality—Dr. Grishkin, the Bringer with the Window, pulls his purple cloak around him and waddles off.

Soon, only his footprints are left on the ash-flats of Wisdom.

Afterword:

I wrote this story in March, 1967. At that time, it was all happening for me emotionally, which probably accounts for the exuberance of the piece. It was sparked by a thing called *Go For Baroque* by Jody Scott (I think it was Jody Scott . . .); but I don't believe Scott's story influenced it—merely provided the literary flashpoint. There are echoes of Beckett there, and some quite deliberate references to the work of John Keats. On a secondary level, the Keats thing is rather important. "Lamia Mutable" stands on its own; but if you are familiar with Keats' long narrative poem *Lamia,* you may get a good deal more out of the section subtitled I REMEMBER CORINTH.

I wrote the story as an allegorical illustration of a philosophy (a few tenets of which are contained in Grishkin's last speech); as a piece of grotesque comedy relevant to certain 20th Century obsessions—black humor, if you like; and as a snide parody of London intellectual life. You can find a Bistro Californium on every street corner in swinging Chelsea or with-it Hampstead: and each one is crowded with aging ravers like Birkin Grif who spend their somewhat pointless lives trying to convince themselves that they have artistic natures and colorful personalities.

My intention was to pose as many unanswered questions as possible, to imply rather than to make statements: thus, conceptually, it is a sprawling and multivalent story, full of blind windows and paranoiac alleys. But its underlying structure is nice and tight, and the thing has—within its own lunatic context—a satisfying rationality. "Lamia Mutable" is tentatively dedicated to Jerry Cornelius.



Introduction to LAST TRAIN TO KANKAKEE:

Ultimately, when the history of these last ten tumultuous years of sf is chronicled, Robin Scott Wilson's name will be listed alongside those of John W. Campbell, Jr., Horace L. Gold, Anthony Boucher and J. Francis McComas as one of the men most responsible for helping to create new writers in speculative fiction. The former gentlemen were all writers and editors, and in their capacities as assemblers of many issues of their respective magazines, they molded, as a matter of daily course, talents without number. Campbell, of course, was the master: from the Thirties well on into the Fifties he gathered around him, and around *Astounding/ Analog,* most of those we call Greats today: Asimov, Kuttner, Heinlein, Hubbard, De Camp, del Rey, Sturgeon, Blish, etc. Gold developed yet another kind of writer, and from *Galaxy* we read Sheckley, Tenn, Budrys, Simak, Wyman Guin, Kornbluth, Bester, Knight and a host of others. Tony Boucher and Mick McComas brought the literary values of sf into sharper focus and developed Avram Davidson, J. T. McIntosh, Leiber, Idris Seabright, Matheson, Chad Oliver, Poul Anderson, Zenna Henderson and others; though many had written for other magazines, they became what we now behold in *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction.*

Robin Scott Wilson, though a writer of considerable talent, as you will discover (if you haven't met him elsewhere already), is only by default an editor. (His anthology of the best stories from the Clarion Workshops, *Clarion* [Signet, 1971], has already become a critically-acclaimed necessity for every other sf workshop in the country.) No, by rigorous judgment, Robin is not an editor, and so it is remarkable that his name should be found with those of the acknowledged "forces" in the genre.

The reason for comradeship with the aforementioned germinal influences is all in a name, already dropped:

Clarion.

In 1967, Robin Scott Wilson showed up at Damon Knight's workshop conference for sf professionals in Milford, Pennsylvania. He was a pleasant man, good-looking but essentially bland, the way a good CIA agent should be. (We learned later he had worked for that skulking organization. It explained the crepe-soled shoes and the suspicious bulges in his clothes, bulges we had attributed to malformations of the body about which gentlefolk do not speak, bulges that later turned out to be service automatics, tape recorders, a plenitude of eavesdropping bugs, a two-way

radio, harness rigs of explosives and other items of doom, and a very thick, buckram-bound collection of *Snoops: The CIA House Organ*, 1950–66, much marginally-annotated in a childlike scrawl.)

He nosed about, speaking to Damon, to Kate Wilhelm, to Fritz Leiber, to me and to others. For a while there, we were pricing cabins in Cuba. Finally, however, he took us into his confidence and admitted the paraphernalia was just a matter of habit. CIA men are apparently like old firehorses. They never get over the thrill of playing G-Man. (Which probably explains J. Edgar Hoover, but that's a horrid of another choler.) (Sorry about that.)

He further confessed, under threat of having to analyze a Tom Disch story, that he was in the English department of a small liberal arts college, Clarion College in Clarion, Pennsylvania—and he wanted to start a sf workshop for unknown writers. He left, as did we all, when Milford ended two weeks later, and he promised to get in touch with some of us who might care to come in as "visiting faculty." Till that time, there had only been sporadic, usually ineptly-staffed sf classes in a *very* few colleges and universities. We didn't hold out much hope, but it had been a pleasant encounter.

Even the retina-printing didn't bother us.

The next summer, five of us were drawn to the midland of Pennsylvania where we took part in one of the most exciting experiments ever attempted in the field of sf. Students of all ages were gathered together for the first concerted attempt to "teach" the writing of sf and fantasy. (I put those " "s there, because as we all know, writing cannot be taught. If there is a talent, it can be shown the tools of imaginative writing, and the uses to which they may be put.)

The success of the Clarion experiment is now history. God knows I've crowed about it enough in these pages. But only comparison with other, more prestigious, longer-established workshops shows precisely *how* successful Clarion has been. As I've said elsewhere in A,DV, if a workshop of fifty or a hundred conferees produces two or three writers who go on to make either a living or a joyful hobby of what they write, it is considered a bonanza. Clarion, in its first three years alone, set forth on a sf world hungry for new voices, at least fifty of its seventy students, and some who have become full-time freelancers, doing quite well, thank you. So Robin Scott Wilson's credits have to include names like Ed Bryant, Joan Bernott, George Alec Effinger, Neil Shapiro, C. Davis Belcher, Vonda McIntyre, Octavia Estelle Butler, Steve Herbst, Robert Thurston and others whose names appear in this volume, in *Quark*, in *Orbit*, and in the forthcoming *The Last Dangerous Visions*.

I've taught at a number of workshops, some sf, some general fiction, but even though Robin has moved to Evanston, Illinois and had to pass along the Workshop to James Sallis at Tulane (now making it the Tulane

Workshop in SF & Fantasy, Continuing Clarion, a somewhat unwieldy title), I have never encountered a conference as smoothly-run, as productive, as enriching for faculty as for students, as the one that will always be remembered as Robin's gift to the sf world. If Campbell and Gold and Boucher/McComas were the spiritual fathers of the generations of sf writers who brought the form to its present state of respectability and excellence, then surely Robin Wilson will forevermore be known as the driving force who gave first break to the new generation.

All of this quite aside, and forgetting for the moment that there will be a second Clarion/Tulane anthology edited by Robin, it certainly seems unlikely that a pure academic type could have instilled the faith and drive in a project like Clarion: the students demand their faculty be working writers. And on that basis, Robin is included here.

"Last Train to Kankakee" is a strange and artful piece of work, deserving of merit purely as story.

It is doubly a pleasure to present it, however, from a man who has paid his dues to sf in a way most of us never will.

How odd that such a complex human being has so little to say about himself:

"Born 1928 in Columbus, Ohio. Grew up in a house under the cellar steps of which were stacked great mouldering piles of *Thrilling Wonder Stories, Amazing,* and *Astounding.* Spent substantial portion of childhood under those stairs along with a considerable pride of silverfish consuming science fiction. Majored in physics at Ohio State but switched to English and girls in my senior year because I couldn't understand mathematics beyond the calculus. Found I could understand English. Took an M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of Illinois, specializing in 18th century literature and the works of Henry Fielding.

"At various times have been a seaman, college professor, short-order cook, electrician, Navy Lieutenant, fish-cutter, CIA officer, farmer, and writer. Have found all these occupations interesting, none of them lucrative. Am conventional in my behavior, but think lots of dark and unsavory thoughts. When this story was written, I was living in a grey house on a hill overlooking the strip mines of Clarion, Pennsylvania, with two hamsters, a bird, four kids, a poodle, a wife, and some tropical fish. By the time it'll be published I'll have been living for some time just outside Chicago. This may not be an improvement. There are still silverfish in my cellar."



Robin Scott

LAST TRAIN TO KANKAKEE

Sidney Becket began to run a very real risk of eternal damnation when he was quite young. When, by the time he was fourteen, he had robbed three candy stores, raped a twelve-year-old girl, and shot his father with his old man's war-surplus '03 Springfield, his damnation was pretty well assured. But Sidney never gave it a thought; he was too busy learning.

And what he learned on the south side of Chicago, he applied with admirable diligence the rest of his life:

. . . *click of cue-ball . . . fat moneyman in the shadowy corner . . . groove in the slate into side pocket . . . dollar bills on green felt like spring leaves in Grant Park after a hailstorm . . .*

In the army, in 1945, it had paid him well:

. . . "Hab'n Sie den Pennicilium mitgebracht?" "Jawohl. *I got it. 500 million units. 500 bucks." . . . and the dollar bills like green roof-shingles, stacked and interleaved with German efficiency . . .*

After the war, with his army stake, it had been hot cars:

. . . *engine block shivering under the air-hammer . . . sweet stink of acetone-base lacquer . . . young men, tough and swaggering, who on a good night could deliver three or four cars apiece to the abandoned bakery on Cicero Avenue . . . and the C-notes layered and bundled like the* Chicago Tribune *on street corners before Sunday dawns . . .*

And then it had been hijacking television sets, and then it had been a string of cribs in Calumet City, and then it had been running uncut heroin up from Matamoros and then it had been Leavenworth, Kansas, and one-to-five. And because Sidney got busted again at Leavenworth, it had been five more. (One of the kids he had dragooned into the back room of the supply shed had objected to the use the older convicts were putting him to, and he had bled a good deal and died from a sacking needle in the eye.)

. . . *O you girls of Calumet City . . . O you hot and dusty reaches of King Ranch . . . O you gray walls and jolly fellows and jute-torn hands*

. . . and the bills fluttered and skimmed across lonely truck-stops and hot summer night streets and mesquite and through the bars . . .

And then it had been bunco in L.A. and a pyramid club in Frisco and an acid cult in Berkeley and Mary Louise Allenby. ("I will save you, Sidney. Believe, Sidney, and I will save you.") And he pretended to believe and married Mary Louise Allenby and jacked the dues up to fifty dollars a quarter and upped the price to five dollars a cube and when Mary Louise fell for the cryogenic preservation bit and invested all her money in a deep-freeze plant, Sidney sold lockers and perpetual care for twenty grand a throw and my god how the money rolled in and even Mary Louise was getting tolerable as long as he could get off to Vegas or down to Tijuana every couple of weeks, and the lessons of South Chicago were really paying off and everything was paradise, or as close to paradise as a man like Sidney Becket could reasonably expect to get, when one night about three in the morning, while he was in bed with a Mexican girl, her lithe young pimp, and a middle-aged couple from Ligonier, Pennsylvania, a small piece of vascular tissue, worn and swollen, broke loose in Sidney's vena cava, sailed gracefully along for a distance of twenty-seven millimeters before nosing a horny edge into its channel, and blocked the flow of blood to Sidney's right auricle.

. . . O deep and mysterious briny . . . O windless sail . . . O diastolic dance . . . O cavéd auricle . . .

Sidney's last words, as he lay flopping and wheezing at the foot of the bed, were: "Bury me inna ground! Don't let Mary Louise stick me in one of them goddam lockers!"

With Latin shrugs he was shipped, comatose, back to Bakersfield; and as soon as the doctor had reeled in his stethoscope and shaken his head, Mary Louise had a couple of the boys wheel Sidney into the cold room and slide him into a locker. And because Mary Louise had been unable to save Sidney while he was alive, she determined in the full flush of her love and fanaticism to save him for some life to come when she could take another crack at him. Deep inside, she distrusted the efficacy of the freezer plant, although she felt her own psychic harmony with the appropriate celestial vibrations made the plant the best bet for her customers. Accordingly, she removed two lockers, Sidney's and an empty, to a deep vault far beneath the San Pedros Mountains.

. . . O love of savior for sinner . . . O lust of painter for canvas . . . oh love, oh love, oh careless love . . . and the dollar bills danced like phased electrons into the coffers of the Pacific Light and Power Company . . .

