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 **SPARTACUS**

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**THE EDGE  
OF  
TOMORROW**  

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**by howard fast**



BANTAM BOOKS

**THE EDGE OF TOMORROW**

*A Bantam Book / published June 1961*

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# THE FIRST MEN

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*By Airmail:*  
Calcutta, India  
Nov. 4th, 1945

Mrs. Jean Arbalaid  
Washington, D. C.

My dear sister:

I found it. I saw it with my own eyes, and thereby I am convinced that I have a useful purpose in life—overseas investigator for the anthropological whims of my sister. That, in any case, is better than boredom. I have no desire to return home; I will not go into any further explanations or reasons. I am neurotic, unsettled and adrift. I got my discharge in Karachi, as you know. I am very happy to be an ex-GI and a tourist, but it took me only a few weeks to become bored to distraction. So I was quite pleased to have a mission from you. The mission is completed.

It could have been more exciting. The plain fact of the mat-

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

ter is that the small Associated Press item you sent me was quite accurate in all of its details. The little village of Chunga is in Assam. I got there by 'plane, narrow gauge train and ox-cart—a fairly pleasant trip at this time of the year, with the back of the heat broken; and there I saw the child, who is now fourteen years old.

I am sure you know enough about India to realize that fourteen is very much an adult age for a girl in these parts—the majority of them are married by then. And there is no question about the age. I spoke at length to the mother and father, who identified the child by two very distinctive birthmarks. The identification was substantiated by relatives and other villagers—all of whom remembered the birthmarks. A circumstance not unusual or remarkable in these small villages.

The child was lost as an infant—at eight months, a common story, the parents working in the field, the child set down, and then the child gone. Whether it crawled at that age or not, I can't say; at any rate, it was a healthy, alert and curious infant. They all agree on that point.

How the child came to the wolves is something we will never know. Possibly a bitch who had lost her own cubs carried the infant off. That is the most likely story, isn't it? This is not lupus, the European variety, but *pallipes*, its local cousin, nevertheless a respectable animal in size and disposition, and not something to stumble over on a dark night. Eighteen days ago, when the child was found, the villagers had to kill five wolves to take her, and she herself fought like a devil out of hell. She had lived as a wolf for thirteen years.

Will the story of her life among the wolves ever emerge? I don't know. To all effects and purposes, she is a wolf. She cannot stand upright—the curvature of her spine being beyond correction. She runs on all fours and her knuckles are covered with heavy callus. They are trying to teach her to use her hands for grasping and holding, but so far unsuccessfully. Any clothes they dress her in, she tears off, and as yet she has not been able to grasp the meaning of speech, much less talk. The Indian anthropologist, Sumil Gojee, has been working with her for a week now, and he has little hope that any real communication will ever be possible. In our terms and by our measurements, she is a

## *The First Men*

total idiot, an infantile imbecile, and it is likely that she will remain so for the rest of her life.

On the other hand, both Professor Gojee and Dr. Chalmers, a government health service man, who came up from Calcutta to examine the child, agree that there are no physical or hereditary elements to account for the child's mental condition, no malformation of the cranial area and no history of imbecilism in her background. Everyone in the village attests to the normalcy—indeed, alertness and brightness—of the infant; and Professor Gojee makes a point of the alertness and adaptability she must have required to survive for thirteen years among the wolves. The child responds excellently to reflex tests, and neurologically, she appears to be sound. She is strong—beyond the strength of a thirteen year old—wiry, quick in her movements, and possesses an uncanny sense of smell and hearing.

Professor Gojee has examined records of eighteen similar cases recorded in India over the past hundred years, and in every case, he says, the recovered child was an idiot in our terms—or a wolf in objective terms. He points out that it would be incorrect to call this child an idiot or an imbecile—any more than we would call a wolf an idiot or an imbecile. The child is a wolf, perhaps a very superior wolf, but a wolf nevertheless.

I am preparing a much fuller report on the whole business. Meanwhile, this letter contains the pertinent facts. As for money—I am very well heeled indeed, with eleven hundred dollars I won in a crap game. Take care of yourself and your brilliant husband and the public health service.

Love and kisses,

Harry

*By cable:*

HARRY FELTON

HOTEL EMPIRE

CALCUTTA, INDIA.

NOVEMBER 10, 1945

THIS IS NO WHIM, HARRY, BUT VERY SERIOUS INDEED. YOU DID NOBLY. SIMILAR CASE IN PRETORIA. GENERAL HOSPITAL, DR. FELIX VANOTT. WE HAVE MADE ALL ARRANGEMENTS WITH AIR TRANSPORT.

JEAN ARBALAID

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

*By Airmail*

Pretoria, Union of South Africa

November 15, 1945

Mrs. Jean Arbalaid  
Washington, D. C.

My dear sister:

You are evidently a very big wheel, you and your husband, and I wish I knew what your current silly season adds up to. I suppose in due time you'll see fit to tell me. But in any case, your priorities command respect. A full colonel was bumped, and I was promptly whisked to South Africa, a beautiful country of pleasant climate and, I am sure, great promise.

I saw the child, who is still being kept in the General Hospital here, and I spent an evening with Dr. Vanott and a young and reasonably attractive Quaker lady, Miss Gloria Oland, an anthropologist working among the Bantu people for her Doctorate. So, you see, I will be able to provide a certain amount of background material—more as I develop my acquaintance with Miss Oland.

Superficially, this case is remarkably like the incident in Assam. There it was a girl of fourteen; here we have a Bantu boy of eleven. The girl was reared by the wolves; the boy, in this case, was reared by the baboons—and rescued from them by a White Hunter, name of Archway, strong, silent type, right out of Hemingway. Unfortunately, Archway has a nasty temper and doesn't like children, so when the boy understandably bit him, he whipped the child to within an inch of its life. "Tamed him," as he puts it.

At the hospital, however, the child has been receiving the best of care and reasonable if scientific affection. There is no way of tracing him back to his parents, for these Basuto-land baboons are great travellers and there is no telling where they picked him up. His age is a medical guess, but reasonable. That he is of Bantu origin, there is no doubt. He is handsome, long-limbed, exceedingly strong, and with no indication of any cranial injury. But like the girl in Assam, he is—in our terms—an idiot and an imbecile.

That is to say, he is a baboon. His vocalization is that of

## *The First Men*

a baboon. He differs from the girl in that he is able to use his hands to hold things and to examine things, and he has a more active curiosity; but that, I am assured by Miss Oland, is the difference between a wolf and a baboon.

He too has a permanent curvature of the spine; he goes on all fours as the baboons do, and the back of his fingers and hands are heavily callused. After tearing off his clothes the first time, he accepted them, but that too is a baboon trait. In this case, Miss Oland has hope for his learning at least rudimentary speech, but Dr. Vanott doubts that he ever will. Incidentally, I must take note that in those eighteen cases Professor Gojee referred to, there was no incidence of human speech being learned beyond its most basic elements.

So goes my childhood hero, Tarzan of the Apes, and all the noble beasts along with him. But the most terrifying thought is this—what is the substance of man himself, if this can happen to him? The learned folk here have been trying to explain to me that man is a creature of his thought and that his thought is to a very large extent shaped by his environment; and that this thought process—or mentation as they call it—is based on words. Without words, thought becomes a process of pictures, which is on the animal level and rules out all, even the most primitive, abstract concepts. In other words, man cannot become man by himself: he is the result of other men and of the totality of human society and experience.

The man raised by the wolves is a wolf, by the baboons a baboon—and this is implacable, isn't it? My head has been swimming with all sorts of notions, some of them not at all pleasant. My dear sister, what are you and your husband up to? Isn't it time you broke down and told old Harry? Or do you want me to pop off to Tibet? Anything to please you, but preferably something that adds up.

Your ever-loving Harry

*By Airmail*

Washington, D. C.

November 27, 1945

Mr. Harry Felton

Pretoria, Union of South Africa.

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

Dear Harry:

You are a noble and sweet brother, and quite sharp too. You are also a dear. Mark and I want you to do a job for us, which will enable you to run here and there across the face of the earth, and be paid for it too. In order to convince you, we must spill out the dark secrets of our work—which we have decided to do, considering you an upright and trustworthy character. But the mail, it would seem, is less trustworthy; and since we are working with the Army, which has a constitutional dedication to *top-secret* and similar nonsense, the information goes to you via diplomatic pouch. As of receiving this, consider yourself employed; your expenses will be paid, within reason, and an additional eight thousand a year for less work than indulgence.

So please stay put at your hotel in Pretoria until the pouch arrives. Not more than ten days. Of course, you will be notified.

Love, affection and respect,  
Jean

*By diplomatic pouch*  
Washington, D. C.  
December 5, 1945

Mr. Harry Felton  
Pretoria, Union of South Africa.

Dear Harry:

Consider this letter the joint effort of Mark and myself. The conclusions are also shared. Also, consider it a very serious document indeed.

You know that for the past twenty years, we have both been deeply concerned with child psychology and child development. There is no need to review our careers or our experience in the Public Health Service. Our work during the war, as part of the Child Reclamation Program, led to an interesting theory, which we decided to pursue. We were given leave by the head of the service to make this our

## *The First Men*

own project, and recently we were granted a substantial amount of army funds to work with.

Now down to the theory, which is not entirely untested, as you know. Briefly—but with two decades of practical work as a background—it is this: Mark and I have come to the conclusion that within the rank and file of *Homo Sapiens* is the leavening of a new race. Call them man-plus—call them what you will. They are not of recent arrival; they have been cropping up for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. But they are trapped in and moulded by human environment as certainly and implacably as your Assamese girl was trapped among the wolves or your Bantu boy among the baboons.

By the way, your two cases are not the only attested ones we have. By sworn witness, we have records of seven similar cases, one in Russia, two in Canada, two in South America, one in West Africa, and, just to cut us down to size, one in the United States. We also have hearsay and folklore of three hundred and eleven parallel cases over a period of fourteen centuries. We have in fourteenth century Germany, in the folio MS of the monk, Hubercus, five case-histories which he claims to have observed. In all of these cases, in the seven cases witnessed by people alive today, and in all but sixteen of the hearsay cases, the result is more or less precisely what you have seen and described yourself: the child reared by the wolf is a wolf.

Our own work adds up to the parallel conclusion: the child reared by a man is a man. If man-plus exists, he is trapped and caged as certainly as any human child reared by animals. Our proposition is that he exists.

Why do we think this super-child exists? Well, there are many reasons, and neither the time nor the space to go into all in detail. But here are two very telling reasons. Firstly, we have case histories of several hundred men and women, who as children had IQs of 150 or above. In spite of their enormous intellectual promise as children, less than ten percent have succeeded in their chosen careers. Roughly another ten percent have been institutionalized as mental cases beyond recovery. About fourteen percent have had or require therapy in terms of mental health problems. Six percent have been suicides, one percent are in prison, twenty-seven

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

percent have had one or more divorces, nineteen percent are chronic failures at whatever they attempt—and the rest are undistinguished in any important manner. All of the IQs have dwindled—almost in the sense of a smooth graph line in relation to age.

Since society has never provided the full potential for such a mentality, we are uncertain as to what it might be. But we can guess that against it, they have been reduced to a sort of idiocy—an idiocy that we call normalcy.

The second reason we put forward is this: we know that man uses only a tiny fraction of his brain. What blocks him from the rest of it? Why has nature given him equipment that he cannot put to use? Or has society prevented him from breaking the barriers around his own potential?

There, in brief, are two reasons. Believe me, Harry, there are many more—enough for us to have convinced some very hard-headed and unimaginative government people that we deserve a chance to release *superman*. Of course, history helps—in its own mean manner. It would appear that we are beginning another war—with Russia this time, a cold war, as some have already taken to calling it. And among other things, it will be a war of intelligence—a commodity in rather short supply, as some of our local mental giants have been frank enough to admit. They look upon our man-plus as a secret weapon, little devils who will come up with death rays and super-atom-bombs when the time is ripe. Well, let them. It is inconceivable to imagine a project like this under benign sponsorship. The important thing is that Mark and I have been placed in full charge of the venture—millions of dollars, top priority—the whole works. But nevertheless, *secret to the ultimate*. I cannot stress this enough.

Now, as to your own job—if you want it. It develops step by step. First step: in Berlin, in 1937, there was a Professor Hans Goldbaum. Half Jewish. The head of the *Institute for Child Therapy*. He published a small monograph on intelligence testing in children, and he put forward claims—which we are inclined to believe—that he could determine a child's IQ during its first year of life, in its pre-speech period. He presented some impressive tables of estimations and subsequent checked results, but we do not

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know enough of his method to practice it ourselves. In other words, we need the professor's help.

In 1937, he vanished from Berlin. In 1943, he was reported to be living in Cape Town—the last address we have for him. I enclose the address. Go to Cape Town, Harry darling. (Myself talking, not Mark.) If he has left, follow him and find him. If he is dead, inform us immediately.

Of course you will take the job. We love you and we need your help.

Jean

*By Airmail*  
Cape Town, South Africa  
December 20, 1945

Mrs. Jean Arbalaid  
Washington, D. C.

My dear sister:

Of all the hairbrained ideas! If this is our secret weapon, I am prepared to throw in the sponge right now. But a job is a job.

It took me a week to follow the Professor's meandering through Cape Town—only to find out that he took off for London in 1944. Evidently, they needed him there. I am off to London

Love, Harry

*By diplomatic pouch*  
Washington, D. C.  
December 26, 1945

Mr. Harry Felton  
London, England

Dear Harry:

This is dead serious. By now, you must have found the professor. We believe that despite protestations of your own idiocy, you have enough sense to gauge his method. Sell him this venture. Sell him! We will give him whatever he asks—and we want him to work with us as long as he will.

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Briefly, here is what we are up to. We have been allocated a tract of eight thousand acres in Northern California. We intend to establish an environment there—under military guard and security. In the beginning, the outside world will be entirely excluded. The environment will be controlled and exclusive.

Within this environment, we intend to bring forty children to maturity—to a maturity that will result in man-plus.

As to the details of this environment—well that can wait. The immediate problem is the children. Out of forty, ten will be found in the United States; the other thirty will be found by the professor and yourself—outside of the United States.

Half are to be boys; we want an even boy-girl balance. They are to be between the ages of six months and nine months, and all are to show indications of an exceedingly high IQ—that is, if the professor's method is any good at all.

We want five racial groupings: Caucasian, Indian, Chinese, Malayan and Bantu. Of course, we are sensible of the vagueness of these groupings, and you have some latitude within them. The six so-called *Caucasian* infants are to be found in Europe. We might suggest two northern types, two Central European types, and two Mediterranean types. A similar breakdown might be followed in other areas.

Now understand this—no cops and robbers stuff, no OSS, no kidnapping. Unfortunately, the world abounds in war orphans—and in parents poor and desperate enough to sell their children. When you want a child and such a situation arises, buy! Price is no object. I will have no maudlin sentimentality or scruples. These children will be loved and cherished—and if you should acquire any by purchase, you will be giving a child life and hope.

When you find a child, inform us immediately. Air transport will be at your disposal—and we are making all arrangements for wet nurses and other details of child care. We shall also have medical aid at your immediate disposal. On the other hand, we want healthy children—within the general conditions of health within any given area.