And in '76, five years before Mary Louise's own death, when the cesium-

fluoride cell came out of the laboratory, she was one of the first buyers of that remarkably long-lived power source. But when she died in '81, her own survivors were not as careful about her corporeal preservation as she had been about Sidney's, and although the cesium-fluoride cell and the deep vault saw Sidney through the holocaust of the Sino-Soviet war, two major upheavals along the San Andreas fault, and something over four centuries of mortal *Sturm und Drang,* when he regained consciousness, the latent images of Marie, Juan, and the middle-aged couple from Ligonier, Pennsylvania, still in his retinas, he awoke alone. Mary Louise was no longer there to save him.

"Jethuth Crith!" said Sidney as a measure of awareness seeped into him. The machine whose surrounding complexity had produced instant awareness that he was no longer in Tijuana but in some place far beyond the imagination had reconstituted his tissues almost cell by cell. But marvelous as the reconstruction had been, there were small anomalies in the brain: Sidney was fifty percent deaf in one ear; his left hand trembled beyond control; he had a lisp.

. . . O marvel and wonder! . . . O future perfect! . . . O best of all possible worlds! . . . O any day now . . .

Sidney's voice brought a human being, a very tall woman with close-cropped white hair, red and blue lines painted on her face, and some sort of instrument in her left hand which she pointed at Sidney. Her only clothing was a slender belt from which a number of glittering appliances dangled.

Sidney shrank back into the nest of wires and tubes which surrounded him. "Doon't be frightened," said the woman in a terrifyingly strange accent. "You have be long asleep." She did something to the instrument in her hand. Sidney heard a whine and felt a plucking sensation all over his body as wires and tubes left him and retracted themselves into the monster at the foot of the bed. One tube remained, and when Sidney struggled upward to a seated position and made to lower his legs from the bed, the tall lady did something else with her instrument, the remaining tube throbbed once, and a tingling sensation in Sidney's left arm suddenly spread upward and out across his body and he sank back. "Jethuth Cri . . ."

He awoke again in a dimly lighted room. There were no people and there was no marvelous monster. A tray of food appeared and he ate. A screen appeared before him and two people dressed like the nurse spoke to him in odd accents. They told him of his revival, of his importance to them as the only survivor from his time, of his value to historians and physiologists. They told him of the events of the intervening centuries. He was fed again and slept again and watched the screen again and they told him of the civilization he would soon join and the role he was expected

to play in it. He ate and slept and watched the screen and learned what he needed to know, and then one day the screen remained dark and a door opened into the room and the tall, white-haired lady appeared and gave him a slim belt, a map of the city, and an oddly shaped key to the living quarters he had been assigned.

. . . arching dome and happy people . . . happy, happy people . . . rebirth of Sidney, rebirth of Buckminster Fuller, rebirth of Townsend California . . . and the artificial leaves in the artificial park fluttered in the artificial wind like counterfeit dollar bills cast mechanically on the white belly of an inexpert whore . . .

Sidney's first year in the San Fernando Dome went quickly. He was a dull man, but all his wants, no matter how esoteric, were provided for, either in the flesh or in perfect illusion, and because of his novelty value, he did not lack for human company.

During the second year, however, the novelty wore off. Sidney was unable to establish any sort of permanent relationship, and he found to his infinite surprise that he missed Mary Louise.

No one was interested in saving Sidney. No one was interested in saving anybody. There was no work for him, no need or opportunity to steal or con. Even pleasure, infinitely exquisite, infinitely realizable, becomes infinitely tedious.

In his third year, desperate with boredom, Sidney attempted assault, but the seven-footers could not be attacked with the naked fist, and they were proof against any weapons available to Sidney.

There remained only one being vulnerable to assault, only one recourse to a boredom so pervasive and desperate as to make life insupportable. In March of his fourth year in the dome, Sidney leaped from his flitter and fell two thousand feet onto the fused sand of what had once been the Mojave desert. It took them nearly a month to patch him up. In June, as soon as he felt well enough to be up and about, he took a high dive into the dome sewage disposal plant, was broken down into his component molecules, and widely distributed throughout the Northern Pacific by the Japanese current.

. . . O effulgent effluent, phosphorus gleaming . . . O infinite distribution and final fleeing . . . and the molecules Brownian danced like ping-pong balls in a county fair bingo game . . .

Awareness once again returned to Sidney and he found himself—or that amorphous gathering of impressions, sensibilities, lusts, hatreds, and ratiocinations which constitutes *self* when the distraction of flesh is temporarily removed—standing (in some strange fashion) in a place, near a thing, which he chose to interpret as the 63rd Street station of the Illinois Cen-

tral. He was not alone, and when a thing he chose to see as a train pulled in, he was caught up in a rush of other amorphous gatherings, clouds of scintillating neural energies, seeking to board it. The cars of the train had individual compartments, each with its own door to the outside. Every amorphous gathering had a key (held in some strange fashion), and every key fit a door. Sidney too had a key, but his did not fit any door. After a bit, all the compartments were filled, the train gave a businesslike wail and moved off down the track in the direction of Kankakee, and Sidney found himself alone again, his useless key still held (in some strange fashion) in what he chose to see as his hand.

Another crowd arrived and another train and Sidney tried again. And then another train and another and another. Sidney gave up. He looked at his key (in some strange fashion). There was a number on it: 22/5/1970.

"Let's see," thought Sidney (in some strange fashion), "I went down to Tijuana on May 20th and it was that night I ran into Marie and Juan and then it was the second night with Marie and Juan when that old bird from Pennsylvania and his wife joined in . . ."

. . . O lust of baker for the unformed dough . . . O love of savior for sinner . . . O love, O love, O careless love . . . and the now-purposeless scintillas, released from the flesh out of their time, wandered and circled the Collector and Reinserter apparatus like weary waterfowl at a long-dry lake . . .

"Jethuth Crith," said (in some strange fashion) Sidney out loud as his temporary gathering of impressions, sensibilites, lusts, hatreds, and ratiocinations, uniquely uncollectable, and hence uniquely incapable of reinsertion in new flesh, began to disperse, began to rejoin the dispersed molecules of his old flesh, "Mary Louithe didn't thave me. She made me mith the train!"

And Sidney was indeed doomed to eternal damnation. The dispersal went on in the slow and stately manner of such things. All summer and fall, the ocean currents spread molecules of Sidney across the broad seas; hygroscopic particles of Sidney were sucked up in thunderheads and further distributed across the broad land; and all that had been Sidney came to permeate the very fabric of the world.

And that was not all. Solar winds caught at infinitely tenuous scraps of Sidney and carried them elsewhere and still elsewhere. Time, which has no importance to someone in Sidney's position, flowed in its steady meaningless stream, and Sidney's dispersion continued—to the stars, to the very limits of the universe. And as he approached those limits, Sidney grew slowly aware that something—some*one*—was receding. And as the volume

of space he informed expanded, so did Sidney's power and despair, so did the joy and peace of whatever—of *whom*ever—it was that he was—Sidney realized—replacing.

. . . O Great Chained Being . . . O fresh pollutant in the stream of time . . . O infinite distribution and recession . . . O pantheism and eternal panmeism . . . and the Gold Watch of Time is burnished as a retirement gift for the Old Chairman of the Board . . .

And Sidney's damnation was complete when, his expansion finished, his size and power infinite, his dominance total over a cosmos in which there was now indeed nothing worth his stealing, he realized (in some strange fashion) that he was now God and that even his reincorporation in flesh, a matter now easily within his powers, would not change things much. It had after all been tried by his most immediate predecessor without notable success.

Afterword:

As a teacher of writing (them as *can't*, they say, *teach*), I suppose the most frequent question I hear from students is "where does a writer get his ideas?" I suppose there are as many answers as there are writers, but one that seems to me to cover a good deal of ground is that the writer gets his ideas when he tries to figure out something he doesn't understand.

Let's face it: very little in life makes much sense to a rational man. We are all soldiering in those ignorant armies that clash by night. Some people accept this and don't worry about it. They seem to adopt a utilitarian and canine attitude and evaluate the human condition with "if you can't eat it or drink it or screw it, piss on it." Some people try to paint or dance or sing or love or drink or smoke some sense into life. Writers try to impose form on it.

And when you extend the purview of life into the great unknowns of eschatology and the future, the preoccupations of science fiction and fantasy, what a challenge it becomes! Then it is that reader and writer alike feel like

> . . . some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken;
> Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
> Silent, upon a peak in Darien.



Introduction to

EMPIRE OF THE SUN:

Again, another first sale writer. Andrew Weiner, from England. Never met him, don't know him, got the story in totally without warning and read it out of what editors call "the slush pile." Bought it, which should dispel any ideas paranoid amateurs have about closed shops in these books.

All I know about Weiner is what he writes below, and the fact that "Empire of the Sun" is an oddly eschatological tale that instantly commanded me to buy it.

From Mr. Weiner comes this, unfortunately written in 1969 and not brought up-to-date . . . but it should give at least a clue:

"Dear Mr. Ellison,

"As to my biography there's really very little to tell. I am twenty years old; I lived my first eighteen years in the suburbs of North London. I have spent most of the last two years in Brighton; I am a student at the University of Sussex, where I have done two out of three years for a degree in Social Psychology. I will be twenty-one next June, which is also when I finish University. I have no idea what I will do then.

"When I was younger I read a great deal of science fiction. I read very little now. My favourite authors (they are not really 'influences,' my stories are just not good enough to claim relation to theirs) are Mailer, Chandler, Greene, Ballard, Dick, Ross MacDonald. I have written perhaps eight stories in four years. 'Empire Of The Sun' is the first I have sold. In its original form it was only about the second worthwhile thing I ever wrote. The first draft was written in December 1967, your version in September 1968.

"My favourite biographical note is the Algis Budrys one in the English edition of 'Who?': 'I have seen Adolf Hitler, Henry Wallace, Franklin Roosevelt . . . I have shaken Harry Truman's hand . . .' I personally have seen Jimi Hendrix, Arthur Brown and the Stones; and once I interviewed the Pink Floyd. Who's to say which is least?

"There is a quote I always wanted to use in a story:

"'I'm 20 years old and one-third of my life has gone, and I don't know whats Happening.'—P. F. Sloan, composer of 'Eve Of Destruction.'"



Andrew Weiner

EMPIRE OF THE SUN

ONE

Kaheris, the unknown astronaut, existential hero, moves through the crowded streets, toward his apartment. The fair-skinned people around him hasten about their lives, never looking up. Above, the sky burns white with the glare of a swollen sun.

Giant loudspeakers, the extension voice of death, boom out the countdown, one thousand hours to total zero. Kaheris fears the coming nova. Sees himself trapped here, at the end of the Main Sequence. Gratefully he enters his soundproofed apartment. The Man In The Mask rises to greet him, dead eyes staring through slits in the hammered metal. Kaheris screams, slips once more through space and time.

TWO

Earth, year 1990, falls victim to the history-bending project of the Sirius Syndicate. Travelers in time establish a network of communication satellites around the globe, and open the Martian War. Continuous 'Martian' broadcasters promise destruction, total war, liquidation, war without limits, to the terrified Earth populace. TV channels are jammed with further images of death. The United Nations is revived, as the World Draft Board. Military elements seize control, promising "the War of all Wars." A space armada is to be constructed. The first troop draft is announced; twenty millions. Draft rioting in China is vigorously suppressed.

THREE

The huge crowd waited. And then the General appeared. Their hero, Carter, Chairman of the Draft Board, scourge of the Martians. From the roof of the hall floated down colored balloons, cascading in thousands around him. The cheering grew to a deafening crescendo. Then he raised his hand, and suddenly there was silence.

Above, high above on the roof, Kaheris aimed his rifle through the skylight.

Carter had begun to speak. "The War will go on. I promise you that. There will be no weakness. I know how to win."

He paused, stared with meaning. "You have nothing to fear from the army. It is the civilians you should distrust." They roared in approval.

"You were swindled. But not any more. The Marts can't tell us what they are going to do. We will show them what they have taken on.

"We are already at war with Mars, and the only solution is victory."

Suddenly he turned his eyes upwards, staring at Kaheris through a mask of hammered metal. Act out your dreams, Kaheris thinks, trying to squeeze the trigger, blacking out. As the doctor said, why this sudden obsession with death?

FOUR

Transition to a dirty room in London. A question: "How long do you think you have?" He delays answering the girl, readjusts to his environment. The walls are pasted with newspaper cuttings, gorilla pictures, faded posters. Empty cans litter the floor. A badly tuned transistor plays military music.

"How long . . . ?"

"Before the Draft gets you. It can't be much longer." The idea seemed to please her.

"They won't send me. I'm psychotic. They can't send me."

"The dreams, you mean?" she asks with contempt. "They send anyone to Mars, particularly those whom no one will miss. Because there are no Martians and this is no War. The War is an invention of the World Draft Board to institute and maintain its power. Nothing else."

FIVE

"They're not dreams. Don't you see? That I'm the link, the intersectional man?"

He brushed past her, descended the stairs to the street. He wandered through the streets of a London deserted of traffic, beneath the giant posters of Carter, beneath pictures of the horrifying Martian enemy. Occasionally he passed hungry and frightened people.

As he walked he tried to recall his former life. Had he been an astronaut, a scientist? He seemed to recall the coral reefs, the concrete zone of the rocket ranges, the murmur of air-conditioning. Mostly, that life was a void to him. That had been before he became aware of other places, when he had been able to think clearly.

A sudden clear image penetrates his mind. He is sitting down, in a darkened room. A man in a white coat stands over him.

"Isolation does funny things, Kaheris. Come on now, what happened in orbit? What spoke to you?"

Kaheris stares in front of him.

"What did it say?"

Kaheris laughs.

SIX

Trancelike in thought, he fails to notice the gathering dusk, the early winter night closing around him. Suddenly they block his way, Draft Police. He turns to run. An electric whip flicks out. "Wait, mister." A strange accent. The night patrol. High grade sadists.

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know. The zoo."

"No zoo 'around here. All the animals are eaten up, anyway." Casually he flicks the whip at Kaheris' stomach. Kaheris doubles up.

"Yank, yeh. We have a draft here too, know that? Just as good. Maybe even better." He searched quickly through Kaheris' pockets, removing his little remaining currency. Then he hit him in the face, with his fist.

"No papers. Take you in on suspicion. All the way to a nice red planet."

SEVEN

The Draft Station. Bored interrogators, minor tortures. Internment. Transportation to the training camp. A month's practice with empty, obsolete weapons. Issue of the uniform. Long train journey. Spaceport, departure for Mars, the one-way ticket.

The evangelist shot by spaceport police, yelling, "Listen to the stars. That's the way through."

The trip. Issue of bullets. Discomfort, overcrowding in the troop ship. Sickness from the space drive. Three days to Mars. For what? "After we finish the Marts, let's fight A Centauri."

EIGHT

Suddenly nightfall, the night of a younger world; in the distance the glowing volcanic skyline. The silver spheres surround him, messages flow. Levitating wizard shoots the sky, through halls of blue fires. "I see a new order for all."

The prophet comes. "I have looked into the darkness and seen doom. We are betrayed."

Advance of the birdmen. The ancient city wavers in the haze. The giant robot storms from its tomb.

Out of the fog comes the Man In The Mask.

NINE

"The Marts are clever, you understand. They assume human form. Don't be fooled. Aim to kill. OK?"

The briefing continued in the dim light. Kaheris ran the red dust through his fingers. How did they still breathe? Someone must have fixed it; the War must go on. Surgery? He couldn't recall. Or was this really Mars? Above, the sun seemed a shrunken disc.

How many troops here? Ten million, a hundred million? The War was "the turning point in our history" as the newspapers had all said. For those at home, maybe. A hundred million, and who ever came back.

"The Marts hold that hill, 770. We must have it."

Why? Why not?

TEN

Noise, gunfire, screams. Bombs, shells, mortar.

Like the comic books.

Kaheris weaves his way through the dead and up to the summit of the hill, adrenalin driving him on, blind to his terror. The hill must be taken. Sure. One of the enemy sprang from a dug-out. Tossing aside an empty gun, it came at him with a knife. Physically, it looked human.

It screamed "Dirty Mart" as Kaheris shot it, through the head. A trick? He was beyond thinking. Nausea welled up. He sank to his knees.

Weight of numbers told. The Marts were swept from the hill. Some escaped through their network of tunnels.

Later, perhaps much later, a medic comes to Kaheris. Looming into the blur of his mind. Kaheris was moaning to himself, something he could not hear.

The medic speaks. For Kaheris it is sudden thunder.

"Man, what turned *you* on?"

His eyes leap into focus. The features of the medic slip, change, and then harden into a mask of hammered metal.

Kaheris vomits. Mars flickers, and is gone.

ELEVEN

Kaheris is a giant, two hundred feet high. He strides between tilted, melting apartment blocks, crushing automobiles under foot. He kicks a railway bridge out of his path.

It is Earth-future, the countdown world. The loudspeakers are fused junk heaps. Above him, the sun approaches nova, flinging its debris outwards, like a sunflower. Time is suspended. The colors around him are unnaturally bright.

Noise reaches an unbearable level. The pneumatic garden. The roads become a great mirror, reflecting the exploding sun.

TWELVE

Fear grips him. He is running, in the dry ocean basin, amid the salt storms. He is running. A jungle of metal pylons rusts away, in the static factories of Detroit. He seeks help. Where is Henry Ford? Where is Superman? But there is no one.

He wanders among blocks of stone, collapsed archways. They crumble to his touch, the sand maker. Behind him, the Man comes, from the dissolving green carpet hills. The Man comes, in the rainstorm upon the wasteland, past the camps guarded with electric fences, now deserted. Kaheris waits.

THIRTEEN

Kaheris sees the high steps, cut in the infinite mountains, up to the burning sky. For a moment he is back at the institution, in the desert. White Sands. They are asking him, over and over, what happened to him in orbit, why he tried to crash the capsule. Once he told them that something spoke to him. But not what it was, what it said.

Dream of escape, past frozen jailors, down the paths of time. The countdown world. The War with Mars. How could it matter? Who was the Man In The Mask?

The sun swells in the sky, a light for the death of all. He shouts a question, "Where does dreaming end?" There is no reply.

He is on the beach, reads a message, scrawled on the blocks at the edge of the sea.

And who is the Man In The Mask? Myself. Or absolutely no one. Fear incarnate. What I became, in the sky.

Who spoke to me? Who do they think?

FOURTEEN

He climbs the sky, fills the heart of the sun. His tendrils spread from the vortex, consuming all.

Whirlpool man, boiling like the quicksilver rain, grasping for the stars. Awaiting nova.

Afterword:

This story, considered at the superficial level, reads like a parody of science fiction; the War with Mars, the concluding nova, are among the oldest and most tired of all possible cliches. I hope that this was intentional. While I find it difficult to reconstruct exactly what I was trying to do, it seems to me that I have written a kind of tribute to the comic books, the literary level below science fiction, where things happen without real explanation, a world of bright colors and loud noises, which fitted with the distorted perceptions of the astronaut Kaheris. The initial image at least, that of the countdown-world, I got from an old edition of the "Justice League Of America." (The planet, of course, was not Earth, and I have no recollection of how the heroes escaped.) Kaheris is a character cut from cardboard, an animated shadow in a sequence of disasters. As I wrote the story, the images grew rather larger than I had wanted, pushed Kaheris further and further back; although I had never intended to define his position clearly. The assassination sequence is an inversion of the nomination of Goldwater. The War with Mars is not the Vietnam War, it's just any war, the kind you can read about in any comic.



In 1967, Terry Carr, then a junior editor at Ace Books, managed to convince that publishing house to begin a series of science fiction "specials" (a designation devised by the late A. A. Wyn, founder of the company, and capitalizing on the then-popular TV "specials" the networks were pushing). Terry was at first nominally in charge, but soon became the senior editor on the series. In the years between 1967 and 1971 when—under unpleasant circumstances that reflect poorly on Ace—Terry left the company, the Ace Specials became the most prestigious series of books ever published in the field. They garnered more Hugos and Nebulas for Ace than any company in the history of sf publishing, brought to first publication such novelists as R. A. Lafferty, Gordon Eklund, Joanna Russ, Alexei Panshin, D. G. Compton and John Sladek (in the United States), Bob Shaw and others . . . and became a sought-after showcase by writers who knew Terry promoted the books as few other paperback houses would.

More than merely a random group of titles submitted by agents and unsolicited through slush pile, the Specials were the brainchild of Terry Carr; they were lovingly crafted and packaged with stunning elegance. (Leo & Diane Dillon, whom DV readers will remember as the artists of that first anthology, created not merely commercial cover paintings but works of genuine Fine Art that made the hearts of the authors burst with joy.)

Terry devised innovations in packaging that made the Specials books worth keeping after insuring they were books no one could keep from purchasing. For instance, instead of mere hype cover copy or *précis* of plot (usually misleading or annoyingly revelatory of the story within), Terry took the time and trouble to work far enough ahead so galleys of forthcoming titles could be sent to well-known sf authors whose works were tonally like those of the book in question, and he solicited unpaid comment for use on the covers. Most companies do that sort of thing from time to time, but usually they either pay for the comments—thereby throwing their validity into question—or they make sure only good comment will be forthcoming, by any number of methods. Terry, on the other hand, always made it perfectly clear that he wanted *only* honest opinion, and if a writer who received a set of galleys found the book less than pleasurable, Terry understood and never tried to bulldoze an author into alter-

ing his opinion, or even into providing something noncommittal that could be edited with those deadly ellipses.

Terry Carr, through dint of sheer hard work, became the very best book editor we ever had.

Now the Specials are dead, and Terry is back on a freelance basis. But who he is, and what he did, will live on.

As editor, Terry brought forth the following excellent collections:

Science Fiction for People Who Hate Science Fiction (Doubleday, 1966; Funk & Wagnalls, 1968)
New Worlds of Fantasy 1/2/3 (Ace, 1967, 1970, 1971)
The Others (Gold Medal, 1969)
On Our Way to the Future (Ace, 1970)
Universe 1/2 (Ace, 1971, 1972)

and in collaboration with long-time Ace editor Donald A. Wollheim he edited the superior series of *World's Best Science Fiction* (1965–71) from Ace. This series alone, had Terry never worked on any other anthology, made his name and gave him the deserved stature all science fiction fandom has bestowed on him. For, early in the game, Terry and Don's "best" became the *definitive* "best," despite other editors' claims to the contrary.

As writer, Terry wrote *Warlord of Kor* (Ace, 1963) and co-wrote a novel he wishes to be forgotten. Threats of kidnapping and tickling to death his writer wife, Carol, could not extract the title of the book from Mr. Carr, and so, apart from some students at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, Illinois who know, the information will go to Mr. Carr's grave and the out-of-print department of Monarch Books. Perhaps that's for the best. One never knows.

As writer, he penned a great short story, "The Dance of the Changer and the Three", which was nominated in 1969 for both Hugo and Nebula, though this editor beat him out for the former and Kate Wilhelm took the latter. Mr. Carr has consistently carped about this experience, claiming all manner of dark and ugly chicane was involved in his upset. Even noble editors can be spoil-sports, it would seem.

Now, Carr, what have you to say for yourself?

"Born Grants Pass, Oregon, February 19, 1937, which means I'm over 30 but was still under the mark when the original caution about who's trustworthy was made. February 19 also means I'm Aquarius or Pisces, depending on what authority you believe. My life is marked by inconsistencies like that, if it's marked by anything. Lived in the hills of Oregon for my first five years—real country stuff, with my father gold mining on the property and all. We moved to San Francisco after Pearl Harbor and that's where I did most of my growing up. College at S. F. City College

for two years, where I was taking a course in space flight before Sputnik, and learned all about weather balloons. More college at University of California at Berkeley, during a time when the administration was scolding the students for their apathy, ahaha. I was apathetic too, and didn't graduate; got married instead. It didn't last, and after the breakup in 1961 I moved to New York where, having no better profession, I tried writing for a living. Astounded myself more than anyone by selling everything I wrote, but was still starving due to not writing enough, a familiar story. Went to work as a literary agent for a year and a half but didn't like it, so I jumped at the chance for an editorial position at Ace Books when Don Wollheim offered it. Worked there for seven years. Job vanished in 1971, along with large chunks of the country, during the Great Recession that seems to have been a reality for everyone except Mr. Nixon.