Now good luck to you. We are depending on you and we love you. And a merry Christmas.

Jean

## *The First Men*

*By diplomatic pouch*  
Copenhagen, Denmark  
February 4, 1946

Mrs. Jean Arbalaid  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Jean:

I seem to have caught your silly *top-secret* and *classified* disease, and I have been waiting for a free day and a diplomatic pouch to sum up my various adventures. From my "guarded" cables, you know that the professor and I have been doing a Cook's Tour of the baby market. My dear sister, this kind of shopping spree does not sit at all well with me. However, I gave my word, and there you are. I will complete and deliver.

By the way, I suppose I continue to send these along to Washington, even though your "environment," as you call it, has been established. I'll do so until otherwise instructed.

There was no great difficulty in finding the professor. Being in uniform—I have since acquired an excellent British wardrobe and having all the fancy credentials you were kind enough to supply, I went to the War Office. As they say, every courtesy was shown to Major Harry Felton, but I feel better in civilian clothes. Anyway, the professor had been working with a child reclamation project, living among the ruins of the East End, which is pretty badly shattered. He is an astonishing little man, and I have become quite fond of him. On his part, he is learning to tolerate me.

I took him to dinner—you were the lever that moved him, my dear sister. I had no idea how famous you are in certain circles. He looked at me in awe, simply because we share a mother and father.

Then I said my piece, all of it, no holds barred. I had expected your reputation to crumble into dust there on the spot, but no such thing. Goldbaum listened with his mouth and his ears and every fibre of his being. The only time he interrupted me was to question me on the Assamese girl and the Bantu boy; and very pointed and meticulous questions they were. When I had finished, he simply shook his head—not in disagreement but with sheer excitement and delight. I then asked him what his reaction to all this was.

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"I need time," he said. "This is something to digest. But the concept is wonderful—daring and wonderful. Not that the reasoning behind it is so novel. I have thought of this—so many anthropologists have. But to put it into practice, young man—ah, your sister is a wonderful and remarkable woman!"

There you are, my sister. I struck while the iron was hot, and told him then and there that you wanted and needed his help, first to find the children and then to work in the environment.

"The environment," he said; "you understand that is everything, everything. But how can she change the environment? The environment is total, the whole fabric of human society, self-deluded and superstitious and sick and irrational and clinging to legends and phantasies and ghosts. Who can change that?"

So it went. My anthropology is passable at best, but I have read all your books. If my answers were weak in that department, he did manage to draw out of me a more or less complete picture of Mark and yourself. He then said he would think about the whole matter. We made an appointment for the following day, when he would explain his method of intelligence determination in infants.

We met the next day, and he explained his methods. He made a great point of the fact that he did not test but rather determined, within a wide margin for error. Years before, in Germany, he had worked out a list of fifty characteristics which he noted in infants. As these infants matured, they were tested regularly by normal methods—and the results were checked against his original observations. Thereby, he began to draw certain conclusions, which he tested again and again over the next fifteen years. I am enclosing an unpublished article of his which goes into greater detail. Sufficient to say that he convinced me of the validity of his methods. Subsequently, I watched him examine a hundred and four British infants—to come up with our first choice. Jean, this is a remarkable and brilliant man.

On the third day after I had met him, he agreed to join the project. But he said this to me, very gravely, and afterwards I put it down exactly as he said it:

"You must tell your sister that I have not come to this

## *The First Men*

decision lightly. We are tampering with human souls—and perhaps even with human destiny. This experiment may fail, but if it succeeds it can be the most important event of our time—even more important and consequential than this war we have just fought. And you must tell her something else. I had a wife and three children, and they were put to death because a nation of men turned into beasts. I watched that, and I could not have lived through it unless I believed, always, that what can turn into a beast can also turn into a man. We are neither. But if we go to create man, we must be humble. We are the tool, not the craftsman, and if we succeed, we will be less than the result of our work.”

There is your man, Jean, and as I said, a good deal of a man. Those words are verbatim. He also dwells a great deal on the question of environment, and the wisdom and judgment and love necessary to create this environment. I think it would be helpful if you could send me a few words at least concerning this environment you are establishing.

We have now sent you four infants. Tomorrow, we leave for Rome—and from Rome to Casablanca.

But we will be in Rome at least two weeks, and a communication should reach me there.

More seriously—

And not untroubled,  
Harry

*By diplomatic pouch*  
Via Washington, D. C.  
February 11, 1946

Mr. Harry Felton  
Rome, Italy

Dear Harry:

Just a few facts here. We are tremendously impressed by your reactions to Professor Goldbaum, and we look forward eagerly to his joining us. Meanwhile, Mark and I have been working night and day on the environment. In the most general terms, this is what we plan.

The entire reservation—all eight thousand acres—will be surrounded by a wire fence and will be under army guard.

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Within it, we shall establish a home. There will be between thirty and forty teachers—or group parents. We are accepting only married couples who love children and who will dedicate themselves to this venture. That they must have additional qualifications goes without saying.

Within the proposition that somewhere in man's civilized development, something went wrong, we are returning to the pre-history form of group marriage. That is not to say that we will cohabit indiscriminately—but the children will be given to understand that parentage is a whole, that we are all their mothers and fathers, not by blood but by love.

We shall teach them the truth, and where we do not know the truth, we shall not teach. There will be no myths, no legends, no lies, superstitions, no premises and no religions. We shall teach love and cooperation and we shall give love and security in full measure. We shall also teach them the knowledge of mankind.

During the first nine years, we shall command the environment entirely. We shall write the books they read, and shape the history and circumstances they require. Only then, will we begin to relate the children to the world as it is.

Does it sound too simple or too presumptuous? It is all we can do, Harry, and I think Professor Goldbaum will understand that full well. It is also more than has ever been done for children before.

So good luck to both of you. Your letters sound as if you are changing, Harry—and we feel a curious process of change within us. When I put down what we are doing, it seems almost too obvious to be meaningful. We are simply taking a group of very gifted children and giving them knowledge and love. Is this enough to break through to that part of man which is unused and unknown? Well, we shall see. Bring us the children, Harry, and we shall see.

With love,  
Jean

In the early spring of 1965, Harry Felton arrived in Washington and went directly to the White House. Felton had just turned fifty; he was a tall and pleasant-looking man, rather lean, with greying hair. As President of the Board of Shipways, Inc.—one of the largest import and export houses in America—he commanded a certain amount of def-

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erence and respect from Eggerton, who was then Secretary of Defense. In any case, Eggerton, who was nobody's fool, did not make the mistake of trying to intimidate Felton.

Instead, he greeted him pleasantly; and the two of them, with no others present, sat down in a small room in the White House, drank each other's good health, and talked about things.

Eggerton proposed that Felton might know why he had been asked to Washington.

"I can't say that I do know," Felton said.

"You have a remarkable sister."

"I have been aware of that for a long time," Felton smiled.

"You are also very close-mouthed, Mr. Felton," the secretary observed. "So far as we know, not even your immediate family has ever heard of man-plus. That's a commendable trait."

"Possibly and possibly not. It's been a long time."

"Has it? Then you haven't heard from your sister lately?"

"Almost a year," Felton answered.

"It didn't alarm you?"

"Should it? No, it didn't alarm me. My sister and I are very close, but this project of hers is not the sort of thing that allows for social relations. There have been long periods before when I have not heard from her. We are poor letter writers."

"I see," nodded Eggerton.

"I am to conclude that she is the reason for my visit here?"

"Yes."

"She's well?"

"As far as we know," Eggerton said quietly.

"Then what can I do for you?"

"Help us, if you will," Eggerton said, just as quietly. "I am going to tell you what has happened, Mr. Felton, and then perhaps you can help us."

"Perhaps," Felton agreed.

"About the project, you know as much as any of us, more perhaps, since you were in at the inception. So you realize that such a project must be taken very seriously or laughed off entirely. To date, it has cost the government eleven million dollars, and that is not something you laugh off. Now you understand that the unique part of this project was its exclusiveness. That word is used advisedly and spe-

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cifically. Its success depended upon the creation of a unique and exclusive environment, and in terms of that environment, we agreed not to send any observers into the reservation for a period of fifteen years. Of course, during those fifteen years, there have been many conferences with Mr. and Mrs. Arbalaid and with certain of their associates, including Dr. Goldbaum.

"But out of these conferences, there was no progress report that dealt with anything more than general progress. We were given to understand that the results were rewarding and exciting, but very little more. We honored our part of the agreement, and at the end of the fifteen year period, we told your sister and her husband that we would have to send in a team of observers. They pleaded for an extension of time—maintaining that it was critical to the success of the entire program—and they pleaded persuasively enough to win a three year extension. Some months ago, the three year period was over. Mrs. Arbalaid came to Washington and begged a further extension. When we refused, she agreed that our team could come into the reservation in ten days. Then she returned to California."

Eggerton paused and looked at Felton searchingly.

"And what did you find?" Felton asked.

"You don't know?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Well—" the secretary said slowly, "I feel like a damn fool when I think of this, and also a little afraid. When I say it, the fool end predominates. We went there and we found nothing."

"Oh?"

"You don't appear too surprised, Mr. Felton?"

"Nothing my sister does has ever really surprised me. You mean the reservation was empty—no sign of anything?"

"I don't mean that, Mr. Felton. I wish I did mean that. I wish it was so pleasantly human and down to earth. I wish we thought that your sister and her husband were two clever and unscrupulous swindlers who had taken the government for eleven million. That would warm the cockles of our hearts compared to what we do have. You see, we don't know whether the reservation is empty or not, Mr. Felton, because the reservation is not there."

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"What?"

"Precisely. The reservation is not there."

"Come now," Felton smiled. "My sister is a remarkable woman, but she doesn't make off with eight thousand acres of land. It isn't like her."

"I don't find your humor entertaining, Mr. Felton."

"No. No, of course not. I'm sorry. Only when a thing makes no sense at all—how could an eight-thousand-acre stretch of land not be where it was? Doesn't it leave a large hole?"

"If the newspapers get hold of it, they could do even better than that, Mr. Felton."

"Why not explain?" Felton said.

"Let me try to—not to explain but to describe. This stretch of land is in the Fulton National Forest, rolling country, some hills, a good stand of redwood—a kidney-shaped area. It was wire-fenced, with army guards at every approach. I went there with our inspection team, General Meyers, two army physicians, Gorman, the psychiatrist, Senator Tottenwell of the Armed Services Committee, and Lydia Gentry, the educator. We crossed the country by plane and drove the final sixty miles to the reservation in two government cars. A dirt road leads into it. The guard on this road halted us. The reservation was directly before us. As the guard approached the first car, the reservation disappeared."

"Just like that?" Felton whispered. "No noise—no explosion?"

"No noise, no explosion. One moment, a forest of redwoods in front of us—then a gray area of nothing."

"Nothing? That's just a word. Did you try to go in?"

"Yes—we tried. The best scientists in America have tried. I myself am not a very brave man, Mr. Felton, but I got up enough courage to walk up to this gray edge and touch it. It was very cold and very hard—so cold that it blistered these three fingers."

He held out his hand for Felton to see.

"I became afraid then. I have not stopped being afraid." Felton nodded. "Fear—such fear," Eggerton sighed.

"I need not ask you if you tried this or that?"

"We tried everything, Mr. Felton, even—I am ashamed to

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say—a very small atomic bomb. We tried the sensible things and the foolish things. We went into panic and out of panic, and we tried everything.”

“Yet you’ve kept it secret?”

“So far, Mr. Felton.”

“Airplanes?”

“You see nothing from above. It looks like mist lying in the valley.”

“What do your people think it is?”

Eggerton smiled and shook his head. “They don’t know. There you are. At first, some of them thought it was some kind of force field. But the mathematics won’t work, and of course it’s cold. Terribly cold. I am mumbling. I am not a scientist and not a mathematician, but they also mumble, Mr. Felton. I am tired of that kind of thing. That is why I asked you to come to Washington and talk with us. I thought you might know.”

“I might,” Felton nodded.

For the first time, Eggerton became alive, excited, impatient. He mixed Felton another drink. Then he leaned forward eagerly and waited. Felton took a letter out of his pocket.

“This came from my sister,” he said.

“You told me you had no letter from her in almost a year!”

“I’ve had this almost a year,” Felton replied, a note of sadness in his voice. “I haven’t opened it. She enclosed this sealed envelope with a short letter, which only said that she was well and quite happy, and that I was to open and read the other letter when it was absolutely necessary to do so. My sister is like that; we think the same way. Now, I suppose it’s necessary, don’t you?”

The secretary nodded slowly but said nothing. Felton opened the letter and began to read aloud.

June 12, 1964

My dear Harry:

As I write this, it is twenty-two years since I have seen you or spoken to you. How very long for two people who have such love and regard for each other as we do! And now that you have found it necessary to open this letter

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and read it, we must face the fact that in all probability we will never see each other again. I hear that you have a wife and three children—all wonderful people. I think it is hardest to know that I will not see them or know them.

Only this saddens me. Otherwise, Mark and I are very happy—and I think you will understand why.

About the barrier—which now exists or you would not have opened the letter—tell them that there is no harm to it and no one will be hurt by it. It cannot be broken into because it is a negative power rather than a positive one, an absence instead of a presence. I will have more to say about it later, but possibly explain it no better. Some of the children could likely put it into intelligible words, but I want this to be my report, not theirs.

Strange that I still call them children and think of them as children—when in all fact we are the children and they are adults. But they still have the quality of children that we know best, the strange innocence and purity that vanishes so quickly in the outside world.

And now I must tell you what came of our experiment—or some of it. Some of it, for how could I ever put down the story of the strangest two decades that men ever lived through? It is all incredible and it is all commonplace. We took a group of wonderful children, and we gave them an abundance of love, security and truth—but I think it was the factor of love that mattered most. During the first year, we weeded out each couple that showed less than a desire to love these children. They were easy to love. And as the years passed, they became our children—in every way. The children who were born to the couples in residence here simply joined the group. No one had a *father* or a *mother*; we were a living functioning group in which all men were the fathers of all children and all women the mothers of all children.

No, this was not easy. Harry—among ourselves, the adults, we had to fight and work and examine and turn ourselves inside out again and again, and tear our guts and hearts out, so that we could present an environment that had never been before, a quality of sanity and truth and security that exists nowhere else in all this world.

How shall I tell you of an American Indian boy, five years old, composing a splendid symphony? Or of the two

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children, one Bantu, one Italian, one a boy, one a girl, who at the age of six built a machine to measure the speed of light? Will you believe that we, the adults, sat quietly and listened to these six year olds explain to us that since the speed of light is a constant everywhere, regardless of the motion of material bodies, the distance between the stars cannot be mentioned in terms of light, since that is not distance on our plane of being? Then believe also that I put it poorly. In all of these matters, I have the sensations of an uneducated immigrant whose child is exposed to all the wonders of school and knowledge. I understand a little, but very little.

If I were to repeat instance after instance, wonder after wonder—at the age of six and seven and eight and nine, would you think of the poor, tortured, nervous creatures whose parents boast that they have an IQ of 160, and in the same breath bemoan the fate that did not give them normal children? Well, ours were and are *normal* children. Perhaps the first normal children this world has seen in a long time. If you heard them laugh or sing only once, you would know that. If you could see how tall and strong they are, how fine of body and movement. They have a quality that I have never seen in children before.