"Discovered science fiction initially by stumbling across Balmer & Wylie's WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE in the school library while looking for a book on astronomy; it had been misfiled, but after reading it I didn't complain. A few months later I found a couple of back issues of *Amazing Stories* in a city dump, and from there it was downhill the rest of the way. Got involved in science fiction fandom when I was twelve, became one of the most voluminous fan publishers ever, until professional things left me without time for it. Five Hugo nominations for best fan magazine, but only one win, that being co-edited with the late Ron Ellik. Later had Nebula and Hugo nominations for a short story, 'The Dance of the Changer and the Three,' but was beaten by dirty politics in both cases. Don't print that.

"I'm 6'3", 185 pounds, brown hair, hazel eyes, no birthmarks except a couple of slight identations behind the ears as a result of being born a forceps baby; you'd have trouble finding them, though, unless I showed you, so they're no good for any FBI dossier that may exist. Have been married for lo these ten years to Carol Carr, who's pretty and sexy and funny and manages to write even less than I do, which is a wonder. What else do you want to know?"

Incidentally, Terry informs me—and you—that he will no longer be editing *World's Best Science Fiction* with Donald Wollheim, but will be initiating a new series of "best" volumes for Ballantine Books.



Terry Carr

OZYMANDIAS

They came up out of the groundstars howling and leaping, laughing and pushing, singing into the night a strange, tuneless, polyphonal chant. They proceeded past the markers and twice around them, still giggling and chanting, and spread out in a wavering line that went up the hill like a snake. It took them ten minutes to go from the markers to the boundary, a distance of no more than fifty paces for a walker—but these were not walkers, they were robbers, and they had the laws to follow.

Sooleyrah was in the lead, because he was the best dancer among them —the most graceful and quick and, even more important, the most inventive. No approach to the vaults could be made in just the same way any had been made before, and if the watcher, who was always second in line, noticed a pattern developing that he thought he might have seen before, it was his job to trip the leader, or shove him, or kick him, or whatever was necessary to shake him into a new rhythm or direction. On those raids when the leader invented enough new variations, and the watcher made sure there were no repeats from the past, then they had a successful raid. When leader and watcher failed, there were explosions, blindings, gases, and sometimes the sound-without-sound, and then there was death.

But Sooleyrah was in good form tonight, and even Kreech, who was watcher, had to admit that.

"Go good," he chanted. "Go good, good, good, go good." Then he tripped Sooleyrah, but only for the fun of it, and danced in a circle till the leader bounded up and continued.

"Watchers got easy, yeah easy," Sooleyrah sang. "Easy trip leader, no reason; damn no reason." He did a double-back step, and whirled, his flying foot narrowly missing Kreech's mouth.

"Reason next time," he sang, and laughed.

Behind him, Kreech did the whirling step, just missing the next in line, and he too laughed; then the third man followed it, and the kick and laugh

traveled back down the hill, undulating in the darkness. Sooleyrah, slim and graceful and dark-bearded, did a slide, three jumps, then rolled on the ground, leading always upward, toward the vaults. They stood black and distant against the night sky at hillcrest, jagged storehouses of darkness.

"Don't matter anyway," Kreech told him. "Don't matter, Sooleyrah, don't leader matter. Go good, go bad, no difference." He rolled, following Sooleyrah up the hill, and the small bells he carried in his tattered shirt pocket tinkled dully. "You heard he said, don't matter."

"Hell damn, yeah," Sooleyrah sang. "Damn yeah, damn fat boy, damn he knows." He paused, straining on tiptoes to look back down the line. The fat boy was only a little way behind them, puffing and gasping already as he tried to follow the upward dance; he wasn't accustomed to it, as anyone could see. His gray-washed tunic was splotching dark with sweat; his hair, cut short at ear-length, fell in sweat-strings down his forehead.

Kreech paused, turned, looked back, and so did the next man, and the next, and so on until the one in front of the fat boy turned suddenly to stare at him; and the fat boy yipped, startled, then caught on to it and turned to look back himself.

Sooleyrah laughed again, and returned to his dance. "Damn fat boy no good anyway," he sang. "No good, know nothing, no good, know nothing."

"Hell damn yourself," Kreech said. "Damn fat boy almost a thinker. *Damn* almost."

Sooleyrah snorted, and did a particularly difficult series of jump-steps deliberately for the confounding of the almost-thinker back down the line. "Damn-almost as good as nowhere, nowhere," he sang. "That's thinkers now anyway, nowhere, nowhere. Nowhere."

"Except fat boy," Kreech said.

"Hell fat boy," Sooleyrah said, lapsing from song in his disgust. "Fat boy don't know, but you know, I know. Vaults still there—*there!*"—he pointed up the hill, still dancing—"so what's fat boy know? So we dance, we sing, careful, damn careful."

They were halfway up the hill now, the luminescent groundstars merging into a bright mist spread over the valley below, where only occasional widely spaced bones of buildings thrust up into the open night air. The rest of the valley, all the way to the mountains, was groundstars from here.

Above them, up the hill, blackness grew and deepened with each step, and the massive vaults loomed black against the weak, scattered light of the skystars. The vaults covered the crown of the hill, most of them broken or crumbled or even exploded by now—the result of centuries of raids by the valley robbers. Those that still stood were all empty inside, or so the

thinkers had said, but Sooleyrah didn't believe them. There were always more vaults to open—always had been, always would be. Hell damn foolishness to say there weren't, or wouldn't be.

If the vaults all became empty, there would be no toys, no starboxes, no tools to replace those worn and broken or maybe thrown away dull, and no samesongs or pictures or any of the other things that had been stored there for the valley people. Which was ridiculous, and unthinkable, and Sooleyrah wouldn't think it.

So he danced on upward, darting to right and left, rolling and tumbling, laughing into the empty air, while behind him, one by one, the others pointed after him to the vaults, and danced and tumbled, and echoes of his laugh faded back down the line.

Lasten, the fat boy, was frightened. He had never been on a raid before, had never been trained for it. He knew he would make some disastrous mistake at any moment, and then the others would turn on him. Or, if they did get to the vaults without trouble, it would be a night for the Immortals.

Probably gas or the sound-without-sound, he thought. *Not so afraid of a blinding—least you can get back down the hill from that. But it be something killing for me, yeah.*

Well, he was lucky to be alive anyway: all the other thinkers had been killed the night before. Massacred by the robbers—just lined up in the hub-square and stoned to death. Oh, the screaming and panic, the ones who tried to run with their ankles hobbled, the manic singing and shouting of the robbers—Lasten shuddered, hating himself for his cowardice, hating the way he had hidden in an unused basement where groundstars were so thick they made a shimmering fog. Hiding, he had heard all of it anyway, had even seen some of the worst scenes, the most vivid ones; they'd invaded his mind in waves of terror from the thinkers or, sometimes, exultation and a kind of crazed kill-frenzy from the robbers. For Lasten, the fat boy, was a weird, one of the 10% of human mutations that managed to live in each generation.

Some were born with extra toes, or no feet at all; these were the common ones, the ones who lived as easily as anyone else, accepting tithes from the market thieves as they rocked back and forth in the dirt and listened for rumors to sell. Others were born already dead or dying, with jellied skulls or tiny hearts unable to support life. And a few, a very few, had extra things that no one else had: not just extra hands or grotesquely oversized

private parts (like Kreech, like Kreech), but *talents*. Lasten's father, for instance, had had a talent for numbers; he could remember how many seasons ago a thing had happened, or how often it had happened during his lifetime, or even put numbers together in his head to make new numbers. And Sooleyrah claimed he had a place somewhere in his head where everything was always level, and that was why he was such a good dancer.

Lasten could hear people's minds. Not their thoughts, for people don't have thoughts inside; Lasten heard emotions and mind-pictures, whatever was strongest in the consciousness of those around him. Red hate, boiling and exploding; sometimes pure fear, blue-white, rigid; sex fantasies that echoed disturbingly in Lasten's own mind. They came at him unbidden; he couldn't shut them out when they were really strong, as they had been last night. Blood, blood on the ground, dark blood spurting from crushed skulls, a trail of red where one man had tried to drag his battered body away to safety. And screaming: Lasten had heard the screams of both the killers and the dying, and had found himself, when it was over, huddled in a corner and still screaming himself, his throat hoarse and ragged. He was crying, and he had emptied his stomach and his bowels simultaneously, helpless to stop either.

And it had all been unnecessary, because they wouldn't have killed him anyway. He wasn't yet a thinker.

Yeah, only thinkers got the death, only official thinkers. Dumb robbers don't know I'm a thinker too, just not entered yet. Dumb robbers don't know hell damn thing.

Lasten tripped over his feet trying to accomplish a whirling jump-step; he fell gasping to the ground, and for a second he thought he'd lie there, let the line pass him while he caught his breath. But the next in line kicked him sharply, kicked him again and again, and Lasten moaned and struggled to his feet. He ran weakly to catch up to the line ahead, sweating and whimpering. He knew he'd never get back alive from this raid. Probably none of them would.

Should try to get away, roll out into the dark where they can't see, maybe they'd go right on by. Couldn't stop to look for me, no; rest of the line has to keep up or the approach goes bad, sure it does. Damn dumb robbers.

But he didn't have the quickness to get out of sight before they'd catch him and drag him back into line, and he knew it. Yeah, damn dumb robbers were going to get themselves killed, blown up, burned—and fat boy thinker Lasten was going to get killed with them, because he couldn't get away.

"Fat boy fell down," Kreech laughed, stepping high behind Sooleyrah's lead. "Daipell kicked him, kicked him, kicked him, fat boy got up."

Sooleyrah paused, looked angrily back down the hill. The fat boy was back in line now, clumsily following the steps. Sooleyrah could hardly see him now, they had progressed so far up into the skystar darkness; but the fat boy's size stood out against the brightness of the valley groundstars below.

"Fat boy messes up my approach, I'll kill him, smash him with rocks, rocks," Sooleyrah chanted. "Yeah, like the rest, make him a thinker too. No good, any thinker." Abruptly he whirled, and did an easy dance-skip straight up the hill. Kreech immediately followed him.

"Told you leave him back, leave him back," Kreech sang. "No good dancer yeah you're right, *damn* right. No good for the rest."

"Fat boy dances right or I damn smash him with rocks," Sooleyrah said.

"We don't smash nobody if we're dead too. No good dancer, no good approach, no good at the vaults. Get ourselves dead, because of fat boy."

Sooleyrah slowed his dancing even more than he already had. He did a waddle-step, then giggled and broke into a tension-high laugh. "Go slow, go easy for fat boy. Go easy so he can follow, so we get into vaults right, no killing tonight. Waddle waddle, kind of dance fat boy does all the time anyway." He giggled again. "Make sure no killing at vaults, show damn almost-thinker vaults still there. Yeah, let him see for himself, no different from always, always . . ."

Kreech leaped forward quickly and tripped him. Their feet tangled together and they both fell, Sooleyrah's lean form sprawling loosely, Kreech's bulkier body hitting the sparse grass heavily. Sooleyrah rolled over quickly and was on his feet almost immediately. Kreech grunted and bounded up too.

"Go bad there," he sang. "Too much the same, go bad, go lousy. Got to go *good*, Sooleyrah, go *good*, go *good*."

The next man in line caught up to them, and he deftly tripped Kreech and fell to the ground beside him, following the lead. Sooleyrah whooped his laughter, whirled and danced on up the hill.

"Yeah, go good tonight," he sang. "Just let fat boy thinker see, yeah, then tomorrow we smash him, *damn* yeah."

And it was all so useless, so senseless. Lasten puffed and sweated trying to follow the lead of the man ahead of him in the line, trying to duplicate each movement, each step, every twist or hop or gesture; that was the rule

when the robbers went up to the vaults, and if you didn't follow it they might stop long enough to kill you. Senselessly, uselessly.

Because it didn't matter. The whole ritual of the dance-approach, the singsong chanting, the leader and the watcher . . . all unnecessary. The robbers thought they were conquering taboos by the skill of their dancing whenever they made a successful approach to the vaults, and they thought they'd failed when instead they encountered the vault-fires, the blindings, the deaths . . . but fat boy Lasten who had been trained as a thinker knew better.

Damn yeah, know better than dumb robbers.

The robbers could have walked straight up the hill to the vaults, no wandering snakelike line, no jumping and dancing, no chanting. They could have approached any of the vaults, and they would have gotten in without incident . . . or else they would have been gassed or blinded or killed. Sometimes a raid would get through the Immortals' defenses, and sometimes it would mean danger and death, but it had nothing to do with the dance or the rituals.

Yeah, dance it right and you get in, or dance it wrong and you get killed. Stupid, stupid.

Lasten's people had been thinkers, the ones who kept the old knowledge . . . or what remained of it. They knew that the vaults were guarded not by curses or demons, nor by strange magic laws that judged and recorded the dance steps of generations of ignorant vault robbers. No, these vaults had been protected by the Immortals in ways even the thinkers no longer knew . . . but it was not magic. There were hidden eyes surrounding each vault, and they defended against invasion with a variety of weapons. Gas was one, explosions were another; that was plain enough. The sound-without-sound was not so simple, nor the blinding lights, but they were all the same, only defenses left to guard the vaults.

The world that had created those vaults was gone, destroyed in bombings and explosions and gases so powerful they had killed most of the Immortals. They screamed and died, screamed and died, until only a handful were left, grubbing among the ruins, their women bearing strange children, and all of them dazzled by the groundstars that filled the low places everywhere.

Each spring now, as soon as the thaw was complete, the people of the valley held memorial for the past and the thinkers told the story.

The man ahead of Lasten was waddling now, laughing as he glanced back to see the fat boy follow the lead. Lasten cursed in ragged gasps, but he waddled after him as the man leaped forward to trip the dancer

in front of him. The two of them fell sprawling to the ground, and giggled and laughed as they rose.

"Hey yeah, fat boy," the dancer ahead of him sang, "come get me, fat boy, your turn to trip ole Sharksey," and he danced in a circle, waiting, giggling, challenging.

Lasten sucked harsh air into his lungs, gathered what strength he had and ran forward to swing a leg and trip the man. But his aim was short; he felt himself falling, off balance, saw Sharksey's face suddenly angry, and then he was on the ground gasping weakly, and Sharksey muttered "Sisterson!" and leaped upon him.

The man's weight was not great, but the impact knocked the rest of Lasten's wind out of him. He moaned weakly, hardly feeling the elbows Sharksey was wielding freely as he rolled off him and got to his feet. "Damn lousy fat Lasten, should've been made a thinker so you'd be killed too. No good dancer, *damn* no good. Get us all killed, yeah, only maybe we kill you, kill Lasten, hey kill fat boy, yeah? Yeah? Unless you get *up*, fat boy, *up* right now, right *now!*"

And Lasten struggled to his feet while Sharksey continued to dance around him cursing and threatening. He stood up shuddering, and Sharksey sang, "Okay, dance it right, dance right . . . oh yeah, or we kill you, Lasten, and you know it, you know it, don't you?" He laughed, whirled and danced on upward to follow the others.

Lasten watched him go, seeing him through a red mist like crimson groundstars swarming around his head. In his mind he still felt the throbbing hatred, the promise of death that was more than just promise; Sharksey really *wanted* to kill him. He gasped in air, and the mist began to dissipate—and suddenly his legs were cut from beneath him as the next dancer in line leaped forward to trip him in his turn. Again he was on the ground, but this time, driven by fear of the anticipation he'd felt from Sharksey's mind, he got up quickly and danced, or lurched, or shambled, step by step up the hill after the line.

No more mistakes for Lasten, no, he told himself. *Dancing don't matter to the Immortals, but it does to the filthy robbers, murdering robbers, and they'll really kill you, won't make no difference why you die.*

But damn them, damn them forcing me here when I've told them the vaults are empty.

Sooleyrah had reached the gates now. There had once been a strong wall here, he'd heard that, but it was virtually demolished by generations of robbers who had torn it down barehanded, stone by stone, and the stones

were littered all around, some scattered back down the hill where they'd rolled or been thrown. Fifteen or twenty yards to the right was a pit where once a bad dancer had caused an explosion. Of the wall only the gates remained, twin steel markers pitted and rust-flaking with age. Night moss had crept up the sides of the gates, half covering them with dark green fur. Overhead the cold skystars hung silently.

"Okay, we go in," Sooleyrah chanted. "We go in, go in—hey we go in *now!*" and he danced forward, through the gates as quickly as he could (many robbers had been killed there, though none within Sooleyrah's memory), and on the other side, the inside, he paused and did shuffle-steps, humming a high keening song while Kreech and one, two, three more followed him through.

"Now we're in," he said softly to Kreech, and they turned to survey the vaults. Behind them more of the line danced through the gates, slowed and finally stopped like Sooleyrah and Kreech, panting, staring around them at the vaults.

"Which one?" Kreech asked. "You been here three, four times in a row now, so which one we go into?"

Sooleyrah's eyes narrowed as he studied the vaults. They crowned the entire hilltop, vaults of many sizes and shapes, some tall, like obelisks, others domelike, still others jointed with odd angles and designs. Sooleyrah had always been afraid of the vaults—for their size alone, even if they hadn't been so dangerous. They towered into the sky above; and when the robbers entered those doorways the arches stretched far overhead to encompass echoing empty darkness.

"Starboxes are kept in the vaults for us, no other reason, yeah?" he said to Kreech. "And samesongs, and tools; some toys maybe too, lots of shapes, yeah? Plug 'em into the starboxes and yeah, they work, they work. Now why unless they're for us? Who else, Kreech, who else?"

"Nobody," Kreech said. "Nobody but us to take 'em."

"Yeah, yeah, nobody," Sooleyrah said, turning slowly in the night, in the poised silence of the hilltop and the looming vaults. He looked back down the hill and saw the rest of the line coming through the gates, and the gates themselves now seemed to lead out, to lead downward, back to the brightness of the groundstars. He saw Lasten come panting and shuffling through, and suddenly he grinned.

"Hey, fat boy Lasten can pick us a vault. Almost-thinker says they're all empty, hell he knows. Remember what the rest said? Rest of the thinkers? Said they could remember which vaults were used up, remember how many vaults there were, and all empty now. You remember? Yeah? Damn dumb thinkers been fooling us for hey *long* time. Send us up here instead

of them, make us take the chances, oh yeah, they just tell us which vaults to go to. Oh sure, oh yeah, smart old thinkers, and every one dead now, about time."

Kreech kicked over a loosely planted stone; underneath it were faintly glowing crawling things that scurried in small circles and quickly burrowed into the ground, hiding.

"Yeah, always hated the thinkers," Kreech said. "Always knew they were liars—well, didn't all of us? Hey yeah, good, get Lasten up here and make him pick out our vault tonight."

"Yeah okay, pass the word back," Sooleyrah said, then turned his back to the line and stared again at the vaults. But almost immediately he had another thought; he said to Kreech, "Lasten picks our vault, and he's first one to go in tonight. First one. Place of honor, yeah?" He laughed.

"First one in gets killed if the approach wasn't good," Kreech said. "Oh yeah, place of honor."

"Fat boy needs it," Sooleyrah said. "Bring him here."

Lasten's fear sharpened when they came for him. Why did they want him now, when they were through the gates and at the portals of the vaults themselves? Surely they wouldn't kill him now, up here on the silent hilltop. What reason, what reason? (Unless they were going back to human sacrifice in front of the vaults. *No.*)

But the flickering impressions that reached him from Sooleyrah's mind, when he was brought to the leader, had nothing of murder in them. There was hatred, yes, and the soft spongy feel of gloating. But not murder, no, nothing overt.

"Hey Lasten, you almost a thinker, yeah?" Sooleyrah said, and his voice was so quiet, almost friendly. But not his mind.

"I wasn't entered," Lasten said cautiously.

"Yeah, we know. Okay, but you know a lot of stuff, yeah? Know a lot about vaults, which ones are dangerous, which ones maybe empty, we hear. Now, not *all* of 'em empty, Lasten, not *all* of 'em. You almost a thinker, you not dumb, yeah?"

"The thinkers told you they were all empty," Lasten said, "so you killed the thinkers. Now if I still say that, you'll kill *me.*"

Sooleyrah smiled widely, glancing at Kreech. "No, no, Lasten, you not dumb. Okay, now what vault do we go to tonight?"

A chill scurried up Lasten's back, touching the nape of his neck spider-softly.

"You want me to pick the vault?" he asked. "Why me? Why, Sooleyrah?"

Sooleyrah laughed, enjoying himself. "Hell damn *I* know what vault to pick. Thinkers always do that, always. So no more thinkers, but we got you, Lasten. So you pick."

So I pick—and if the vault is empty, it's my fault, not Sooleyrah's. Sooleyrah maybe not so sure about the vaults after all, eh?

"You scared to pick one yourself, Sooleyrah? Scared you can't find a vault with your pretty things? Yeah, you're scared, scared."

But he shouldn't have said that. Sooleyrah leaped forward and grasped Lasten's arm, painfully squeezing the soft flesh, twisting the arm behind him. Lasten cried out in pain, and bent over trying to escape the pressure. Sooleyrah jammed his arm up against his shoulder blades.

"Not scared, fat boy; not scared, just smart. Thinkers knew about vaults, they taught you, yeah? Sure, Lasten, sure, we know. Then thinkers said all vaults empty, no use making raids any more, yeah? Yeah? Well, maybe thinkers got something up here they don't want found, eh? Robbers not so dumb, Lasten, and Sooleyrah not dumb either. You pick vault, *you*, and it *better* not be empty!"

Or they'll stone me right here, Lasten thought, seeing that as a bright certainty in Sooleyrah's mind. *Only way Sooleyrah could make up for leading a failure raid. Yeah, and the robbers would love another stoning, especially up here where the magic is. Magic and death, oh yeah, they'll love it.*

"And *you* go into vault first, Lasten," Kreech told him with happy malice. "Sure, *you*, Lasten, place of honor for you."

Place of death, Lasten thought. *Oh, you dumb damn robbers, lousy murdering superstitious—*

"Which one, Lasten?" Sooleyrah said, applying pressure to his arm. "Which one?"

And Lasten, the almost-thinker, suddenly laughed.

"Yeah, okay," he said, and giggled again, a giggle just like Sooleyrah's or Kreech's, only higher pitched, thinner. "Okay, yeah, okay, okay . . ."

Sooleyrah let go of his arm, stepping back. "You take us to an empty vault, you won't be laughing," he warned.

"Yeah, oh yeah, I know," Lasten said, managing to stop his giggling. It wasn't that funny, after all; in fact, probably it wasn't funny at all.

"That one," he said, pointing to the vault nearest to them. "We go there."

Sooleyrah and Kreech both stared. "*That* one? Fat boy, you crazy? Nothing in that vault, nothing there since before you or me born!"

"Hey, yeah," Kreech said. "First vault ever emptied was that one, that one right there, don't you know that?"

"Sure, I know, sure. But that's the one we go to tonight. And you look

close, robber leader and watcher, you look close and you'll see vault's *not* empty. You want more pretty stuff stored in vaults, you just look close tonight!"

He began to walk confidently toward the nearest vault, while behind him Sooleyrah and Kreech looked angry, then uneasy, and finally they turned and motioned the rest of the party to follow them as they moved after Lasten.

Sure, damn robbers emptied this vault first thing, Lasten was thinking. *Been in this one so often you can't count, clearing it out, every piece they could find, everything the Immortals stored here. Only that just means it's a safe vault, all the defenses used up or burned out so long ago. Nothing here to blind me, burn me, kill me. Safe vault, yeah . . . but maybe not so empty as they think.*

The door to the vault gaped open, leading into blackness. Lasten called for torches, and two of the robbers came forward and lit them. "Okay, now we go in," Lasten said, and sullenly the torchbearers followed him through the wide doorway, Sooleyrah and Kreech right behind them.

Inside was a high-ceilinged room littered with dust and stones and broken pieces of once-complete artifacts; one wall of the room was dark and misshapen, its plastoid seared by some long-forgotten fire-explosion. A hole in the ceiling, so far above them it was barely discernible in the flickering torchlight, showed where once there had been lighting fixtures, long since ripped out by the robbers. The sounds of footsteps were flat and harsh in the bare room, and the faint smell of old torchsmoke seemed to come from the shadows. Sooleyrah moved closer to Lasten, saying with dangerous softness, "Don't see nothing in here, thinker."

Lasten nodded, looking carefully around the vault.

"*You* see anything in here, Kreech? Looks empty to me, just empty as damn, yeah?"

Kreech grinned. "Oh no, not empty. Can't be; fat thinker brought us here. That right, fat thinker? Something hidden in here?"