Yes, I suppose, dear Harry, that much about them would shock you. Most of the time, they wear no clothes. Sex has always been a joy and a good thing to them, and they face it and enjoy it as naturally as we eat and drink—more naturally, for we have no gluttons in sex or food, no ulcers of the belly or the soul. They kiss and caress each other and do many other things that the world has specified as shocking, nasty, etc.—but whatever they do, they do with grace and joy. Is all this possible? I tell you that it has been my life for almost twenty years now. I live with boys and girls who are without evil or sickness, who are like pagans or gods—however you would look at it.

But the story of the children and of their day-to-day life is one that will be told properly and in its own time and place. All the indications I have put down here add up only to great gifts and abilities. Mark and I never had any doubts about these results; we knew that if we controlled an environment that was predicated on the future, the children would learn more than any children do on the outside. In

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their seventh year of life they were dealing easily and naturally with scientific problems normally taught on the college level, or higher, outside. This was to be expected, and we would have been very disappointed if something of this sort had not developed. But it was the unexpected that we hoped for and watched for—the flowering of the mind of man that is blocked in every single human being on the outside.

And it came. Originally, it began with a Chinese child in the fifth year of our work. The second was an American child, then a Burmese. Most strangely, it was not thought of as anything very unusual, nor did we realize what was happening until the seventh year, when there were already five of them.

Mark and I were taking a walk that day—I remember it so well, a lovely, cool and clear California day—when we came on a group of children in a meadow. There were about a dozen children there. Five of them sat in a little circle, with a sixth in the center of the circle. Their heads were almost touching. They were full of little giggles, ripples of mirth and satisfaction. The rest of the children sat in a group about ten feet away—watching intently.

As we came to the scene, the children in the second group put their fingers to their lips, indicating that we should be quiet. So we stood and watched without speaking. After we were there about ten minutes, the little girl in the center of the circle of five, leaped to her feet, crying ecstatically.

“I heard you! I heard you! I heard you!”

There was a kind of achievement and delight in her voice that we had not heard before, not even from our children. Then all of the children there rushed together to kiss her and embrace her, and they did a sort of dance of play and delight around her. All this we watched with no indication of surprise or even very great curiosity. For even though this was the first time anything like this—beyond our guesses or comprehension—had ever happened, we had worked out our own reaction to it.

When the children rushed to us for our congratulations, we nodded and smiled and agreed that it was all very wonderful. “Now, it’s my turn, mother,” a Senegalese boy told me. “I can almost do it already. Now there are six to help me, and it will be easier.”

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"Aren't you proud of us?" another cried.

We agreed that we were very proud, and we skirted the rest of the questions. Then, at our staff meeting that evening, Mark described what had happened.

"I noticed that last week," Mary Hengel, our semantics teacher nodded. "I watched them, but they didn't see me."

"How many were there?" Professor Goldbaum asked intently.

"Three. A fourth in the center—their heads together. I thought it was one of their games and I walked away."

"They make no secret of it," someone observed.

"Yes," I said, "they took it for granted that we knew what they were doing."

"No one spoke," Mark said. "I can vouch for that."

"Yet they were listening," I said. "They giggled and laughed as if some great joke was taking place—or the way children laugh about a game that delights them."

It was Dr. Goldbaum who put his finger on it. He said, very gravely, "Do you know, Jean—you always said that we might open that great area of the mind that is closed and blocked in us. I think that they have opened it. I think they are teaching and learning to listen to thoughts."

There was a silence after that, and then Atwater, one of our psychologists, said uneasily, "I don't think I believe it. I've investigated every test and report on telepathy ever published in this country—the Duke stuff and all the rest of it. We know how tiny and feeble brain waves are—it is fantastic to imagine that they can be a means of communication."

"There is also a statistical factor," Rhoda Lannon, a mathematician, observed. "If this faculty existed even as a potential in mankind, is it conceivable that there would be no recorded instance of it?"

"Maybe it has been recorded," said Fleming, one of our historians. "Can you take all the whippings, burnings and hangings of history and determine which were telepaths?"

"I think I agree with Dr. Goldbaum," Mark said. "The children are becoming telepaths. I am not moved by a historical argument, or by a statistical argument, because our obsession here is environment. There is no record in history of a similar group of unusual children being raised in such

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an environment. Also, this may be—and probably is—a faculty which must be released in childhood or remain permanently blocked. I believe Dr. Haenigson will bear me out when I say that mental blocks imposed during childhood are not uncommon.”

“More than that,” Dr. Haenigson, our chief psychiatrist, nodded. “No child in our society escapes the need to erect some mental block in his mind. Whole areas of every human being’s mind are blocked in early childhood. This is an absolute of human society.”

Dr. Goldbaum was looking at us strangely. I was going to say something—but I stopped. I waited and Dr. Goldbaum said:

“I wonder whether we have begun to realize what we may have done. What is a human being? He is the sum of his memories, which are locked in his brain, and every moment of experience simply builds up the structure of those memories. We don’t know as yet what is the extent or power of the gift these children of ours appear to be developing, but suppose they reach a point where they can share the totality of memory? It is not simply that among themselves there can be no lies, no deceit, no rationalization, no secrets, no guilts—it is more than that.”

Then he looked from face to face, around the whole circle of our staff. We were beginning to comprehend him. I remember my own reactions at that moment, a sense of wonder and discovery and joy and heartbreak too; a feeling so poignant that it brought tears to my eyes.

“You know, I see,” Dr. Goldbaum nodded. “Perhaps it would be best for me to speak about it. I am much older than any of you—and I have been through, lived through the worst years of horror and bestiality that mankind ever knew. When I saw what I saw, I asked myself a thousand times; What is the meaning of mankind—if it has any meaning at all, if it is not simply a haphazard accident, an unusual complexity of molecular structure? I know you have all asked yourselves the same thing. Who are we? What are we destined for? What is our purpose? Where is sanity or reason in these bits of struggling, clawing, sick flesh? We kill, we torture, we hurt and destroy as no other species does. We enoble murder and falsehood and hypocrisy and supersti-

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tion; we destroy our own body with drugs and poisonous food; we deceive ourselves as well as others—and we hate and hate and hate.

“Now something has happened. If these children can go into each other’s minds completely—then they will have a single memory, which is the memory of all of them. All experience will be common to all of them, all knowledge, all dreams—and they will be immortal. For as one dies, another child is linked to the whole, and another and another. Death will lose all meaning, all of its dark horror. Mankind will begin, here in this place, to fulfill a part of its intended destiny—to become a single, wonderful unit, a whole—almost in the old words of your poet, John Donne, who sensed what we have all sensed at one time, that no man is an island unto himself. Has any thoughtful man lived without having a sense of that singleness of mankind? I don’t think so. We have been living in darkness, in the night, struggling each of us with his own poor brain and then dying with all the memories of a lifetime. It is no wonder that we have achieved so little. The wonder is that we have achieved so much. Yet all that we know, all that we have done will be nothing compared to what these children will know and do and create—”

So the old man spelled it out, Harry—and saw almost all of it from the beginning. That was the beginning. Within the next twelve months, each one of our children was linked to all of the others telepathically. And in the years that followed, every child born in our reservation was shown the way into that linkage by the children. Only we, the adults, were forever barred from joining it. We were of the old, they of the new; their way was closed to us forever—although they could go into our minds, and did. But never could we feel them there or see them there, as they did each other.

I don’t know how to tell you of the years that followed, Harry. In our little, guarded reservation, man became what he was always destined to be, but I can explain it only imperfectly. I can hardly comprehend, much less explain, what it means to inhabit forty bodies simultaneously, or what it means to each of the children to have the other personalities within them, a part of them—what it means to live as man and woman always and together. Could the children

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explain it to us? Hardly, for this is a transformation that must take place, from all we can learn, before puberty—and as it happens, the children accept it as normal and natural—indeed as the most natural thing in the world. We were the unnatural ones—and one thing they never truly comprehended is how we could bear to live in our aloneness, how we could bear to live with the knowledge of death as extinction.

We are happy that this knowledge of us did not come at once. In the beginning, the children could merge their thoughts only when their heads were almost touching. Bit by bit, their command of distance grew—but not until they were in their fifteenth year did they have the power to reach out and probe with their thoughts anywhere on earth. We thank God for this. By then the children were ready for what they found. Earlier, it might have destroyed them.

I must mention that two of our children met accidental death—in the ninth and the eleventh year. But it made no difference to the others, a little regret, but no grief, no sense of great loss, no tears or weeping. Death is totally different to them than to us; a loss of flesh; the personality itself is immortal and lives consciously in the others. When we spoke of a marked grave or a tombstone, they smiled and said that we could make it if it would give us any comfort. Yet later, when Dr. Goldbaum died, their grief was deep and terrible, for his was the old kind of death.

Outwardly, they remained individuals—each with his or her own set of characteristics, mannerisms, personality. The boys and the girls make love in a normal sexual manner—though all of them share the experience. Can you comprehend that? I cannot—but for them everything is different. Only the unspoiled devotion of mother for helpless child can approximate the love that binds them together—yet here it is also different, deeper even than that.

Before the transformation took place, there was sufficient of children's petulance and anger and annoyance—but after it took place, we never again heard a voice raised in anger or annoyance. As they themselves put it, when there was trouble among them, they washed it out—when there was sickness, they healed it; and after the ninth year, there was no more sickness—even three or four of them, when they merged their minds, could go into a body and cure it.

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I use these words and phrases because I have no others, but they don't describe. Even after all these years of living with the children, day and night, I can only vaguely comprehend the manner of their existence. What they are outwardly, I know, free and healthy and happy as no men were before, but what their inner life is remains beyond me.

I spoke to one of them about it once, Arlene, a tall, lovely child whom we found in an orphanage in Idaho. She was fourteen then. We were discussing personality, and I told her that I could not understand how she could live and work as an individual, when she was also a part of so many others, and they were a part of her.

"But I remain myself, Jean. I could not stop being myself."

"But aren't the others also yourself?"

"Yes. But I am also them."

"But who controls your body?"

"I do. Of course."

"But if they should want to control it instead of you?"

"Why?"

"If you did something they disapproved of," I said lamely.

"How could I?" she asked. "Can you do something you disapprove of?"

"I am afraid I can. And do."

"I don't understand? Then why do you do it?"

So these discussions always ended. We, the adults, had only words for communication. By their tenth year, the children had developed methods of communication as far beyond words as words are beyond the dumb motions of animals. If one of them watched something, there was no necessity for it to be described; the others could see it through his eyes. Even in sleep, they dreamed together.

I could go on for hours attempting to describe something utterly beyond my understanding, but that would not help, would it, Harry? You will have your own problems, and I must try to make you understand what happened, what had to happen. You see, by the tenth year, the children had learned all we knew, all we had among us as material for teaching. In effect, we were teaching a single mind, a mind composed of the unblocked, unfettered talent of forty superb children; a mind so rational and pure and agile that to them we could only be objects of loving pity.

We have among us Axel Cromwell, whose name you will

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recognize. He is one of the greatest physicists on earth, and it was he who was mainly responsible for the first Atom bomb. After that, he came to us as one would go into a monastery—an act of personal expiation. He and his wife taught the children physics, but by the eighth year, the children were teaching Cromwell. A year later, Cromwell could follow neither their mathematics nor their reasoning; and their symbolism, of course, was out of the structure of their own thoughts.

Let me give you an example. In the far outfield of our baseball diamond, there was a boulder of perhaps ten tons. (I must remark that the athletic skill, the physical reactions of the children, was in its own way almost as extraordinary as their mental powers. They have broken every track and field record in existence—often cutting world records by one third. I have watched them run down our horses. Their movements can be so quick as to make us appear sluggards by comparison. And they love baseball—among other games.)

We had spoken of either blasting the boulder apart or rolling it out of the way with one of our heavy bulldozers, but it was something we had never gotten to. Then, one day, we discovered that the boulder was gone—in its place a pile of thick red dust that the wind was fast leveling. We asked the children what had happened, and they told us that they had reduced the boulder to dust—as if it was no more than kicking a small stone out of one's path. How? Well, they had loosened the molecular structure and it had become dust. They explained, but we could not understand. They tried to explain to Cromwell how their thoughts could do this, but he could no more comprehend it than the rest of us.

I mention one thing. They built an atomic fusion power plant, out of which we derive an unlimited store of power. They built what they call free fields into all our trucks and cars, so that they rise and travel through the air with the same facility they have on the ground. With the power of thought, they can go into atoms, rearrange electrons, build one element out of another—and all this is elementary to them, as if they were doing tricks to amuse us and amaze us.

So you see something of what the children are, and now I shall tell you what you must know.

In the fifteenth year of the children, our entire staff met

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with them. There were fifty-two of them now, for all the children born to us were taken into their body of singleness—and flourished in their company, I should add, despite their initially lower IQs. A very formal and serious meeting, for in thirty days the team of observers were scheduled to enter the reservation. Michael, who was born in Italy, spoke for them; they needed only one voice.

He began by telling us how much they loved and cherished us, the adults who were once their teachers. "All that we have, all that we are, you have given us," he said. "You are our fathers and mothers and teachers—and we love you beyond our power to say. For years now, we have wondered at your patience and self-giving, for we have gone into your minds and we know what pain and doubt and fear and confusion you all live with. We have also gone into the minds of the soldiers who guard the reservation. More and more, our power to probe grew—until now there is no mind anywhere on earth that we cannot seek out and read.

"From our seventh year, we knew all the details of this experiment, why we were here and what you were attempting—and from then until now, we have pondered over what our future must be. We have also tried to help you, whom we love so much, and perhaps we have been a little help in easing your discontents, in keeping you as healthy as possible, and in easing your troubled nights in that maze of fear and nightmare that you call sleep.

"We did what we could, but all our efforts to join you with us have failed. Unless that area of the mind is opened before puberty, the tissues change, the brain cells lose all potential of development, and it is closed forever. Of all things, this saddens us most—for you have given us the most precious heritage of mankind, and in return we have given you nothing."

"That isn't so," I said. "You have given us more than we gave you."

"Perhaps," Michael nodded. "You are very good and kind people. But now the fifteen years are over, and the team will be here in thirty days—"

I shook my head. "No. They must be stopped."

"And all of you?" Michael asked, looking from one to another of the adults.

Some of us were weeping. Cromwell said:

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"We are your teachers and your fathers and mothers, but you must tell us what to do. You know that."

Michael nodded, and then he told us what they had decided. The reservation must be maintained. I was to go to Washington with Mark and Dr. Goldbaum—and somehow get an extension of time. Then new infants would be brought into the reservation by teams of the children, and educated here.

"But why must they be brought here?" Mark asked. "You can reach them wherever they are—go into their minds, make them a part of you?"

"But they can't reach us," Michael said. "Not for a long time. They would be alone—and their minds would be shattered. What would the people of your world outside do to such children? What happened to people in the past who were possessed of devils, who heard voices? Some became saints, but more were burned at the stake."

"Can't you protect them?" someone asked.