Lasten got down on hands and knees in the middle of the floor, picking through the rubble. Here and there he brushed aside dust and stones to look closely at the floor.

"Yeah hey, he got something hidden all right," Sooleyrah said. "Hey, move in with the torches there, move closer." The torchbearers edged suspiciously forward; Sooleyrah grabbed one, swung him around and placed him where he wanted him, standing right over Lasten. "You too," he told the other man, and that one too held his torch close over the fat boy.

Lasten giggled.

"You find it, hey?" Sooleyrah said. "What is it, fat boy? Better be good, and you know it, now don't you? What is it?"

Lasten knew Sooleyrah and the others were more frightened than they acted. The robbers had always been afraid of these vaults, no matter how often they'd pillaged them, and despite the lower and lower frequency of maimings or killings by the defense systems. *Robbers think this is all demon-stuff, something like that. Hell, no demons, not even lousy magic. Just stuff we forgot, even the thinkers forgot.*

But yeah, I know one more thing about vaults that Sooleyrah don't know.

Lasten rose to his feet, puffing, then looked around and picked out the south wall. In the center of it was a metal plaque with writing on it—devil marks, the robbers called it: another kind of magic to fear.

Lasten couldn't read it, but he knew what it must be. He motioned Sooleyrah over to him and pointed at the plaque. "Take that off the wall," he said.

Sooleyrah stared at him; so did Kreech, and so did the rest, the torch-bearers and the ones crowded around the doorway.

"Take it off the wall!" Lasten said sharply, a little shrilly. "Pry it, use your knives—but be careful."

Sooleyrah hesitated only a moment more; then he turned and picked out one of the men in the doorway. "Takker—you. Bring your knife, do what thinker says. Rest of you, you keep door blocked so thinker can't run out."

Takker came into the vault reluctantly, drawing his knife. It was crude but strong; once it had been just a slim bar of metal, but Takker had filed it sharp. He worked the edge under the plaque and pried; the plaque began to loosen.

"Secret place in there?" Sooleyrah asked, and Lasten didn't have to feel the suppressed fear from his mind; it was apparent in his voice.

"Yeah, secret place," he said. "Surprise for you."

The plaque came off and dropped to the floor with a sharp metallic ring. Lasten stepped forward, motioned for the light and looked into the small hole opened in the wall.

There was a round dial, with markings and writing—the short writing they'd used for numbers. A time-lock, set for sometime in the future, after the wars. But the time could be changed, no reason it couldn't be changed.

Lasten twisted the dial, heard its faint scraping clearly in the suddenly silent vault. Turn, turn, and seasons flowed by, more and more time was marked off. Years, years. He kept turning the dial, waiting for the time-lock

to release. (Maybe he was turning it the wrong direction? But no; it wouldn't turn at all the other way.)

All around him he tasted fear. He stood in semidarkness as the torch-bearers edged away; shadows sprang up to claim more of the vault. Even Sooleyrah and Kreech had moved away, toward the door.

Then the floor of the vault began to rise.

There was a section of the flooring, twice as long as the height of a man and half as wide, that was separate from the rest; Lasten had searched for and found the edges of that section when he'd been on hands and knees earlier. Now the section was rising out of the floor, accompanied by a low subterranean hum of machinery. It was a block of heavy plastoid, and as Lasten and the others stared in wonder and terror it raised itself steadily to a height almost up to their shoulders.

It was a compartment, transparent-sided; inside it lay the body of an Immortal—or a demon, a god, a monster. He was huge, twice the size of Lasten or Sooleyrah or any of the rest of them; they could see that even while he was lying down, in the moving shadows of torchlight.

The mechanisms of the compartment were whirring to life; Lasten saw the top of the case lifting off, smelled stale air as it was released from the case, saw a needle-thin marker on the side of the compartment leap to the end of its dial, and at the same time the giant's body convulsed, back arching, muscles quivering. It settled back, but again the dial-marker leaped, and the huge body with it.

This time there came a moan, low and weak, and the monster's head rolled onto its side. Its mouth was open, slack; the eyes fluttered; the hands shook and moved.

Needles and tubes withdrew from the body, sinking back into their seats within the case. The dials settled to rest.

The Immortal's eyes opened and stared emptily at them.

Hell helt hell hell hell big monstrous inhuman devil hell hell kill us all kill us no no!

The eyes opened wider, and the creature moaned again, louder now. It was a deep growl, half-choked, and it echoed from the walls.

Hate us hate us all kill us kill me me me me no!

And the giant tried to sit up.

Its hands scratched at the sides of the case, lacking coordination, lacking strength. The creature grunted and fell back; it breathed in pain-wracked gobbets of air, making harsh gasping sounds deep in its throat.

Kreech screamed. He threw himself at the men standing frozen in the doorway and fought his way through them, still screaming. He sent others reeling backward as he burst through, and several followed him, adding

their screams to his. Sooleyrah yelled after him, started to run too but hesitated.

Lasten stood rooted in fright, his whole being filled with terror, both from himself and from the flood of panic in the minds around him. Red, bursting fear, splashing white-hot into his stomach, his chest . . .

Kill me kill me kill me me me me kill—

The giant sat up, and it was monstrous. Twice the height of a man, it swayed and moaned above them in the dark vault. Its fingers scrabbled spasmodically; it slipped back onto one elbow; its eyes rolled as it stared down at them. And it spoke.

"God . . . oh God . . . what are you? What *are* you?"

A weak, thin voice. Frightened.

"Help me . . . please, help—"

Suddenly it tumbled over, falling off the side of its mount, headfirst onto the floor at Lasten's feet. It crashed heavily and noisily, sending Lasten staggering back in fright. The monster writhed there on the floor, hands clutching air, legs jerking, spittle falling from its mouth. And then it slumped, and sobbed weakly, hopelessly. "Oh God, please . . ."

Kill me kill me me me kill kill and Lasten suddenly had a large stone in his hands and he ran forward and brought it down with all his strength on the monster's face. It smashed in one eye, a side of the head, and thin red blood spurted. The giant thrashed about wildly, arms flung up and feet kicking spasmodically, and faint little sobs came from its gaping mouth. Lasten hit it again, and again, and again, and he was screaming now, screaming to drown out the cries of the monster, and he hit it again, and again, and *harder* . . .

And at last there were only his own screams in the vault. The monster, the Immortal, the inhuman giant lay silent and destroyed at his feet. Sooleyrah and the rest had fled. Lasten choked off his cries and dropped the slippery red stone. He fell against the case, hardly noticing the blood that covered his legs and hands.

I'm alive I'm alive, alive . . . I'm alive . . .

It was more than an hour later when Sooleyrah and Kreech crept back up to the vault. There had been silence for all that time, and the monster had not come out after them.

Kreech carried a torch; he thrust it before him through the doorway. He saw the demon-monster, and he recoiled; but then he realized that it lay completely still and there was blood all around its smashed head.

Sooleyrah pushed past him and entered the vault. He saw Lasten stand-

ing beside the monster's case, a dark stone in his hands. Lasten brought the stone down once, twice, and the molding broke; pieces showered to his blood-caked feet. He reached into the recesses of the case, yanked, and brought forth a handful of wires, red, yellow, blue, green.

He looked up and saw Sooleyrah, and smiled.

And giggled.

And said, "Come on, Sooleyrah. Come on, little dancer leader. No demon left to hurt you now, oh no, no demon, no monster. Devil scared you? But I killed him—*me*. Don't be scared, dancer, don't be scared; come inside. Plenty of stuff here, oh plenty. And in other vaults too."

He held up the fistful of many-colored wires.

"Pretty?"

Afterword:

I'm strictly a spare-time writer these days, and not at all a prolific one; I write a couple of short stories a year, that's all. Not much of an output, but it does give me one advantage: before I actually sit down to write a story, I've usually been mulling it over in my head for months or sometimes years, with the result that my original story idea may have been carried much further out than I'd expected, and a lot of undertones may have crept into the story.

"Ozymandias" happened like that. Originally it was just a notion that came when I'd been reading about cryogenics: Where would they store all the bodies? Maintenance would be prohibitive over the long haul, unless it were automated. And if it were automated, then you'd have a self-contained unit, a modern tomb sufficient unto itself, a scientific version of the elaborate tombs of ancient Egypt.

Well, why not? Those Egyptian tombs were designed to insure the immortality of pharaohs, nobles and anyone else with enough money and power; today the criteria are the same, and so is the purpose. So . . . put a bunch of cryogenics tombs together and you've got a new Valley of the Kings.

It was an eerie image, and I carried it around in the back of my head for several months. Then an apparently different story idea came to me: Cryogenics is, in a sense, a method of time travel, so mightn't it one day come to be used specifically for that purpose? Rich men and women shut themselves in their tombs and set the mechanism to awaken them in time for, say, the turn of the millennium, or a century later, and another century, traveling forward in these time-leaps.

But if the future of the world should turn out to be as grim as some trends are warning us, then those cryogenic time-tombs could be used not

just to travel forward but to escape from something—armageddon, maybe. For the rich, even an atomic war might be just something else to sleep through.

And there I had another analogy to the tomb: a retreat designed to carry a person through death for a reawakening on the other side. And I was back again in the Valley of the Kings, for now it was even reasonable to assume that these people might store in their tombs quantities of tools, weapons, power sources, food . . . whatever they felt they might need on the other side of the catastrophe. Like the pharaohs, who stored food, possessions and wealth for use in the afterlife.

For the pharaohs this inevitably meant that their tombs would be violated by tomb-robbers, because it's the way of the world that those who need will take from those who have, if they can. And after an atomic war, anyone left alive would probably be very desperately in need, so those cryogenic tombs would become natural prey for robbers, or scavengers.

That was the background I had in mind when I began to put the actual story together; the rest is elaboration in terms of story, character, imagery and even symbolism. The symbolism, frankly, just happened as the story took form; it was an unconscious thing on my part, and I was surprised when I read over the final manuscript to see how many details had a little touch of extra referents . . . nothing major, nothing crucial to the story, but they're there if you have that turn of mind.

I'd almost finished the story before I realized that it should be titled "Ozymandias." This story is a comment on modern achievements in much the same way that Shelley's poem was a refutation of the vainglorious boasts of pharaohs: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings. Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair."

This time a new Ozymandias awakes to look on his own works, but the reaction is the same.



Introduction to

THE MILK OF PARADISE:

This is the last introduction in the book. I have been at it, more off than on, for three months. It looks to be about 60,000 words of copy. That's a novel. For those of you who hate my introductions, you'll have decided to forego them all to this point, and you'll have no carp because you're paying for about 250,000 words of stories and the extra sixty grand of words is thrown in as a bonus. But for those of you who like to sense the people behind the fictions, I hope it has been as stimulating and pleasant an experience for you as it has for me. But in no way as exhausting.

Keep watch, there'll be a final volume in this trilogy, as I've noted elsewhere herein. It'll be titled *The Last Dangerous Visions* and the name is intended to be taken literally.

But for now, the best has been saved for the last.

In an earlier introduction I made sport of the concept of holding an anthology's strongest entry for the closeout spot. I did it in that introduction for the humorous effect. (What's that? Well, you're not so hot, yourself, smartass.) In *Dangerous Visions* I knew my best pick was Samuel R. Delany's award-winning ". . . Aye, and Gomorrah." When I bought it, Chip Delany hadn't published many short stories, though his novels were already coming to prominence. So it wasn't an award-winner then. But it was quite clearly the eye-opener of the book—though Phil Farmer's "Riders of the Purple Wage" was so close there wasn't air between them. It just howled award-winner. And so it was.

I kept hoping, as I assembled A,DV, for another smasher like the Delany, for the rideout position here. For many months good stories came in, some even breath-catchers—the Lupoff, the Vonnegut, the Filer, others—but not one that propelled itself, shoving aside all other contenders, into this slot. Then James Tiptree's story came to my desk.

I had been reading Tiptree for some time. He's a fairly recent addition to the corps of sf writers, and he hadn't had all *that* much published—not even a novel as of this writing—but what I'd seen had impressed me considerably, and so I wrote asking for a submission.

In came "The Milk of Paradise."