"Some day—yes. Now, no—there are not enough of us. First, we must help move children here, hundreds and hundreds more. Then there must be other places like this one. It will take a long time. The world is a large place and there are a great many children. And we must work carefully. You see, people are so filled with fear—and this would be the worst fear of all. They would go mad with fear and all that they would think of is to kill us."

"And our children could not fight back," Dr. Goldbaum said quietly. "They cannot hurt any human being, much less kill one. Cattle, our old dogs and cats, they are one thing—"

(Here Dr. Goldbaum referred to the fact that we no longer slaughtered our cattle in the old way. We had pet dogs and cats, and when they became very old and sick, the children caused them peacefully to go to sleep—from which they never awakened. Then the children asked us if we might do the same with the cattle we butchered for food.)

"—but not people," Dr. Goldbaum went on. "They cannot hurt people or kill people. We are able to do things that we know are wrong, but that is one power we have that the children lack. They cannot kill and they cannot hurt. Am I right, Michael?"

"Yes,—you are right." Michael nodded. "We must do it slowly and patiently—and the world must not know what

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we are doing until we have taken certain measures. We think we need three years more. Can you get us three years, Jean?"

"I will get it," I said.

"And we need all of you to help us. Of course we will not keep any of you here if you wish to go. But we need you—as we have always needed you. We love you and value you, and we beg you to remain with us . . ."

Do you wonder that we all remained, Harry—that no one of us could leave our children—or will ever leave them, except when death takes us away? There is not so much more that I must tell now.

We got the three years we needed, and as for the gray barrier that surrounds us, the children tell me that it is a simple device indeed. As nearly as I can understand, they altered the time sequence of the entire reservation. Not much—by less than one ten thousandth of a second. But the result is that your world outside exists this tiny fraction of a second in the future. The same sun shines on us, the same winds blow, and from inside the barrier, we see your world unaltered. But you cannot see us. When you look at us, the present of our existence has not yet come into being—and instead there is nothing, no space, no heat, no light, only the impenetrable wall of non-existence.

From inside, we can go outside—from the past into the future. I have done this during the moments when we experimented with the barrier. You feel a shudder, a moment of cold—but no more.

There is also a way in which we return, but understandably, I cannot spell it out.

So there is the situation, Harry. We will never see each other again, but I assure you that Mark and I are happier than we have ever been. Man will change, and he will become what he was intended to be, and he will reach out with love and knowledge to all the universes of the firmament. Isn't this what man has always dreamt of, no war or hatred or hunger or sickness or death? We are fortunate to be alive while this is happening, Harry—we should ask no more.

With all my love,  
Jean

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Felton finished reading, and then there was a long, long silence while the two men looked at each other. Finally, the Secretary spoke:

"You know we shall have to keep knocking at that barrier—trying to find a way to break through?"

"I know."

"It will be easier, now that your sister has explained it."

"I don't think it will be easier," Felton said tiredly. "I do not think that she has explained it."

"Not to you and me, perhaps. But we'll put the eggheads to work on it. They'll figure it out. They always do."

"Perhaps not this time."

"Oh, yes," the Secretary nodded. "You see, we've got to stop it. We can't have this kind of thing—immoral, godless, and a threat to every human being on earth. The kids were right. We would have to kill them, you know. It's a disease. The only way to stop a disease is to kill the bugs that cause it. The only way. I wish there was another way, but there isn't."



# THE LARGE ANT

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There have been all kinds of notions and guesses as to how it would end. One held that sooner or later there would be too many people; another that we would do each other in, and the atom bomb made that a very good likelihood. All sorts of notions, except the simple fact that we were what we were. We could find a way to feed any number of people and perhaps even a way to avoid wiping each other out with the bomb; those things we are very good at, but we have never been any good at changing ourselves or the way we behave.

I know. I am not a bad man or a cruel man; quite to the contrary, I am an ordinary, humane person, and I love my wife and my children and I get along with my neighbors. I am like a great many other men, and I do the things they would do and just as thoughtlessly. There it is in a nutshell.

I am also a writer, and I told Lieberman, the curator, and Fitzgerald, the government man, that I would like to write down the story. They shrugged their shoulders. "Go ahead," they said, "because it won't make one bit of difference."

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"You don't think it would alarm people?"

"How can it alarm anyone when nobody will believe it?"

"If I could have a photograph or two."

"Oh, no," they said then. "No photographs."

"What kind of sense does that make?" I asked them. "You are willing to let me write the story—why not the photographs so that people could believe me?"

"They still won't believe you. They will just say you faked the photographs, but no one will believe you. It will make for more confusion, and if we have a chance of getting out of this, confusion won't help."

"What will help?"

They weren't ready to say that, because they didn't know. So here is what happened to me, in a very straightforward and ordinary manner.

Every summer, sometime in August, four good friends of mine and I go for a week's fishing on the St. Regis chain of lakes in the Adirondacks. We rent the same shack each summer; we drift around in canoes, and sometimes we catch a few bass. The fishing isn't very good, but we play cards well together, and we cook out and generally relax. This summer past, I had some things to do that couldn't be put off. I arrived three days late, and the weather was so warm and even and beguiling that I decided to stay on by myself for a day or two after the others left. There was a small flat lawn in front of the shack, and I made up my mind to spend at least three or four hours at short putts. That was how I happened to have the putting iron next to my bed.

The first day I was alone, I opened a can of beans and a can of beer for my supper. Then I lay down in my bed with *Life on the Mississippi*, a pack of cigarettes, and an eight ounce chocolate bar. There was nothing I had to do, no telephone, no demands and no newspapers. At that moment, I was about as contented as any man can be in these nervous times.

It was still light outside, and enough light came in through the window above my head for me to read by. I was just reaching for a fresh cigarette, when I looked up and saw it on the foot of my bed. The edge of my hand was touching the golf club, and with a single motion I swept the club over and down, struck it a savage and accurate blow, and killed it. That was what I referred to before. Whatever

## *The Large Ant*

kind of a man I am, I react as a man does. I think that any man, black, white or yellow, in China, Africa or Russia, would have done the same thing.

First I found that I was sweating all over, and then I knew I was going to be sick. I went outside to vomit, recalling that this hadn't happened to me since 1943, on my way to Europe on a tub of a Liberty Ship. Then I felt better and was able to go back into the shack and look at it. It was quite dead, but I had already made up my mind that I was not going to sleep alone in this shack.

I couldn't bear to touch it with my bare hands. With a piece of brown paper, I picked it up and dropped it into my fishing creel. That, I put into the trunk case of my car, along with what luggage I carried. Then I closed the door of the shack, got into my car and drove back to New York. I stopped once along the road, just before I reached the Thruway, to nap in the car for a little over an hour. It was almost dawn when I reached the city, and I had shaved, had a hot bath and changed my clothes before my wife awoke.

During breakfast, I explained that I was never much of a hand at the solitary business, and since she knew that, and since driving alone all night was by no means an extraordinary procedure for me, she didn't press me with any questions. I had two eggs, coffee and a cigarette. Then I went into my study, lit another cigarette, and contemplated my fishing creel, which sat upon my desk.

My wife looked in, saw the creel, remarked that it had too ripe a smell, and asked me to remove it to the basement.

"I'm going to dress," she said. The kids were still at camp. "I have a date with Ann for lunch—I had no idea you were coming back. Shall I break it?"

"No, please don't. I can find things to do that have to be done."

Then I sat and smoked some more, and finally I called the Museum, and asked who the curator of insects was. They told me his name was Bertram Lieberman, and I asked to talk to him. He had a pleasant voice. I told him that my name was Morgan, and that I was a writer, and he politely indicated that he had seen my name and read something that I had written. That is formal procedure when a writer introduces himself to a thoughtful person.

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

I asked Lieberman if I could see him, and he said that he had a busy morning ahead of him. Could it be tomorrow?

"I am afraid it has to be now," I said firmly.

"Oh? Some information you require."

"No. I have a specimen for you."

"Oh?" The "oh" was a cultivated, neutral interval. It asked and answered and said nothing. You have to develop that particular "oh."

"Yes. I think you will be interested."

"An insect?" he asked mildly.

"I think so."

"Oh? Large?"

"Quite large," I told him.

"Eleven o'clock? Can you be here then? On the main floor, to the right, as you enter."

"I'll be there," I said.

"One thing—dead?"

"Yes, it's dead."

"Oh?" again. "I'll be happy to see you at eleven o'clock, Mr. Morgan."

My wife was dressed now. She opened the door to my study and said firmly, "Do get rid of that fishing creel. It smells."

"Yes, darling. I'll get rid of it."

"I should think you'd want to take a nap after driving all night."

"Funny, but I'm not sleepy," I said. "I think I'll drop around to the museum."

My wife said that was what she liked about me, that I never tired of places like museums, police courts and third-rate night clubs.

Anyway, aside from a racetrack, a museum is the most interesting and unexpected place in the world. It was unexpected to have two other men waiting for me, along with Mr. Lieberman, in his office. Lieberman was a skinny, sharp-faced man of about sixty. The government man, Fitzgerald, was small, dark-eyed, and wore gold-rimmed glasses. He was very alert, but he never told me what part of the government he represented. He just said "we", and it meant the government. Hopper, the third man, was comfortable-looking, pudgy, and genial. He was a United States senator with an interest in entomology, although before this morn-

## *The Large Ant*

ing I would have taken better than even money that such a thing not only wasn't, but could not be.

The room was large and square and plainly-furnished, with shelves and cupboards on all walls.

We shook hands, and then Lieberman asked me, nodding at the creel, "Is that it?"

"That's it."

"May I?"

"Go ahead," I told him. "It's nothing that I want to stuff for the parlor. I'm making you a gift of it."

"Thank you, Mr. Morgan," he said, and then he opened the creel and looked inside. Then he straightened up, and the other two men looked at him inquiringly.

He nodded. "Yes."

The senator closed his eyes for a long moment. Fitzgerald took off his glasses and wiped them industriously. Lieberman spread a piece of plastic on his desk, and then lifted the thing out of my creel and laid it on the plastic. The two men didn't move. They just sat where they were and looked at it.

"What do you think it is, Mr. Morgan?" Lieberman asked me.

"I thought that was your department."

"Yes, of course. I only wanted your impression."

"An ant. That's my impression. It's the first time I saw an ant fourteen, fifteen inches long. I hope it's the last."

"An understandable wish," Lieberman nodded.

Fitzgerald said to me, "May I ask how you killed it, Mr. Morgan?"

"With an iron. A golf club, I mean. I was doing a little fishing with some friends up at St. Regis in the Adirondacks, and I brought the iron for my short shots. They're the worst part of my game, and when my friends left, I intended to stay on at our shack and do four or five hours of short putts. You see—"

"There's no need to explain," Hopper smiled, a trace of sadness on his face. "Some of our very best golfers have the same trouble."

"I was lying in bed, reading, and I saw it at the foot of my bed. I had the club—"

"I understand," Fitzgerald nodded.

"You avoid looking at it," Hopper said.

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

"It turns my stomach."

"Yes—yes, I suppose so."

Lieberman said, "Would you mind telling us why you killed it, Mr. Morgan."

"Why?"

"Yes—why?"

"I don't understand you," I said. "I don't know what you're driving at."

"Sit down, please, Mr. Morgan," Hopper nodded. "Try to relax. I'm sure this has been very trying."

"I still haven't slept. I want a chance to dream before I say how trying."

"We are not trying to upset you, Mr. Morgan," Lieberman said. "We do feel, however, that certain aspects of this are very important. That is why I am asking you why you killed it. You must have had a reason. Did it seem about to attack you?"

"No."

"Or make any sudden motion toward you?"

"No. It was just there."

"Then why?"

"This is to no purpose," Fitzgerald put in. "We know why he killed it."

"Do you?"

"The answer is very simple, Mr. Morgan. You killed it because you are a human being."

"Oh?"

"Yes. Do you understand?"

"No, I don't."

"Then why did you kill it?" Hopper put in.

"I was scared to death. I still am, to tell the truth."

Lieberman said, "You are an intelligent man, Mr. Morgan. Let me show you something." He then opened the doors of one of the wall cupboards, and there eight jars of formaldehyde and in each jar a specimen like mine—and in each case mutilated by the violence of its death. I said nothing. I just stared.

Lieberman closed the cupboard doors. "All in five days," he shrugged.

"A new race of ants," I whispered stupidly.

"No. They're not ants. Come here!" He motioned me to

## *The Large Ant*

the desk and the other two joined me. Lieberman took a set of dissecting instruments out of his drawer, used one to turn the thing over and then pointed to the underpart of what would be the thorax in an insect.

"That looks like part of him, doesn't it, Mr. Morgan?"

"Yes, it does."

Using two of the tools, he found a fissure and pried the bottom apart. It came open like the belly of a bomber; it was a pocket, a pouch, a receptacle that the thing wore, and in it were four beautiful little tools or instruments or weapons, each about an inch and a half long. They were beautiful the way any object of functional purpose and loving creation is beautiful—the way the creature itself would have been beautiful, had it not been an insect and myself a man. Using tweezers, Lieberman took each instrument off the brackets that held it, offering each to me. And I took each one, felt it, examined it, and then put it down.

I had to look at the ant now, and I realized that I had not truly looked at it before. We don't look carefully at a thing that is horrible or repugnant to us. You can't look at anything through a screen of hatred. But now the hatred and the fear was dilute, and as I looked, I realized it was not an ant although like an ant. It was nothing that I had ever seen or dreamed of.

All three men were watching me, and suddenly I was on the defensive. "I didn't know! What do you expect when you see an insect that size?"

Lieberman nodded.

"What in the name of God is it?"

From his desk, Lieberman produced a bottle and four small glasses. He poured and we drank it neat. I would not have expected him to keep good Scotch in his desk.

"We don't know," Hopper said. "We don't know what it is."

Lieberman pointed to the broken skull from which a white substance oozed. "Brain material—a great deal of it."

"It could be a very intelligent creature," Hopper nodded.

Lieberman said, "It is an insect in developmental structure. We know very little about intelligence in our insects. It's not the same as what we call intelligence. It's a collective phenomenon—as if you were to think of the component

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

parts of our bodies. Each part is alive, but the intelligence is a result of the whole. If that same pattern were to extend to creatures like this one—"

I broke the silence. They were content to stand there and stare at it.

"Suppose it were?"

"What?"

"The kind of collective intelligence you were talking about."

"Oh? Well, I couldn't say. It would be something beyond our wildest dreams. To us—well, what we are to an ordinary ant."

"I don't believe that," I said shortly, and Fitzgerald, the government man, told me quietly, "Neither do we. We guess."

"If it's that intelligent, why didn't it use one of those weapons on me?"

"Would that be a mark of intelligence?" Hopper asked mildly.

"Perhaps none of these are weapons," Lieberman said.

"Don't you know? Didn't the others carry instruments?"

"They did," Fitzgerald said shortly.

"Why? What were they?"

"We don't know," Lieberman said.

"But you can find out. We have scientists, engineers—good God, this is an age of fantastic instruments. Have them taken apart!"

"We have."

"Then what have you found out?"

"Nothing."

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that you can find out nothing about these instruments—what they are, how they work, what their purpose is?"