I simply could not believe I had been given the chance to buy a story that stunning. That kind of thing always winds up in some other guy's hands, and he becomes known as the editor who published such-and-such by so-and-so. But here it was, and it was mine, all mine, and without a

glance at any of the other stories it went past go, collected all the marbles, avoided jail, and nestled here in signoff country. It was the big winner, the grand finale, the "Saints Go Marching In" with all horns blaring and emotional and intellectual pinwheels and luck had held. As I predicted earlier in this collection that Lupoff's novella would cop the mid-length awards, so I now stake what little rep I have left that this Tiptree story will cop the short story awards. And the sf world at large will realize what those who've read this story in manuscript and galley have come to realize: we have a new Giant in the genre.

Tiptree is the man to beat this year.

Wilhelm is the woman to beat, but Tiptree is the man.

All of this ferocity of flack is offered not merely because I am so high on this story, but because it is the favored spot, as said, and because, ironically, James Tiptree refuses to provide any personal data on himself.

That he lives in the state of Virginia and does a good deal of traveling (for a purpose I don't know) is all I have on him.

His reasons for remaining private seem to me deeply and sincerely motivated, so I won't defy them. But as a mark of a writer who may not even suspect how good he is—and for that reason may *be* that good—here is an excerpt from the letter that accompanied return of the signed contracts for this marvelous, memorable, goodbye-to-A,DV story. Here is Tiptree:

". . . You have given me to think about the value, to an editor, of an author with no personal data, no desire to be quotes 'showcased,' and every intention of impersonating a Döppler shift if threatened with anything like awards. And who kicks over displays with his name on the cover. It had never, you see, occurred to me that such would happen. I had planned on several years of quietly collecting rejection slips. And then came Fred Pohl who understood and never made a fuss. Now he has gone and probes are coming in all around the horizon and for reasons which I trust are quite unclear they cannot get answered. What to do? A pseudonym and a P.O. box and start over?"



James Tiptree, Jr.

THE MILK OF PARADISE

She was flowing hot and naked and she straddled his belly in the cuddle-cube and fed him her hard little tits. And he convulsed up under her and then was headlong on the waster, vomiting.

"Timor! Timor!"

It was not his name.

"Sorry." He retched up more U_4. "I warned you, Seoul."

She sat up where he'd thrown her, purely astonished.

"You mean you don't *want* me? But everyone in this station—"

"I'm sorry. I did warn you." He began to struggle into his gray singlet, long-sleeved, puffed at elbows. "It's no good. It's never any good."

"But you're Human, Timor. Like me. Aren't you glad you were rescued?"

"Human." He spat in the waster. "That's all you can think of."

She gasped. He was pulling on long gray tights, pleated at knee and ankle.

"What did they *do* to you, Timor?" She rocked on her bottom. "How did they love you I can't?" she wailed.

"It's what they were, Seoul," he said patiently, arranging his dove-gray cuffs.

"Did they look like that? All gray and shiny? Is that why you wear—"

He turned on her, chunky gray-covered boy, hot eyes in a still face. "I wear these to conceal my hideous Human body," he said tightly. "So I won't make myself sick. Compared to them I was a—a Crot. So are you."

"Oh-h-h-h—"

His face softened.

"If you could have seen them, Seoul. Tall as smoke, and they were always in music, with . . . something you can't imagine. We haven't—" He stopped tugging at his gray gloves, shuddered. "Fairer than all the children of men," he said painfully.

She hugged herself, eyes narrowed.

"But they're dead, Timor. Dead! You told me."

He went rigid, turned away from her with his hand on his gray slipper.

"How could there be better than Humans?" she persisted. "Everyone knows there's only Humans and Crots. I don't think it's your crotty Paradise at all, I think—"

He wrenched at the privacy lock.

"Timor, wait! Timor?"

The sound that was not his name followed him into the bright corridors, his feet carrying him blindly on the dry hardness. Fight to breathe evenly, to control the fist that shook him from within.

When he slowed he saw that he was in a part of this station still strange to him. But they were all alike, all like hospital and Trainworld. Parched prisms.

An aged she-Crot wheeled by, grinning vacuously, trailing skin. His stomach churned again at the red scurf. The local Crots were high-grade, equivalent to Human morons. Caricatures. *Subhumans.* Why let them in the stations?

A drone warned him of the air plant ahead and he veered away, passed a flasher: HUMANS ONLY. Beyond it was the playroom where he had met Seoul. He found it empty, jagged with rude games and mechanical throats. What the lords of the Galaxy called music. So jealous of their ugliness. He passed the U_4 bar, grimaced, and heard water splashing.

It drew him powerfully. There had been water on Paradise . . . such water . . . he came into the station pool.

Two heads shot out of the water, tossed black hair.

"Heyo, the newboy!"

He stared at the wetness, the olive boy-flesh.

"He flows! Come on in, newboy!"

For a moment he held aloof, a gray-clad stranger. Then his body prodded and he stripped again, showed the hateful dry pink.

"Heyo, he really flows!"

The water was clear and wrong but he felt better.

"Ottowa," one boy told him.

"Hull." They were twins.

"Timor," he lied, rolling, sluicing in the wet. He wanted—wanted—

Olive hands on his legs in the bubbling.

"Good?"

"In the water," he said thickly. They laughed.

"Are you sub? Come on."

He flushed, saw it was a joke and followed them.

The pool cube was dim and moist and it was almost good. But their

flesh grew greasy-hot and presently he could not do what they wanted.

"He flows nowhere," the one called Ottowa said.

"You don't—" They were busy with each other. Aching, undrained, he said furiously, "Humans! Ugly nullhead Humans. You don't know what flowing is."

They stared at him now, too startled for anger.

"Where are *you* from, newboy?" Ottowa asked.

It was no use, he shouldn't have.

"From Paradise," he said wearily, pulling on gray silk.

They exchanged looks.

"There's no such planet."

"There is," he said. "There is. There was." And went out head averted into the bright wastes. Stilling his face, straightening the short tree of his spine. When would he be in space, allowed simply to do his job? The mindless immensities, the empty stars. Better. *Weave a circle round him thrice and close your eyes with holy dread, for he on honey-dew hath fed and drunk—*

A hand fell on his shoulder from behind.

"So you're the Crot nurseling."

The old fury lashed him round, fists ready. His eyes went up.

Into dream. He stood gaping his unbelief. But then he saw that the thin black face above his own was Human. Human, not much older than he. But cloud-lean, ghost-graceful, like—

"I'm Santiago. Work to do. Follow me, Crotty."

Old habit drove his fist, automatically his throat said, "My-name-is-Timor."

The dark one twisted lightly, the blow palmed on his shoulder. Contemptuous god-grin.

"Pax, pax." Black velvet voice. "Timor, son of the late great Scout Timor. My father's compliments and will you get your ass into the scouter I'm taking out. Sector D needs it as of yesterday and we're short-handed. Your specs say you know how."

Santiago. His father must be the fat brown stationchief who had greeted him yesterday. How could such a sire—

"Apprentice cert," his voice was saying.

Santiago nodded and went away without looking back to see that Timor followed.

The scouter was new and of the same model Timor had CRd on. Numbly he moved through the out-system transjection routine, parroting the checks, not daring to look closely at the long figure in the command console.

When they were set to first transit Santiago turned to him.

"Still freaked?"

Timor kept his eyes from the dark magnets.

"Seoul told me a little. I shouldn't have said that, obviously no Crot could raise a man."

". . ."

"My father. Wasted me too long. His dear old chum-scout Timor's son, saved from the aliens. Your father and mine spaced together—you'll get all that when you're back. He thinks you're Scout Timor reincarnated. He asked for you, you know."

"Yes," Timor got out.

The eyes studied him, hooded.

"It's a good thing he did. Your specs are a little strange."

"What do you mean?"

"All that sycounsel wad. I expect they had to work you over *completely*. How old were you when you were found?"

"Ten," said Timor absently. "What were you doing *with my—*"

"Don't freak. Man going out wants to know who's with him, fair? . . . Ten years with—all right, I won't say it. But if they weren't Crots, what were they? Crots is all we know."

Timor drew breath. If he could somehow touch understanding without words. But he was so tired.

"They were not Crots," he told the smoke-thin face. "Compared to them . . ." He turned away.

"You don't want to talk."

"No."

"Too bad," said Santiago lightly. "We could use a super race."

In silence they worked through the transit-change, set the main course parameters and secondary checks. Then Santiago stretched, moved to the lockers.

"Might as well relax and eat now, next transit's not for an hour. Then we can sleep." With odd, archaic ceremoniousness he opened their food.

Timor realized he was very hungry. And from behind his gut, stabs of a deeper hunger. It seemed good to eat thus with another Human, intimately cocooned in abyssal space. Always before he had been the monitored pupil. Now . . .

He stiffened, summoned scorn.

"U4?"

"No."

"Try some of this, then. Station's best, I boosted it. You must not have had much rest since you came off Trainworld."

It was true. Timor took the proffered bulb.

"Where is Sector D?"

"Out toward Deneb. Six transits. They're opening three new systems and we're trying to keep it all supplied."

They talked a little then, about the station and the weird encapsulated life of Trainworld. Despite himself, Timor felt knots in perilous thaw.

"Music?"

Santiago caught his unguarded wince.

"That wastes you? Your aliens had better music, true?"

Timor nodded.

"They had cities?"

"Oh yes."

"Real cities? Like Mescalon?"

"More beautiful. Different. With many musics," he said painfully.

The dark face watched him.

"Where are they now?"

"In Paradise." Timor shook his head tiredly. "I mean, the planet was called Paradise. But they're all dead. The scouts who found me had a disease."

"Bad."

There was a pause. Then Santiago said musingly, "There's a spool of planets called paradise something or somebody's paradise. You wouldn't happen to know the coordinates?"

Alarms clattered in Timor's head.

"No!"

"Oh, you must have been told."

"No, no! I forgot. They never—"

"Maybe we could hype you," Santiago smiled.

"No!"

The effort jerked him loose from his stay. As he caught himself clumsily he noticed that the cabin seemed very small, with curious haloes.

"They had cities, you say. Tell me about them."

He wanted to say it was time for the transit, to stop talking. But he found he was telling the dark ghost about the cities. The cities of his lost world, of Paradise . . .

"—dim ruby light. And music. The music of many, and the mud—"

"Mud?"

His heart jolted, raced. Staring mutely at the ghost-angel.

"Oh, keep on the track," the angel said severely.

Suddenly Timor knew.

"You've drugged me." Santiago's long lips flickered.

"The people. You say they were beautiful?"

"Fairer than all the children of men," said Timor helplessly, worlds sliding within him.

"They flowed?"

"They flowed." Timor's head weaved, tortured. "More than any Human. More than you.

"They loved me," he groaned, reaching his arms to ghosts. "You look a little like them. Why . . ."

Santiago seemed to be doing something at the console.

"I do?" White teeth made haloes.

"No," said Timor. Suddenly he was very cool. "You're only Human. It's just that you're not pink and you're tall. But you're nothing but a Human. To them, Humans are Crots."

"Humans are Crots?" Blue-black knife-face over him, lethal. "You're trying for it, newboy. So your aliens are something better than Humans? Mere Humans make you vomit? That makes you something very very special. And how convenient, they're all dead, and no one's ever seen it. You know a thing, Timor son of Crot Timor, I think you're lying. You know where it is."

"No!"

"Where is it?"

Timor heard himself yell, saw the ebony mask check and change.

"All right, don't freak. I caught enough of your specs to know the sector they picked you up in. It's not far off course. You said the primary was dim and red, true? Computer will sort it, there can't be too many Class M dwarfs out here."

He turned away. Timor tried to launch himself to stop him, but his drugged hands were flailing empty bulkhead.

"I am not lying, I am not lying . . ."

The computer was droning.

"—class M Beta primaries Sector Two zero point zed point delta solution one four repeat one four."

"Ah," said Santiago. "Fourteen's too many." He frowned at Timor who was now quiet.

"There must be something you know. Some criterion. I want to find this Paradise."

"They're all dead," Timor whispered.

"Maybe," said Santiago. "Maybe not. And maybe you're lying and maybe not. Either way I want to see it. If the cities are there there'll be things we can use. Or I'll get you off for good. Why do you think you're on this trip, newboy? Somebody's hiding something and I'm going to find it."

"You can't find it. I won't let you hurt them!" Timor heard his voice break, struggled through shells of unreality. He could see the cabin lights reflected in violet bloom on Santiago's brow. Black stars probed him, golden edged. The face of dream.

"I wouldn't hurt them." The voice was velvet again. "Why would I harm Paradise? I want to see them. The cities. We could see the cities together. You could show me." The dream loomed, swelled closer. Warmth. Melting. "You could show me.