"Exactly," Hopper nodded. "Nothing, Mr. Morgan. They are meaningless to the finest engineers and technicians in the United States. You know the old story—suppose you gave a radio to Aristotle? What would he do with it? Where would he find power? And what would he receive with no one to send? It is not that these instruments are complex. They are actually very simple. We simply have no idea of what they can or should do."

"But they must be a weapon of some kind."

## *The Large Ant*

"Why?" Lieberman demanded. "Look at yourself, Mr. Morgan—a cultured and intelligent man, yet you cannot conceive of a mentality that does not include weapons as a prime necessity. Yet a weapon is an unusual thing, Mr. Morgan. An instrument of murder. We don't think that way, because the weapon has become the symbol of the world we inhabit. Is that civilized, Mr. Morgan? Or is the weapon and civilization in the ultimate sense incompatible? Can you imagine a mentality to which the concept of murder is impossible—or let me say absent. We see everything through our own subjectivity. Why shouldn't some other—this creature, for example—see the process of mentation out of his subjectivity? So he approaches a creature of our world—and he is slain. Why? What explanation? Tell me, Mr. Morgan, what conceivable explanation could we offer a wholly rational creature for this—" pointing to the thing on his desk. "I am asking you the question most seriously. What explanation?"

"An accident?" I muttered.

"And the eight jars in my cupboard? Eight accidents?"

"I think, Dr. Lieberman," Fitzgerald said, "that you can go a little too far in that direction."

"Yes, you would think so. It's a part of your own background. Mine is as a scientist. As a scientist, I try to be rational when I can. The creation of a structure of good and evil, or what we call morality and ethics, is a function of intelligence—and unquestionably the ultimate evil may be the destruction of conscious intelligence. That is why, so long ago, we at least recognized the injunction, 'thou shalt not kill!' even if we never gave more than lips service to it. But to a collective intelligence, such as this might be a part of, the concept of murder would be monstrous beyond the power of thought."

I sat down and lit a cigarette. My hands were trembling. Hopper apologized. "We have been rather rough with you, Mr. Morgan. But over the past days, eight other people have done just what you did. We are caught in the trap of being what we are."

"But tell me—where do these things come from?"

"It almost doesn't matter where they come from," Hopper said hopelessly. "Perhaps from another planet—perhaps from inside this one—or the moon or Mars. That doesn't

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matter. Fitzgerald thinks they come from a smaller planet, because their movements are apparently slow on earth. But Dr. Lieberman thinks that they move slowly because they have not discovered the need to move quickly. Meanwhile, they have the problem of murder and what to do with it. Heaven knows how many of them have died in other places—Africa, Asia, Europe.”

“Then why don’t you publicize this? Put a stop to it before it’s too late!”

“We’ve thought of that,” Fitzgerald nodded. “What then—panic, hysteria, charges that this is the result of the atom bomb? We can’t change. We are what we are.”

“They may go away,” I said.

“Yes, they may,” Lieberman nodded. “But if they are without the curse of murder, they may also be without the curse of fear. They may be social in the highest sense. What does society do with a murderer?”

“There are societies that put him to death—and there are other societies that recognize his sickness and lock him away, where he can kill no more,” Hopper said. “Of course, when a whole world is on trial, that’s another matter. We have atom bombs now and other things, and we are reaching out to the stars—”

“I’m inclined to think that they’ll run,” Fitzgerald put in. “They may just have that curse of fear, Doctor.”

“They may,” Lieberman admitted. “I hope so.”

But the more I think of it the more it seems to me that fear and hatred are the two sides of the same coin. I keep trying to think back, to recreate the moment when I saw it standing at the foot of my bed in the fishing shack. I keep trying to drag out of my memory a clear picture of what it looked like, whether behind that chitinous face and the two gently waving antennae there was any evidence of fear and anger. But the clearer the memory becomes, the more I seem to recall a certain wonderful dignity and repose. Not fear and not anger.

And more and more, as I go about my work, I get the feeling of what Hopper called “a world on trial.” I have no sense of anger myself. Like a criminal who can no longer live with himself, I am content to be judged.

# OF TIME AND CATS

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At least, if it makes no sense at all, it explains about the cats. There was a note in the *Times* today about the pound; they have put away four times the average number of cats, and it keeps getting worse. It will continue to get worse and worse, no doubt, but cats are not as bad as some things.

To explain it, after I had convinced myself that I was in my right mind, I telephoned my wife. Some say that there is actually no way of convincing yourself that you are in your right mind, but I don't go along with that. At least I was as sane as I was a week before.

"Where are you?" my wife demanded. "Why are you telephoning—why don't you come up?"

"Because I am downtown at the Waldorf."

"Oh no—no. You are downstairs where I left you less than three minutes ago."

"That is not me—not myself, do you understand?"

"No."

I waited a while, and she waited too. Finally, I said, "No, I guess you don't."

"I also saw you dodge around the corner of 63rd Street," she added. "Were you playing games?"

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"Well—"

"Yes?"

"That wasn't me either. Do you think I'm out of my mind? I mean, do you think I've had a breakdown or something like that?"

"No," my wife said. "You're not the breakdown type."

"Well, what do you think?"

"I'm reserving opinions," my wife said.

"Thank you. I still love you. When you saw me downstairs a few minutes ago, what was I wearing?"

"Don't you know?" She seemed shaken for the first time.

"I know. But I want you to tell me. Is that asking so much? Just tell me."

"All right. I'll tell you. The gray herringbone."

"Ah," I said. "Now I will hold the wire, and you go to my closet and tell me what you see there."

"You're not drunk. I've seen you drunk, and you don't act this way. I will not go to the closet. You come home and we'll decide whether to call a doctor or not."

"Please," I begged her. "Please. I am asking a small thing. We have been married twelve years. It has been give and take, the best with the worst. But we came through. Now all I am asking is that you go—"

"All right," she said shortly. "I'll humor you. I will go to your closet. Just hold on."

I waited while she went and returned. She picked up the phone again, but said nothing.

"Well?"

She sighed and admitted that she had gone to the closet.

"And you saw it there?"

"Your gray suit?"

"Yes?"

"Yes."

"Gray herringbone. My one gray suit. I have brown, blue and Oxford. I have two sport jackets and three pairs of flannel trousers. But only one gray suit—gray herringbone. Right?"

"Gray herringbone," she said weakly. "But maybe you bought another?"

"Why?"

"How should I know why? You like gray herringbone, I suppose."

## *Of Time and Cats*

"No, I didn't buy another. I give you my word of honor. Alice, I love you. We have been married twelve years. I'm a solid character as such things go. Not flighty. Not even romantic, as you have remarked."

"You are romantic enough," she said flatly.

"You know what I mean. I did not buy another gray suit. It is the same gray suit."

"In two places at the same time?"

"Yes."

"Oh?"

There was a long, long pause then, until finally I said, "Now will you do as I say, even if it makes no sense?"

She paused and sighed again. "Yes."

"Good. It is now two-fifteen. Shortly before three o'clock, Professor Dunbar will call and tell you some rubbish about his cat and then ask for me. Tell him to go to hell. Then get a cab down here to the Waldorf. I'm in Room 1121."

"Bob," she said uncertainly, "just that way—go to hell? He is the head of your department."

"Well, not in so many words. Do it your own way. Then come straight here. Yes—one thing more. If you see me anywhere, ignore me. Do you understand—no matter what. Ignore me. Don't talk to me."

"Oh? Yes—of course. If I see you anywhere, I ignore you. And if I see you, you'll be wearing the gray herringbone?"

"Yes," I said. "And will you do as I say?"

"Oh, yes—yes. Of course."

And strangely enough, she did. There are wives and wives; I like mine. I sat in that room (the least expensive, eight dollars a day) and waited and tried to think about something no one should ever have to think about, and at exactly 3:20, there was a knock at the door, and I opened it, and there was Alice. She was a little pale, a little shaken, but still very nice to look at and standing and walking on her own feet.

I kissed her, and she returned the kiss, but told me it was only because I had the blue suit on. Not a chance with the gray suit, she said; and then asked me seriously whether we could be dreaming?

"Not both of us," I said. "Either you or me. But this isn't a dream. Why do you ask? Did you see me?"

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

She nodded. "Let me sit down first." She sat down and looked at me with a curious smile on her face.

"You did see me?" I asked.

"Oh, yes—yes, I saw you."

"Where?"

"On the corner of 58th Street."

"Did I see you?"

"No, I don't think so. I was in a cab. But not in the singular, either. You would have to say, 'Did we see you?' There were three of you."

"All in gray herringbone?"

"Every one of you."

I had a bottle of brandy, and I poured a tot for each of us, and I drank mine down and then so did Alice. Then she asked me what I was doing, and I told her I was taking my pulse.

"You would think the rooms would be nicer than this in the Waldorf," she said, "even for eight dollars a day. If I was hiding, I wouldn't hide in the Waldorf. I'd go downtown to a flophouse, like they do in the stories, for fifty cents a day. How is your pulse?"

"Eighty. I'm not hiding."

"Eighty is good, isn't it?"

"It's all right. It's normal," I pointed out. "We're both normal. We're plain people with common sense."

"Yes?"

"How was I? I mean, was I—"

"We. Say *we*. There were three of you. And I might as well tell you, I saw you outside the house. That makes four of you. I got the cab before you caught me, and when I looked back, there was another one of you. Five of you."

"Oh, my God!"

"Yes, indeed, and you can thank your stars that I am not the hysterical type. How many of you are there, if I may ask?"

"I don't know," I whispered. "Maybe fifty—maybe a hundred—maybe five hundred. I just don't know."

"You mean New York is full of you," Alice nodded. "When I was a little girl, I used to read *Alice in Wonderland* and pretend it was me. Now I don't have to pretend."

"No, I guess you don't. Tell me, Alice—just one or two things more—and then I'll try to explain."

## *Of Time and Cats*

I poured her another brandy and she drank it down neat, and said, "Oh, fine. I want to hear you explain about this."

"Yes, yes, naturally you do. And I'm going to—that is as much as I understand, I'm going to, I am indeed—"

"You are babbling," Alice interrupted, not without sympathy.

"I am, aren't I? Well, there you are. What I meant is—when you saw the three of me, was I—were we quarrelling, angry or what?"

"Oh, no, getting along fine. Just so deep in a discussion you didn't realize you had stopped traffic. Three of you are triplets, not any kind of triplets, but bald, forty-year old college-professor type triplets, identical of course, and dressed in that gray herringbone that all of the city must be talking about—oh, yes, and the sleeveless cashmere instead of a vest and the bright green bow-tie—"

"I don't see how you can laugh at something like this."

"I have problems of my own sanity," Alice said. "Would you like another nip? Yes—I told Dunbar to go to hell, just as you advised me to."

She poured the brandy for me, and her hand didn't shake. Don't ever tell me that any man knows the woman he is married to, not in twelve years and not in twenty years—not unless something happens that can't happen, and most people live their lives without that.

"He called?"

"Yes. You said he would."

"But I didn't believe he would. What time?"

"Ten minutes to three, exactly. I checked the time."

"Yes. What did he say—for God's sake, Alice, what did he say?"

"If you had only said it was important, I would have listened more carefully."

"But you did listen—please. Alice!"

"The trouble is, he doesn't talk English even at best, and he was very excited. He's building some kind of a silly machine in his basement—a field deviator or something of that sort—"

"I know. I know what he's trying to do."

"Then perhaps you can tell me."

"I will, I will," I pleaded. "I don't quite understand it myself, to tell you the truth. He has some notion that space

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

can be warped or bent—no, that doesn't do it, but something like that. Knotted, perhaps. A tiny corner of it twisted into a knot—"

"You're not making any sense at all, Bob. I think you're excited. I think you're upset."

"Yes I'm upset! Going out of my mind! God damn it, Alice—what did he say?"

"That's better," Alice nodded. "I think it's good for you to get angry, a sort of safety valve."

"What did he say?"

"He said that his cat walked into the—what would it be—between two electrodes or something like electrodes?"

"A vortex?"

"Perhaps. Whatever it is, his cat walked into it and disappeared. Poof—just like that. No cat. So he tried it on himself—he has the emotional stability of a six year old, if you ask me—and nothing at all happened. So he wants you to get in your car and get right over to his basement and let him know what you make of it."

"And?"

"I don't know," Alice frowned. "He assured me that it had nothing to do with atomic disintegration or anything of that sort or there would have been a dreadful explosion and he wouldn't have been talking to me at all. I think he thought that was a joke—he laughed. The kind of humor a professor uses with his students. Oh, I'm sorry."

"Don't mind me at all. You can't hurt my feelings now."

"And I told him to go to hell. Not in those words—I told him you were spending the night with your brother in Hartford, and when he wanted your brother's telephone number, I said it had been temporarily disconnected, so he got the address and sent you a wire there, or he said he would. Now it's your turn."

"Now it's my turn," I repeated, and I went over to the window and looked down.

"Looking for yourself?" Alice wanted to know.

"That's a damn poor joke."

"Sorry. Really, I am, Bob." She got up and came over to me and put her arm through mine. "I know you have trouble. Why don't you try to tell me?"

"Will you believe me?"

"I think I can believe anything, now."

## *Of Time and Cats*

"Good. Now sit down again. I want you to sit down and look at me." She did this dutifully, and rested her elbow on the arm of the chair, her chin on her knuckles, and looked at me. "I am your husband, Robert Clyde Bottman. Right?"

"I accept that."

"And all those others you saw today—they were also me, your husband, Robert Clyde Bottman—right?"

She nodded.

"What do you make of it?"

"Oh, no—not me. As soon as I try to make anything out of it, I'll go screaming mad. What do you make of it?"

"I'll tell you," I said. "This morning, at ten-thirty, you left the house to go shopping downtown. I was correcting papers. Shortly after you left, the bell rang. I opened the door—and there I was. The first one."

"Gray herringbone, you mean."

"Exactly. And I wasn't too surprised at first. He looked familiar, but nobody really knows what they look like to someone else. The worst moment came when I discovered that it was myself—not an imitation, not a copy, not a fraud, not proof that the devil actually exists, but myself. It was me. I was me. It was me. We both were Robert Clyde Bottman. We both were the real thing. Do you understand?"

For the first time, there was fear and horror in my wife's face as she shook her head and said, "No—I don't, Bob."

"Listen," I went on. "He explained it to me. Or I explained it to me, take your choice. And while he was explaining, the doorbell rang, and I opened it, and there I was again. Three of us now. Then we began to fight it out philosophically, and the doorbell rang again. Four of us—"

"Bob, tell me!"

"Yes—now listen. Take today in terms of time. What happens to it when tomorrow comes?"

"Oh, it's yesterday, and stop that, Bob. Tell me what happened. I can't stand much more of this."

"And I'm trying to tell you, believe me, Alice. But first we have to talk about time. What is time?"

"Bob, I don't know what time is. Time is time. It passes."

"And I don't know any more than that, when you come right down to it. And neither does anyone else. But it's been

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

a philosophical football for ages. I walk across this room. Time passes. I have been in a number of places just in this room, all connected by my actual physical being. What happened to me as I was two minutes ago? I was. I cease to exist. I reappear."