"You want to go back, to Paradise."

Timor's eyes blurred.

"Maybe some of them are still alive. Maybe we could help them."

Depths shifted in him, oozed scorching springs. "Santiago . . ." His hands were on richness now, kneading the throb. If it were not so dry, so bright—

The lights dimmed to a blue glow.

"Yes," Santiago said. His tunic was peeling away, the dark flesh glimmered. "I would like to share the beauty. You must be very lonely."

Timor's lips moved, wordless.

"Tell me a little how it was . . . the light . . ."

* * *

. . . No, no, no, no, no, no . . .

His mouth was on fire, even his lungs were dry. Somewhere the voder-voice gabbled, quit. His eyes were crusted. "No, no," he croaked, his face striking plastic.

"Suck, stupid."

Liquid gushed in. He sucked greedily and the blue-blackness above him came in focus.

"That wears off. You'll be fine when we get to Paradise."

"No!" Timor jerked upright, clutching after the long shape that weaved away. He remembered now, the drug and Santiago.

He had been hyped.

The thing that must not, must not ever be.

But Santiago was grinning at him.

"Oh yes, little Timor-whatever-your-name-is. You put out. Those sunless periods. It was a binary, did you know that? Dark-body system. And that cluster you called the Swarm. Computer had it all."

"You found it? *You found Paradise?*"

"We're one transit out."

A cool bursting inside him, fountains of dissolving light unbearable. Santiago had hyped him and found Paradise. He could not believe it.

Slowly he sank back, drank some more, dreamily watching Santiago. Belief grew. They would walk the streets of Paradise. His proud Human would see. The signaller was flashing. Santiago's eyes slid round.

"Recall presignal. But they can't know we've gone off-course." He shrugged. "We'll see when the message clears. I'm not turning back."

"Santiago." Timor smiled. "We flowed. I've never said it to a Human before."

But the black stars came no closer.

"Maybe. I wonder. You said a lot of things. If your Paradise turns out to be a Crot world—" Santiago's nostrils wedged. "A Crot's thing into Humans—"

"You'll see. You will see!"

"Maybe."

The boards chimed for transit, and suddenly Timor's head cleared.

"But they're dead!" he cried. "I don't want to see it, Santiago. Not all dead. Don't take us there!"

Santiago ignored him, went on setting course. Timor floundered up, pulled at his arms and received a chop that sent him into the stays.

"What's wasting you? Why are you so sure they're all dead?"

Timor's mouth opened, closed. How was he so sure? Armor seemed to be dissolving from his brain. Who had told him that? He had been so young. Could it have been a mistake? A lie?

"In which case," Santiago's eyes roved the boards, "would they be friendly?"

"Friendly?" A fearful joy was rising in Timor, perilous, unstoppable. Alive. Was it *possible*? "Oh, yes."

"But maybe after that disease," Santiago persisted. He started a check-run. "Just make sure our Ambax is operational."

Timor hardly heard him, moved like a zombie through the drill. Finally Santiago pushed him at the shower.

"Clean up. In case you meet your friends."

He seemed to be floating at less than the scouter's nominal gee, roiled by waves of alternate joy and dread. Timor concentrated on the vision of himself and Santiago entering empty cities. No music, but the spires and the . . . his bitter lover would see what a flowing world had been.

They were braking into the system. To their side a sullen star swelled, eclipsed, reappeared.

"That one. Third out."

The grav-webs took hold. Timor saw a great star-cluster wheel across the screen. "The Swarm!"

Paradise. *They were landing on Paradise.*

"Where are the cities?"

"Under the clouds."

"It's nine-tenths ocean. I don't see any roads. Or fields."

"That's right. They don't need them. The open spaces are—were just for sport or water-dancing."

"A hole there. Go down by the sea."

As the braking bit the signal print-out chattered. Santiago slapped it aside. Overcast churned around them crescendo, thinned. Then the webs grabbed them and they were set down, cooling, in dim ruby light.

Before them the screen showed milky smoothness; sea. With a level shore, and behind them low fronds. And a long crenellated line which fingered Timor's heart. This was not real. This was real.

Santiago was frowning at the message.

"Out of their heads. A *medical* recall?"

Timor scarcely heard him. The cycling lock was a vortex tugging him to the beautiful dimness, the garnet-gleaming light. Real.

"Your moment of truth, newboy."

The port opened and they went out into Paradise. Healing moisture rushed into Timor's lungs.

"Agh, what a fug. You sure this is breathable?"

"Come on. The city."

"Where are your spires?"

Twilight, the ground sluiced with sweetness, lapped by the quiet shallow sea. Impatiently he pulled at Santiago's arm, felt him stumble. Not real.

"Where is the city?"

"Come on." In dimness they splashed through a grove of short, flabby trees that oozed fruit. The sea curved beside them, barely ankle-deep.

"Is *that* supposed to be a town?"

Timor looked at the low crenellated walls lit only by the dusk. They seemed lower than he remembered, lower and—but he had been a child.

"It's been abandoned, it's crumbled."

"Mud—*what are those?*"

Gray rotten little things were humping toward them out of the walls, stopping to stare.

"They," said Timor. "They must be the—the servants. The workers. I guess they didn't die."

"They make Crots look Human."

"No, no."

"And those are nothing but mud hovels."

"No," repeated Timor. He moved forward, pulling his friend who would not see. "Look, they've just deteriorated."

"In seven years?"

A low music came to Timor's ears. Three of the lumps were humping closer. All dove-gray like himself, but it was hide, not silk, that bloated at elbows and knees. Gray splayed feet, and between them, under the bags of belly, the giant genitals of two of them leaving triple furrows in the soft mud. The third trailed a central row of great dugs. From their blue-black face holes came gentle glubbering sounds.

Dark gems, gold-crusted like the sad eyes of toads met his. The world sideslipped, folded into transparency. The music—

A terrible clamor broke upon him. Timor whirled. The alien beside him was laughing, cruel barking teeth.

"Well, my crotty friend! So this is Paradise!" Santiago yelled, whooped. "Not even Crots! SUBCROTS!

"Speak to your friends, Crot," he gasped. "Answer them!"

But Timor did not understand. A thing was clysming from him, a thing of most careful construction which had almost killed him, dissolving out.

"It is absolutely necessary that this child be totally reconditioned," he said in a stranger's voice. "He is Scout Timor's son." But his words meant nothing to him, for he had heard his name in the music. His true name, name of his babyhood under the soft gray hands and bodies of his first world. The bodies that had taught him love, all in the mud, in the cool mud.

The thing beside him was making hurtful sounds.

"You wanted the beauty!" Timor screamed his last Human words.

And then they were down, tearing and rolling in the sweet mud, gray bodies with him. Until he found that it was no longer fighting but love—love as it always had been, his true flowing, while the voices rose around him and the muddied thing under him that was dead or dying slipped away in the gray welter, in the music of many, flowing together in Paradise in the dim ruby light.

Afterword:

Reading an afterword is like watching a stoned friend sail onto an interstate expressway. One can't help looking and one is seldom made happy. Exceptions, sure. Our long-established favorites may safely peer around the edges of their monuments, even wave and wink. And we have also the walkie-talkie writers, the *Pan troglodytes* who verbalize every twitching

moment and who are named Mailer and Wolfe when they're good. To them are permitted forewords, afterwords, asides, superscripts, anything—because their separate stories are in fact only nodes, local swirls in a life-flow of words.

But the rest of us, poor carnivores whose inwards meagerly condense into speech. Only at intervals when the moon, perhaps, opens our throats do we clamber up the rocks and emit our peculiar streams of sound to the sky. Good, bad, we do not know. When it is over we are finished. Our glands have changed. Push microphones at us and you get only grumbles about the prevalence of fleas or the scarcity of rabbits. And this is what makes most afterwords such nervous reading, gives rise to the suspicion that the baying itself was a cryptic complaint about rabbits.

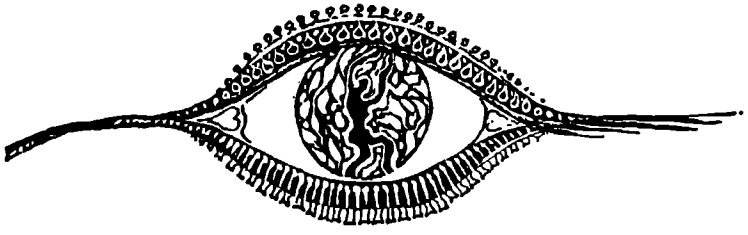
We think not, of course. We think it was somewhat deeper in the blood. But we're in no condition to argue. Push me at noon on the streets and I can only tell you—those damned rabbits are dying out and the fleas have us.

Peace?

About this story. A thermal vortex by the arbitrary name of Harlan Ellison has been bashing out a bit of free space where writers who need some elbow-room can try. Count me among those currently running and flapping, dragging homemade fly-buggies up on cliffs and taking off with hope. The resultant is not of course a neat scene, nor necessarily art. Moreover, Ellison is instantly recognizable as that type of absolutely top guy whose friends all go around with tubes in their stomachs. But after all the Maalox has been gulped and the old ladies picked up and apologized to, I think a ragged cheer is in order. For the guy without whom everybody would have slept better and dreamed less.

about the artist who illustrated
AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS





ED EMSHWILLER

To individually illustrate the forty-two stories in this book, the editor selected one of America's finest graphic designers and artists, who also happens to be an internationally-acclaimed filmmaker.

Ed Emshwiller was born in 1925, in Lansing, Michigan. He is married to Carol Emshwiller, a well-known writer (among her credits is "Sex and/or Mr. Morrison" in *Dangerous Visions*), and they live with their three children in Wantagh, Long Island, New York. He served in the US Infantry in World War II, received his BA in Design in 1949 from the University of Michigan, and studied painting in Paris at L'École des Beaux-Arts. He is currently on the Board of the American Film Institute.

During the period 1951–64, Mr. Emshwiller was a well-known illustrator in the science fiction field, rendering a staggering number of magazine and book covers (Mr. Emshwiller estimates between 500 and 600), as well as quite literally thousands of black and white interior illustrations.

For his work he has been singularly honored with receipt of the Hugo award as Best Artist, from the World Science Fiction Convention, five times.

In 1952 he began doing film "doodles" and in 1956 began using film as a means of keeping records of his paintings. Utilizing film he did a series of "time-lapse" projects showing his paintings at various stages of completion. He began making experimental films seriously in 1959. In 1964 he took what was intended as a "leave of absence" from illustrating, to concentrate on film. Mr. Emshwiller remembers telling one sf publisher it would be for one year. To date, he has not returned to illustrating, save for special projects such as *Again, Dangerous Visions,* which Mr. Emshwiller terms a labor of love "for old time's sake."

His "underground" films have shown in virtually every important film festival, both here and abroad, in the last ten years. He has won many awards as well as Ford and Arts Council filmmaking grants.

His films include the following:

Dance Chromatic (1959)
Transformation (1959)—time painting
Life Lines (1960)—live action, animation, etc.
Variable Studies (1960)—time painting
Thanatopsis (1960–62)
Totem (1962–63)
Scrambles (1960–63)
George Dumpson's Place (1961–63)

Relativity (1960–63)—feature-length experimental, made with the aid of a Ford grant
Body Works (1965)—life dance film
Two films (titles unavailable) for USIA
Image, Flesh and Voice (1968–70)—containing voices and utilizing the persons of a number of sf writers

Mr. Emshwiller served as Cinematographer on the following:

Time of the Heathen (1960–61)
Hallelujah the Hills (1962)

And as Cameraman for:

American Way (1961)
Film Magazine of the Arts (1963)

And as Cameraman for sections of:

Streets of Greenwood (1963)
The Existentialist (1964)

He is currently at work on a new film of his own.

For *Again, Dangerous Visions* Mr. Emshwiller conceived of a two-dimensional "cinematic" technique he describes briefly thus:

"A movie — a series of visions accompanied by a sound track, the sound of the reader reading in his own head. Here's a book, a series of verbal visions to which we can add a picture track. In each case the track adds a sensual dimension, hopefully making the experience richer."

The individual illustrations, joined into one continuing visual track (as stated by the endpapers of this volume) appears to be a series of lines with protuberances which, inside the book, are separated and enlarged, to show the visual theme of the story. In this way the art parallels film that seems to be merely a strip of celluloid till flashed larger on a screen.