"Nonsense," Alice snorted. "You're here all the time."

"Because I am connected with myself in terms of time. Suppose Time is an aspect of motion. No motion, no time. If you will, think of a path in terms of motion. You move along it—everything we are conscious of moves in parallel terms. But nothing disappears—it is all there always, yesterday, tomorrow, a million years from now—a reality that we are conscious of only in the flickering transition of now—this moment, this instant."

"I don't understand that at all, and I don't believe it either," Alice said. "Is this some new kismet—fate, a future ordained for us?"

"No, no," I said impatiently. "It's not that. The path isn't fixed. It's fluid, it changes all the time. But we can't sit and argue about it, because we're moving along it. And I have to tell you before we go too far. Those other myselfs—"

"Just call them gray herringbone," Alice said weakly.

"Very well, gray herringbone. They told me what happened today."

"Before it happened?"

"Before it happened and after it happened. That makes no difference. It's a paradox. That's why this sort of thing can't be handled by the mental equipment we have. There's no room for paradox. The most illogical man is still logical in terms of paradox. Today happened to me. I corrected the papers. You came home. Professor Dunbar telephoned and told me about the cat. I rushed over to his place. I took a panel of transistors with me, found where his circuit burned out, rewired it. You see, I had wired it originally. I was trembling with excitement then—"

"You were trembling with excitement?" Alice said.

"Yes. Well, I react to different things. You can't imagine how exciting this was—actually to warp space, even if a tiny bit of it. I wasn't thinking about time then. You see, I had picked up the professor's cat outside his door, and I brought it in with me. There were three cats there, but I didn't think twice about that. I picked up the one on the doorstep and

## *Of Time and Cats*

brought it in. The professor was delighted. We decided that a space-warp had placed the cat outside the house. So when I hooked in the transistors and threw the power, I stepped between the electrodes myself. What could be more natural?"

"Nothing," Alice said. "Oh—nothing at all. Very natural, only they give the younger generations to you to be taught."

"And that was five PM, today."

"And now it's four-thirty PM," Alice shrugged. "Today was, but it isn't yet. For God's sake, Bob, I am a woman. Talk sense to me!"

"I am trying to. You must accept it—don't think about it, accept it. The warp was in time, maybe in space too, maybe the two are inseparable. We only had three hundred amps—a very slight effect, a tiny loop or twist in time, and then it snapped back. But the damage was done. My own particular time belt now had a five hour loop in it. In other words, it was repeating itself, endlessly, eternally, and each time it repeated, I was stranded here—no, I don't make sense, do I?"

"I'm afraid not," Alice agreed sadly. "You said it happened."

"It did. But I was pushed back to before it happened. I went straight to the apartment. I rang the bell. I opened the door and let myself in. I told myself—"

"Stop that!" Alice cried. "Stop talking about yourself. Say gray herringbone, if you must."

"All right. Gray herringbone, and he told me what had happened. Heaven knows how many times the loop had repeated already—"

"Wouldn't you know if it repeated?"

"How could I know? My own consciousness is only for now—not for yesterday, not for tomorrow. How could I know?"

Alice shook her head dumbly.

"Anyway," I continued desperately, "today, my today, our today, this morning, I decided to stop it. I had to stop it. I would go insane, the whole world would go insane if I didn't stop it. But they—the gray herringbones—they didn't want me to stop it."

"Why?"

"Because they were afraid. They were afraid that they would die. They want to live as much as I do. I am the first me, and therefore the real me; but they are also me—

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

different moments of consciousness in me—but they are me. But they couldn't stop me. They couldn't interfere with me. When I told them to get out, they had to go. If they interfered, it might mean death for them too. So they left. But some of them watched downstairs—and some in other places, and all of them myself. Do you wonder that I am half insane?"

"All right, my dear," Alice said gently. "What did you do then?"

"I put on the blue suit, not the gray one. I climbed down the fire-escape, through the house opposite ours, hailed a cab, and checked in here at the hotel."

"But if what you say is true," Alice said, beginning to share my own fear and horror, "any one of you—of the gray herringbone—can go to Dunbar instead—"

I nodded. "I thought of that. I'm not certain it would work that way. But to make sure, I took the transistor panel with me. It would take at least ten hours of work and a good electronics shop to duplicate it. They can repair the circuit—and maybe it will be enough power for a cat, but not for a man. I can swear that. Not for a man—"

"But if they do?"

I shook my head. "I don't know. I just don't know. Nothing will ever again be the way it was. How many of me will the world contain? I don't know—"

"And if you stop it, Bob?" Whether she understood me or not, she believed me. Her eyes said that; the fear was deep and wet and sick in her eyes.

"I can't answer that," I shrugged. "I don't know. We just scraped at a great mystery. I don't know. All we can do is sit and wait. Less than a half hour to five o'clock, so it's not too long to wait."

Then we waited. At first we tried to talk, but we couldn't talk much. Then we were silent. Then, a few minutes before five o'clock, Alice came over to me and kissed me. I pushed her back and into her chair. "I've got to be alone for this." I waited for anything, more afraid than I ever have been, before that or since, and then it was five o'clock. We compared watches. We called the desk and checked the time. It was five minutes past the hour. Then Alice began to cry, and I let her cry it out. Then we decided to go home.

There was a crowd and commotion down in the lobby,

## *Of Time and Cats*

but we didn't stop. Later I realized that one of them would have remembered that I liked the Waldorf and would go there, but then we didn't stop.

We got a cab. As we drove uptown, we saw seven separate crowds, accident crowds, which are unmistakable in New York. "This town is becoming a battlefield," the driver said. We didn't say anything at all. But there were no gray herringbones, not along the way, not in front of the house we lived in and not waiting for us in our apartment.

We were home less than an hour when the police came. Two plainclothes men and two men in uniform. They talked like cops and wanted to know whether I was Professor Robert Clyde Bottman.

"That's right."

"What do you do?"

"I teach physics at Columbia University."

"You got anything to identify yourself?"

"Well, I live here," I said. "Of course I have."

"You got pictures of yourself?"

I wanted to know if they had gone out of their minds, but Alice smiled sweetly and brought our scrapbook and our family album. That seemed to satisfy them a little; wholly satisfied, they never were. For in three places in New York, friends of mine had been talking to me when I disappeared. Just disappeared—poof, and done with.

One of the plainclothes men asked if I was twins, and the other said, "He'd have to be better than triplets."

Then they called downtown, and discovered that the number of men around town—gray herringbone suits and bald—reported to have disappeared into thin air, poof, at exactly 5:00 o'clock, had reached seventy-eight, and was mounting steadily. They stared at me without saying anything.

They argued about arresting me; one wanted to, the other didn't. They called downtown again, and then they told me not to leave town without notifying them, and then they left. A little while later, Professor Dunbar rang our doorbell.

"Ah, there you are," he said. "I turned my back for a moment, and you were gone. Really, Bob, you must trace that circuit again."

Alice smiled and promised that I would come tomorrow and fix the circuit once and for all.

As the professor was leaving, he said, "Most interesting

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

thing, you know. There must have been two dozen cats outside when I left. All of them exactly like Prudence."

"Prudence is the Professor's cat," I explained to Alice.

"Oh, I have Prudence back—oh, yes. I'm very fond of cats. But I never realized how alike they can be."

"And I am sure we look alike to cats, Professor Dunbar," Alice said.

"Oh, good. Very good indeed. I never thought of it that way. But I suppose we do. Well, tomorrow's another day."

"Thank God it is," Alice said.

We let him out and Alice made scrambled eggs for dinner, and then the press began to arrive. They were tiring, but we stuck to our ignorance and smiled disbelievingly about men in gray herringbone suits disappearing into thin air. I don't know whether it is for better or worse. For a few days, it was a bigger thing than flying saucers, and it made me rather uncomfortable at school. But Alice says it won't last.

It's her theory that I and my gray herringbone suit will be forgotten in a general problem of cats. Professor Dunbar lives in the North Bronx, and when we drove up to his house the following day, to fix a circuit once and for all and to fix it properly, we counted over a hundred cats. Those were the ones we saw. Alice says that cats that don't disappear—poof—have more lasting interest than college professors who do. Alice says if man can learn to live with the atom, he can learn to live with cats. Anyway, you can't hold science back, and sooner or later, someone else will tie a knot in time. Only I don't like to think about it.

# CATO THE MARTIAN

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They spoke only one language on Mars—which was one of the reasons why Earth languages fascinated them so. Mrs. Erdig had made the study of English her own hobby. English was rather popular, but lately more and more Martians were turning to Chinese; before that, it had been Russian. But Mrs. Erdig held that no other language had the variety of inflection, subtlety and meaning that English possessed.

For example, the word *righteousness*. She mentioned it to her husband tonight.

"I'm telling you, I just cannot understand it," she said. "I mean it eludes me just as I feel I can grasp it. And you know how inadequate one feels with an Earth word that is too elusive."

"I don't know how it is," Mr. Erdig replied absently. His own specialty among Earth languages was Latin—recorded only via the infrequent Vatican broadcasts—and this tells a good deal about what sort of Martian he was. Perhaps a thousand Martians specialized in Latin; certainly no more.

"Inadequate. It's obvious," his wife repeated.

"Oh? Why?"

"You know. I wish you wouldn't make yourself so obtuse.

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

One expects to feel superior to those savages in there on the third planet. It's provoking to have a word in their language elude you."

"What word?" Mr. Erdig asked.

"You weren't listening at all. *Righteousness*."

"Well, my own English is nothing to crow about, but I seem to remember what *right* means."

"And righteous means something else entirely, and it makes no sense whatsoever."

"Have you tried Lqynn's dictionary?" Mr. Erdig asked, his thoughts still wrapped around his own problems.

"Lqynn is a fool!"

"Of course, my dear. You might get through to Judge Grylyg on the Intertator. He is considered an expert on English verbs."

"Oh, you don't even hear me," she cried in despair. "Even you would know that *righteous* is not a verb. I feel like I am talking to the wall."

Mr. Erdig sat up—its equivalent, for his seven limbs were jointed very differently from a human's—and apologized to his wife. Actually he loved her and respected her. "Terribly sorry," he said. "Really, my dear. It's just that there are so many things these days. I get lost in my thoughts—and depressed too."

"I know. I know," she said with immediate tenderness. "There are so many things. I know how it all weighs on you."

"A burden I never asked for."

"I know," she nodded. "How well I know."

"Yes, there are Martians and Martians," Mr. Erdig sighed wearily. "I know some who schemed and bribed and used every trick in the book to get onto the Planetary Council. I didn't. I never wanted it, never thought of it."

"Of course," his wife agreed.

"I even thought of refusing—"

"How could you?" his wife agreed sympathetically. "How could you? No one has ever refused. We would have been pariahs. The children would never hold up their heads again. And it is an honor, darling—an honor second to none. You are a young man, two hundred and eighty years old, young and in your prime. I know what a burden it is. You must

## *Cato the Martian*

try to carry that burden as lightly as possible and not fight everything you don't agree with."

"Not what I don't agree with," Mr. Erdig said slowly but distinctly, "not at all. What is wrong."

"Can you be sure something is wrong?"

"This time. Yes, I am sure."

"Cato again, I suppose," Mrs. Erdig nodded.

"The old fool! Why don't they see through him! Why don't they see what a pompous idiot he is!"

"I suppose some do. But he appears to reflect the prevailing sentiment."

"Yes? Well, it seems to me," said Mr. Erdig, "that he created a good deal of what you call the prevailing sentiment. He rose to speak again yesterday, cleared his throat, and cried out, 'Earth must be destroyed!' Just as he has every session these past thirty years. And this time—mind you, my dear—this time he had the gall to repeat it in Latin: '*Earth esse delendam.*' Soon, he will believe that he is Cato."

"I think that is a great tribute to you," Mrs. Erdig told him calmly. "After all, you are the foremost Latin scholar on Mars. You were the first to call him Cato the Censor—and the name stuck. Now everyone calls him Cato. I shouldn't be surprised if they have all forgotten his real name. You can be proud of your influence."

"That isn't the point at all," Mr. Erdig sighed.

"I only meant to cheer you a bit."

"I know, my dear. I shouldn't be annoyed with you. But the point is that each day they smile less and listen to him even more intently. I can remember quite well when he first began his campaign against Earth, the amused smiles, the clucking and shaking of heads. A good many of us were of the opinion that he was out of his mind, that he needed medical treatment. Then, bit by bit, the attitude changed. Now, they listen seriously—and they agree. Do you know that he plans to put it to a vote tomorrow?"

"Well, if he does, he does, and the council will do what is right. So the best thing for you to do is to get a good night's sleep. Come along with me."

Mr. Erdig rose to follow her. They were in bed, when she said, "I do wish you had chosen English, my dear. Why should *righteous* be so utterly confusing?"

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

Most of the Planetary Council of Mars were already present when Mr. Erdig arrived and took his place. As he made his way among the other representatives, he could not fail to notice a certain coolness, a certain restraint in the greetings that followed him. Mrs. Erdig would have held that he was being over-sensitive and that he always had been too sensitive for his own peace of mind; but Mr. Erdig himself labored under no illusions. He prided himself upon his psychological awareness of the Council's mood. All things considered, he was already certain that today was Cato's day.

As he took his place, his friend, Mr. Kyegg, nodded and confirmed his gloomy view of things. "I see you are thinking along the same lines, Erdig," Mr. Kyegg said.

"Yes."

"Well—*que serait, serait*," Mr. Kyegg sighed. "What will be, will be. French. Language spoken by only a handful of people on the European continent, but very elegant."

"I know that France is on the European continent," Mr. Erdig observed stiffly.

"Of course. Well, old Fllari persuaded me to take lessons with him. Poor chap needs the money."

Mr. Erdig realized that his irritation with Kyegg was increasing, and without cause. Kyegg was a very decent fellow whom Mr. Erdig had known for better than two hundred years. It would be childish to allow a general state of irritation to separate him from any one of the narrowing circle he could still call his friends.

At moments of stress, like this one, Mr. Erdig would lie back in his seat and gaze at the Council ceiling. It had a soothing effect. Like most Martians, Mr. Erdig had a keen and well-developed sense of aesthetics, and he never tired of the beauties of Martian buildings and landscapes. Indeed, the creation of beauty and the appreciation of beauty were preoccupations of Martian society. Even Mr. Erdig would not have denied the Martian superiority in that direction.

The ceiling of the Council Chamber reproduced the Martian skies at night. Deep, velvety blue-purple, it was as full of stars as a tree in bloom is of blossoms. The silver starlight lit the Council Chamber.

"How beautiful and wise are the things we create and live with!" Mr. Erdig reflected. "How good to be a Martian!"

## *Cato the Martian*

He could afford pity for the poor devils of the third planet. Why couldn't others?

He awoke out of his reverie to the chimes that called the session to order. Now the seats were all filled.

"This is it," said Mr. Erdig's friend, Mr. Kyegg. "Not an empty seat in the house."

The minutes of the previous meeting were read.

"He'll recognize Cato first," Mr. Kyegg nodded.

"That doesn't take much foresight," Mr. Erdig replied sourly, pointing to Cato. Already Cato's arm (or limb or tentacle, depending on your point of view) was up.

The chairman bowed and recognized him.

Cato the Censor had concluded his speeches in the Roman Senate with the injunction that Carthage must be destroyed. Cato the Martian did him one better; he began and finished with the injunction that Earth must be destroyed.

"Earth must be destroyed," Cato the Martian began, and then paused for the ripple of applause to die down.

"Why do I go on, year after year, with what once seemed to so many to be a heartless and blood-thirsty plea? I assure you that the first time my lips formed that phrase, my heart was sick and my bowels turned over in disgust. I am a Martian like all of you; like all of you, I view murder as the ultimate evil, force as the mark of the beast.

"Think—all of you, think of what it cost me to create that phrase and to speak it for the first time in this chamber, so many years ago! Think of how you would have felt! Was it easy then—or any time in all the years since then? Is the roll of a *patriot* ever easy? Yes, I use a word Earth taught us—*patriot*. A word most meaningful to us now."

"*Le patriotisme est le dernier refuge d'un gredin*," Mr. Kyegg observed caustically. "French. A pithy language."

"English, as a matter of fact," Mr. Erdig corrected him. "*Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel*. Samuel Johnson, I believe. Literary dean and wit in London, two centuries ago." Mr. Erdig felt unpleasant enough to put Mr. Kyegg in his place. "London," he went on, "largest city in England, which is an island a few miles from the European continent."

"Oh, yes," Mr. Kyegg nodded weakly.

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"—not only because I love Mars," Cato was saying, "but because I love the entire essence and meaning of life. It is almost half a century since we picked up the first radio signals from the planet Earth. We on Mars had never known the meaning of *war*; it took Earth to teach us that. We had never known what it meant to kill, to destroy, to torture. Indeed, when we first began to analyze and understand the various languages of Earth, we doubted our own senses, our own analytical abilities. We heard, but at first we refused to believe what we heard. We refused to believe that there could be an entire race of intelligent beings whose existence was dedicated to assault, to murder and thievery and brutality beyond the imagination of Martians—"

"Never changes a word," muttered Mr. Erdig. "Same speech over and over."

"He's learned to deliver it very well, don't you think?" Mr. Kyegg said.

"—we would not believe!" Cato cried. "Who could believe such things? We were a race of love and mercy. We tried to rationalize, to explain, to excuse—but when our receivers picked up the first television signals, well, we could no longer rationalize, explain or excuse. What our ears might have doubted, our eyes proved. What our sensibilities refused, fact forced upon us. I don't have to remind you or review what we saw in the course of fifteen Earth years of television transmission. Murder—murder—murder—and violence! Murder and violent death to a point where one could only conclude that this is the dream, the being and the vision of Earth! Man against man, nation against nation, mother against child—and always violence and death—"

"He said he wasn't going to review it," Mr. Erdig murmured.

"It's rather nice to know every word of a speech," said Mr. Kyegg. "Then you don't have to listen with any attention."

But the members of the council were listening with attention as Cato cried.

"And *war*! The word itself did not exist in our language until we heard it from Earth. War without end—large wars and small wars, until half of their world is a graveyard and their very atmosphere is soaked with hatred!"

"That's a rather nice turn of phrase for Cato, don't you

## *Cato the Martian*

think?" Mr. Kyegg asked his associate. Mr. Erdig did not even deign to answer.

"And then," Cato continued, his voice low and ominous now, "we watched them explode their first atom bomb. On their television, we watched this monstrous weapon exploded again and again as they poisoned their atmosphere and girded themselves for a new war. Ah, well do I remember how calm the philosophers were when this happened. 'Leave them alone,' said our philosophers, 'now they will destroy themselves.' Would they? By all that Mars means to every Martian, I will not put my faith in the philosophers!"

"He means you," said Mr. Kyegg to Mr. Erdig.

"Philosophers!" Cato repeated in contempt. "I know one of them well indeed. In derision, he dubbed me Cato—thinking to parade his Latin scholarship before me. Well, I accept the name. As Cato, I say, Earth must be destroyed! Not because of what Earth has done and continues to do to itself—I agree that is their affair—but because of what, as every Martian now knows, Earth will inevitably do to us. We watched them send up their first satellites; we did nothing as they sent their missiles probing into space; and now—now—as our astronomers confirm—they have sent an unmanned rocket to the moon!"

"That seals it," Mr. Erdig sighed.

"How long must we wait?" Cato cried. "Must all that we have made of our lovely planet be an atomic wasteland before we act? Are we to do nothing until the first Earth invaders land on Mars? Or do we destroy this blight as firmly and surely as we would wipe out some new and dreadful disease?"

"I say that Earth must be destroyed! Not next month or next year, but now! Earth must be destroyed!"

Cato sat down, not as formerly to a small ripple of applause or to disapproving silence, but now to a storm of assent and approval.

"Silly of me to think of myself as a philosopher," Mr. Erdig reflected as he rose to speak, "but I suppose I am, in a very small way." And then he told the assembled Council members that he would not take too much of their time.

"I am one of those individuals," Mr. Erdig said, "who, even when they cannot hope to win an argument, get some

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

small satisfaction out of placing their thoughts upon the record. That I do not agree with Cato, you know. I have said so emphatically and on many occasions; but this is the conclusion of a long debate, not the beginning of one.

"I never believed that I should live to see the day when this Council would agree that Earth should be destroyed. But that you are in agreement with Cato seems obvious. Let me only remind you of some of the things you propose to destroy.

"We Martians never paused to consider how fortunate we are in our longevity until we began to listen, as one might say, to Earth—and to watch Earth. We are all old enough to recall the years before the people of Earth discovered the secret of radio and television transmission. Were our lives as rich then as they are now?

"How much has changed in the mere two-score of Earth years that we have listened to them and watched them. Our ancient and beautiful Martian language has become all the richer for the inclusion of hundreds of Earth words. The languages of Earth have become the pastime and delight of millions of Martians. The games of Earth divert us and amuse us—to a point where baseball and tennis and golf seem native and proper among us. You all recall how dead and stagnant our art had become; the art of Earth brought it to life and gave us new forms, ideas and directions. Our libraries are filled with thousands of books on the subject of Earth, manners and customs and history, and due to their habit on Earth of reading books and verse over the radio, we now have available to us the literary treasures of Earth.

"Where in our lives is the influence of Earth not felt? Our architects have incorporated Earth buildings. Our doctors have found techniques and methods on Earth that have saved lives here. The symphonies of Earth are heard in our concert halls and the songs of Earth fill the Martian air.

"I have suggested only some of an almost endless list of treasures Earth has given us. And this Earth you propose to destroy. Oh, I cannot refute Cato. He speaks the truth. Earth is still a mystery to us. We have never breathed the air of Earth or trod on the soil of Earth, or seen her mighty cities and green forests at first hand. We see only a shadow of the reality, and this shadow confuses us and frightens us. By Martian terms, Earth people are short-lived. From birth to

## *Cato the Martian*

death is only a moment. How have they done so much in such fragile moments of existence? We really don't know—we don't understand. We see them divided and filled with hate and fear and resentment; we watch them murder and destroy; and we are puzzled and confused. How can the same people who create so splendidly destroy so casually?

"But is destruction the answer to this problem? There are two and a half thousand million people on Earth, three times the number who inhabit Mars. Can we ever again sleep in peace, dream in peace, if we destroy them?"

Cato's answer to Mr. Erdig was very brief. "Can we ever again sleep in peace, dream in peace if we don't?"

Then Mr. Erdig sat down and knew that it was over.

"It's not as if we were actually doing it ourselves," Mrs. Erdig said to her husband at home that evening.

"The same thing, my dear."

"But as you explain it, here are these two countries, as they call them, the Soviet Union and the United States of America—the two most powerful countries on Earth, armed to the teeth with heaven knows how many atom bombs and just waiting to leap at each other's throats. I know enough Earth history to realize that sooner or later they're bound to touch off a war—even if only through some accident."

"Perhaps."

"And all we will do," Mrs. Erdig said soothingly, "is to hasten that inevitable accident."

"Yes, we have come to that," Mr. Erdig nodded somberly. "War and cruelty and injustice are Earth words that we have learned—foreign words, nasty words. It would be utterly immoral for us to arm ourselves for war or even to contemplate war. But an accident is something else indeed. We will build a rocket and arm it with an atomic warhead and put it into space so that it will orbit Earth over their poles and come down and explode in the Arizona desert of the United States. At the worst, we destroy a few snakes and cows, so our hands are clean. Minutes after that atom bomb explodes, Earth will begin to destroy itself. Yet we have absolved ourselves—"

"I don't like to hear you talk like that, my dear," Mrs. Erdig protested. "I never heard any other Martian talk like that."

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

"I am not proud of being a Martian."

"Really!"

"It turns my stomach," said Mr. Erdig.

There was a trace of asperity in Mrs. Erdig's voice. "I don't see how you can be so sure that you are right and everyone else is wrong. Sometimes I feel that you disagree just for the pleasure of disagreeing—or of being disagreeable, if I must say it. It seems to me that every Martian should treasure our security and way of life above all else. And I can't see what is so terribly wrong about hastening something that is bound to happen sooner or later in any case. If Earth folk were deserving, it would be another matter entirely—"

Mr. Erdig was not listening. Long years of association had taught him that when his wife began this kind of tidal wave of argument and proof, it could go on for a very long time indeed. He closed off her sound and his thoughts ranged, as they did so often, across the green meadows and the white-capped blue seas of Earth. How often he had dreamed of that wilderness of tossing and restless water! How wonderful and terrible it must be! There were no seas on Mars, so even to visualize the oceans of Earth was not easy. But he could not think about the oceans of Earth and not think of the people of Earth, the mighty cities of Earth.

Suddenly, his heart constricted with a pang of knife-like grief. In the old, unspoken language of Earth, which he had come to cherish so much, he whispered,

*"Magna civitas, magna solitudo—"*

The rocket was built and fitted with an atomic warhead—no difficult task for the technology of Mars. In the churches (their equivalent, that is) of Mars, a prayer was said for the souls of the people of Earth, and then the rocket was launched.

The astronomers watched it and the mathematicians tracked it. In spite of its somber purpose and awful destiny, the Martians could not refrain from a flush of pride in the skill and efficiency of their scientists, for the rocket crossed over the North Pole of Earth and landed smack in the Arizona desert, not more than five miles away from the chosen target spot.

The air of Mars is thin and clear and millions of Martians

## *Cato the Martian*

have fine telescopes. Millions of them watched the atomic warhead burst and millions of them kept their telescopes trained to Earth, waiting to witness the holocaust of radiation and flame that would signal atomic war among the nations of Earth.

They waited, but what they expected did not come. They were civilized beings, not at all bloodthirsty, but by now they were very much afraid; so some of them waited and watched until the Martian morning made the Martian skies blaze with burning red and violet.

Yet there was no war on Earth.

"I do wonder what could have gone wrong?" Mrs. Erdig said, looking up from the copy of *Vanity Fair*, which she was reading for the second time. She did not actually expect an answer, for her husband had become less and less communicative of late. She was rather surprised when he answered,

"Can't you guess?"

"I don't see why you should sound so superior. No one else can guess. Can you?"

Instead of answering her, he said, "I envy you your knowledge of English—if only to read novelists like Thackeray."

"It is amusing," Mrs. Erdig admitted, "but I never can quite get used to the nightmare of life on Earth."

"I didn't know you regarded it as a nightmare."

"How else could one regard it?"

"I suppose so," Mr. Erdig sighed. "Still—I would have liked to read Caesar's *Conquest of Gaul*. They have never broadcast it."

"Perhaps they will."

"No. No, they never will. No more broadcasts from Earth. No more television."

"Oh, well—if they don't start that war and wipe themselves out, they're bound to be broadcasting again."

"I wonder," Mr. Erdig said.

The second rocket from Mars exploded its warhead in the wastelands of Siberia. Once again, Martians watched for hours through their telescopes and waited. But Mr. Erdig did not watch. He seemed to have lost interest in the current obsession of Mars, and he devoted most of his time to the study

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of English, burying himself in his wife's novels and dictionaries and thesaurus. His progress, as his wife told her neighbors, was absolutely amazing. He already knew the language well enough to carry on a passable conversation.

When the Planetary Council of Mars met and took the decision to aim a rocket at London, Mr. Erdig was not even present. He remained at home and read a book—one of his wife's English transcripts.

As with so many of her husband's recent habits, his truancy was shocking to Mrs. Erdig, and she took it upon herself to lecture him concerning his duties to Mars and Martians—and in particular, his deplorable lack of patriotism. The word was very much in use upon Mars these days.

"I have more important things to do," Mr. Erdig finally replied to her insistence.

"Such as?"

"Reading this book, for instance."

"What book *are* you reading?"

"It's called *Huckleberry Finn*. Written by an American—Mark Twain."

"It's a silly book. I couldn't make head or tail of it."

"Well—"

"And I don't see why it's important."

Mr. Erdig shook his head and went on reading.

And that night, when she turned on the Intertator, the Erdigs learned, along with the rest of Mars, that a rocket had been launched against the City of London. . . .

After that, a whole month passed before the first atomic warhead, launched from the Earth, exploded upon the surface of Mars. Other warheads followed. And still, there was no war on the Planet Earth.

The Erdigs were fortunate, for they lived in a part of Mars that had still not felt the monstrous, searing impact of a hydrogen bomb. Thus, they were able to maintain at least a semblance of normal life, and within this, Mr. Erdig clung to his habit of reading for an hour or so before bedtime. As Mr. Erdig had the Intertator on almost constantly these days, he had retreated to the Martian equivalent of a man's den. He was sitting there on this particular evening when Mrs. Erdig burst in and informed him that the first fleet of manned space-rockets from Earth had just landed on Mars—

### *Cato the Martian*

the soldiers from Earth were proceeding to conquer Mars, and that there was no opposition possible.

"Very interesting," Mr. Erdig agreed.

"Didn't you hear me?"

"I heard you, my dear," Mr. Erdig said.

"Soldiers—armed soldiers from Earth!"

"Yes, my dear." He went back to his book, and when Mrs. Erdig saw that for the third time he was reading the nonsense called *Huckleberry Finn*, she turned out of the room in despair. She was preparing to slam the door behind her, when Mr. Erdig said,

"Oh, my dear."

She turned back into the room. "Well—"

"You remember," Mr. Erdig said, just as if soldiers from Earth were not landing on Mars that very moment, "that a while back you were complaining that you couldn't make any sense out of an English word—*righteous*?"

"For heaven's sake!"

"Well, it seemed to puzzle you so—"

"Did you hear a word I said?"

"About the ships from Earth? Oh, yes—yes, of course. But here I was reading this book for the third time—it is a most remarkable book—and I came across that word, and it's not obscure at all. Not in the least. A righteous man is pure and wise and good and holy and just—above all, just. And equitable, you might say. Cato the Censor was such a man. Yes—and Cato the Martian, I do believe. Poor Cato—he was fried by one of those hydrogen bombs, wasn't he? A very righteous man—"

Sobbing hysterically, Mrs. Erdig fled from the room. Mr. Erdig sighed and returned to his novel.



# THE COLD, COLD BOX

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As always, the annual meeting of the Board of Directors convened at nine o'clock in the morning, on the 10th of December. Nine o'clock in the morning was a sensible and reasonable hour to begin a day's work, and long ago, the 10th of December had been chosen as a guarantee against the seduction of words. Every one of the directors would have to be home for the Christmas holiday—or its equivalent—and therefore the agenda was timed for precisely two weeks and not an hour more.

In the beginning, this had caused many late sessions, sometimes two or three days when the directors met the clock round, with no break for sleep or rest. But in time, as things fell into the proper place and orderly management replaced improvisation, each day's meeting was able to adjourn by four o'clock in the afternoon—and there were even years when the general meeting finished its work a day or two early.

By now, the meeting of the Board of Directors was very matter-of-fact and routine. The big clock on the wall of the charming and spacious meeting room was just sounding nine, its voice low and musical, as the last of the directors found

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

their seats. They nodded pleasantly to each other, and if they were seated close to old friends, they exchanged greetings. They were completely relaxed, neither tense nor uneasy at the thought of the long meeting that lay ahead of them.

There were exactly three hundred of these directors, and they sat in a comfortable circle of many tiers of seats—in a room not unlike a small amphitheatre. Two aisles cut through to a center circle or stage about twenty feet in diameter, and there a podium was placed which allowed the speaker to turn in any direction as he spoke. Since the number of three hundred was an arbitrary one, agreed upon after a good deal of trial and error, and maintained as an excellent working size, half the seats in the meeting room were always empty. There was some talk now and then of redesigning the meeting room, but nobody ever got down to doing it and by now the empty seats were a normal part of the decor.

The membership of the Board was about equally divided between men and women. No one could serve under the age of thirty, but retirement was a matter of personal decision, and a reasonable number of members were over seventy. Two thirds of them were in their fifties. Since the Board was responsible for an international management, it was only natural that all nations and races should be represented—black men and white men and brown men and yellow men, and all the shadings and gradations in between. Like the United Nations—they were too modest to make such a comparison themselves—they had a number of official languages (and a system of simultaneous translation), though English was most frequently used.

As a matter of fact, the Chairman of the Board, who had been born in Indo-China, opened this meeting in English, which he spoke very well and with ease, and after he had welcomed them and announced the total attendance—all members present—he said,

“At the beginning of our annual meeting—and this is an established procedure, I may say—we deal with a moral and legal point, the question of Mr. Steve Kovac. We undertake this before the reading of the agenda, for we have felt that the question of Mr. Kovac is not a matter of agenda or business, but of conscience. Of our conscience, I must add, and not without humility; for Mr. Kovac is the only secret

## *The Cold, Cold Box*

of this meeting. All else that the Board discusses, votes upon and decides or rejects, will be made public, as you know. But of Mr. Steve Kovac the world knows nothing; and each year in the past, our decision has been that the world should continue to know nothing about Mr. Kovac. Each year in the past, Mr. Kovac has been the object of a cruel and criminal action by the members of this Board. Each year in the past, it has been our decision to repeat this crime."

To these words, most of the members of the Board did not react at all—but here and there young men and women showed their surprise, bewilderment and unease, either by the expressions on their faces or by low protestations of disbelief. The members of the Board were not insensitive people.

"This year, as in the past, we make this question of Mr. Kovac our first piece of business—because we cannot go onto our other business until it is decided. As in the past, we will decide whether to engage in a criminal conspiracy or not."

A young woman, a new member of the board, her face flushed and angry, rose and asked the chairman if he would yield for a question. He replied that he would.

"Am I to understand that you are serious, Mr. Chairman, or is this some sophomoric prank for the edification of new members?"

"This board is not used to such descriptive terms as sophomoric, as you should know, Mrs. Ramu," he answered mildly. "I am quite serious."

The young woman sat down. She bit her lower lip and stared at her lap. A young man arose.

"Yes, Mr. Steffanson?" the chairman said pleasantly.

The young man sat down again. The older members were gravely attentive, thoughtful without impatience.

"I do not intend to choke off any discussion, and I will gladly yield to any questions," said the Chairman, "but perhaps a little more about this troublesome matter first. There are two reasons why we consider this problem each year. Firstly, because the kind of crime we have committed in the past is hardly anything to grow indifferent to; we need to be reminded; premeditated crime is a deadly threat to basic decency, and God help us if we should ever become complacent! Secondly, each year, there are new members on this

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

board, and it is necessary that they should hear all of the facts in the case of Mr. Kovac. This year, we have seven new members. I address myself to them, but not only to them. I include all of my fellow members of this Board."

Steve Kovac (the President of the Board began) was born in Pittsburgh in the year 1913. He was one of eleven children, four of whom survived to adulthood. This was not too unusual in those days of poverty, ignorance and primitive medicine.

John Kovac, Steve Kovac's father, was a steelworker. When Steve Kovac was six years old, there was a long strike—an attempt on the part of the steelworkers to increase their wages. I am sure you are all familiar with the method of the strike, and therefore I will not elaborate.

During this strike, Steve Kovac's mother died; a year later, John Kovac fell into a vat of molten steel. The mother died of tuberculosis, a disease then incurable. The father's body was dissolved in the molten steel. I mention these things in terms of their very deep and lasting effect on the mind and character of Steve Kovac. Orphaned at the age of seven, he grew up like an animal in the jungle. Placed in a county home for orphan children, he was marked as a bad and intractable boy, beaten daily, deprived of food, punished in every way the ignorance and insensitivity of the authorities could devise. After two years of this, he ran away.

This is a very brief background to the childhood of a most remarkable man, a man of brilliance and strong character, a man of high inventive genius and grim determination. Unfortunately, the mind and personality of this man had been scarred and traumatized beyond redemption. A psychiatric analysis of this process has been prepared, and each of you will find a copy in your portfolio. It also itemizes the trials and suffering of Steve Kovac between the ages of nine and twenty—the years during which he fought to survive and to grow to adulthood.

It also gives a great many details of this time of his life—details I cannot go into. You must understand that while the question before us is related to this background, there are many other features I will deal with.

At this point, the Chairman of the Board paused to take

## *The Cold, Cold Box*

a drink of water and to glance through his notes. The younger members of the Board glanced hurriedly at the psychiatric report; the older members remained contemplative, absorbed in their own thoughts. As many times as they had been through this, somehow it was never dull.

At the age of twenty (the Chairman resumed) Steve Kovac was working in a steel mill outside of Pittsburgh. He was friendly then with a man named Emery. This man, Emery, was alone, without family or means of support. A former coal miner, he suffered from a disease of the lungs, common to his trade. All he had in the world was a five thousand dollar insurance policy. Steve Kovac agreed to support him, and in return he made Kovac the beneficiary of the insurance policy. In those days, insurance policies were frequently the only means with which a family could survive the death of the breadwinner.

Four months later, Emery died. Years afterward, it was rumored that Kovac had hastened his death, but there is no evidence for the rumor. The five thousand dollars became the basis for Steve Kovac's subsequent fortune. Twenty-five years later, the net worth of Steve Kovac was almost three billion dollars. As an individual, he was possibly the wealthiest man in the United States of America. He was a tycoon in the steel and aluminum industries, and he controlled chemical plants, copper mines, railroads, oil refineries and dozens of associated industries. He was then forty-six years old. The year was 1959.

The story of his climb to power and wealth is unique for the generations he lived through. He was a strong, powerful, handsome man—tortured within himself, driven by an insatiable lust to revenge himself, and his father and mother too, for the poverty and suffering of his childhood. Given the traumatic factors of his childhood, his cravings for power turned psychopathic and paranoid, and he built this structure of power securely. He owned newspapers as well as airlines, television stations and publishing houses, and much more than he owned, he controlled. Thereby, he was able to keep himself out of the public eye. In any year of the fifties, you can find no more than an occasional passing reference to him in the press.

How an individual achieved this in a time of the public

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corporation and the "corporation man" is a singular tale of drive and ambition. Steve Kovac was ambitious, ruthless, merciless and utterly without compassion or pity. His policy was to destroy what stood in his way, if he could; if he could not, he bent it to his will in one way or another. He wrecked lives and fortunes. He framed and entrapped his competitors; he used violence when he had to—when he could not buy or bribe what he wanted. He corrupted individuals and bribed parliaments and bought governments. He erected a structure of power and wealth and control that reached out to every corner of the globe.

And then, in his forty-sixth year, at the height of his wealth and power, he discovered that he had cancer.

The Chairman of the Board paused to allow the impact of the words to settle and tell. He took another drink of water. He rearranged the papers in front of him.

"At this time," he said, "I propose to read to you a short extract from the diary of Dr. Jacob Frederick. I think that most of you are familiar with the work of Dr. Frederick. In any case, you know that he was elected a member of our Board. Naturally, that was a long time ago. I need only mention that Dr. Frederick was one of the many wise and patient pioneers in the work of cancer research—not only a great physician, but a great scientist. The first entry I propose to read is dated January 12, 1959."

I had an unusual visitor today (the Chairman of the Board read), Steve Kovac, the industrial tycoon. I had heard rumors to the effect of the wealth and power of this man. In himself, he is a striking individual, tall, muscular, handsome with a broad strong face and a great mane of prematurely-white hair. He has blue eyes, a ruddy complexion, and appears to be in the prime of life and health. Of course, he is not. I examined him thoroughly. There is no hope for the man.

"Doctor," he said to me, "I want the truth. I know it already. You are not the first physician I have seen. But I also want it from you, plainly and bluntly."

I would have told him in any case. He is not the kind of a man you can lie to easily. "Very well," I said to him, "you

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have cancer. There is no cure for your cancer. You are going to die."

"How long?"

"We can't say. Perhaps a year."

"And if I undergo operative procedure?"

"That could prolong your life—perhaps a year or two longer if the operation is successful. But it will mean pain and incapacity."

"And there is no cure?" His surface was calm, his voice controlled; he must have labored for years to achieve that kind of surface calm and control; but underneath, I could see a very frightened and desperate man.

"None as yet."

"And the quacks and diet men and the rest—they promise cures?"

"It's easy to promise," I said. "But there isn't any cure."

"Doc," he said to me, "I don't want to die and I don't intend to die. I have worked twenty-five years to be where I am now. The tree is planted. I'm going to eat the fruit. I am young and strong—and the best years of my life are ahead of me."

When Kovac talked like that, he was convincing, even to me. It is his quality not simply to demand of life, but to take. He denies the inevitable. But the fact remained.

"I can't help you, Mr. Kovac," I told him.

"But you're going to help me," he said calmly. "I came to you because you know more about cancer than any man in the world. Or so I am told."

"You have been misinformed," I said shortly. "No man knows more than anyone else. Such knowledge and work is a collective thing."

"I believe in men, not mobs. I believe in you. Therefore, I am ready to pay you a fee of one million dollars if you can make it possible for me to beat this thing and live a full life span." He then reached into his coat for his wallet and took out a certified check for one million dollars. "It is yours—if I live."

I told him to return the following day—that is tomorrow. And now I have been sitting here for hours, thinking of what one million dollars would mean to my work, my hopes—indeed, through them, to all people. I have been thinking

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with desperation and with small result. Only one thought occurs to me. It is fantastic, but then Steve Kovac is a fantastic man.

Again, the Chairman of the Board paused and looked inquiringly at some of the younger members. They had been listening with what appeared to be hypnotic concentration. There were no questions and no comments.

"Then I will continue with the diary of Dr. Frederick," the Chairman said.

January 13, (the Chairman said). Steve Kovac returned at 2:00, as we had arranged. He greeted me with a confident smile.

"Doc, if you are ready to sell, I am ready to buy."

"And you really believe that you can buy life?"

"I can buy anything. It's a question of price."

"Can you buy the future?" I asked him. "Because that is where the cure for cancer lies. Do you want to buy it?"

"I'll buy it because you have decided to sell," he said flatly. "I know who I am dealing with. Make your offer, Dr. Frederick."

I made it, as fantastic as it was. I told him about my experiments with the effects of intense cold upon cancer cells. I explained that though, as yet, the experiments had not produced any cure, I had made enormous strides in the intense and speedy application of extreme cold—or, to put it more scientifically, my success in removing heat from living objects. I detailed my experiments—how I had begun with frogs and snakes, freezing them, and then removing the cold and resuming the life process at a later date; how I had experimented with mice, cats, dogs—and most recently, monkeys.

He followed me and anticipated me. "How do you restore life?" he wanted to know.

"I don't restore it. The life never dies. In the absence of heat, what might be called the ripening or aging process of life is suspended, but the life remains. Time and motion are closely related; and under intense cold, motion slows and theoretically could cease—all motion, even within the atomic structure. When the motion ceases, time ceases."

"Is it painful?"

## *The Cold, Cold Box*

"As far as I know, it isn't. The transition is too quick."

"I'd like to see an experiment."

I told him that I had in my laboratory a spider monkey that had been frozen seven weeks ago. My assistants could attest to that. He went into the laboratory with me and watched as we successfully restored the monkey. Seemingly, it was none the worse.

"And the mind?" he asked me.

I shrugged. "I don't know. I have never attempted it with a human being."

"But you think it would work?"

"I am almost certain that it would work. I would need better and larger equipment. With some money to spend, I can improve the process—well, considerably."

He nodded and took the certified check out of his wallet. "Here is your retainer—apart from what you have to spend. Buy whatever you need, and charge it to me. Spend whatever you have to spend and buy the best. No ceiling, no limit. And when I wake up, after a cure has been discovered, there will be a second million to add to your fee. I am not a generous man, but neither am I niggardly when I buy what I want. When will you be ready?"

"Considering the prognosis of your disease," I said, "we should not delay more than five weeks. I will be ready then. Will you?"

Steve Kovac nodded. "I will be ready. There are a good many technical and legal details to work out. I have many and large interests, as you may know, and this is a journey of uncertain duration. I will also take care of your own legal responsibilities."

Then he left, and it was done—possibly the strangest agreement ever entered into by a doctor and his patient. I try to think of only one thing—that I now have a million dollars to put into my work and research.

The Chairman of the Board wore pince-nez, and now he paused to wipe them. He cleared his throat, rearranged the papers on the podium once again, and explained.

You see, the plan was a simple one and a sensible one too. Since Mr. Kovac's condition could not be cured, here was a means of preserving his life and arresting the disease

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until science had found a cure. Timidity was never one of Mr. Kovac's qualities. He analyzed the situation, faced it, and accepted the only possible escape offered to him. So he went about placing his affairs in such order as to guarantee the success and prosperity of his enterprises while he slept—and also their return to his bidding and ownership when he awoke.

In other words, he formed a single holding company for all of his many interests. He gathered together a Board of Directors to manage that holding company in his absence, making himself president in absentia, with a substitute president to preside while he was gone. He made a set of qualifying bylaws, that no president could hold office for more than two years, that the Board was to be enlarged each year and a number of other details, each of them aimed at the single goal of retaining all power to himself. And because he was not dead, but merely absent, he created a unique situation, one unprecedented in the history of finance.

This holding company was exempted from all the traditional brakes and tolls placed upon previous companies through the mechanism of death. Until Mr. Kovac returned, the holding company was immortal. Naturally, Dr. Frederick was placed upon the Board of Directors.

In other words (the Chairman of the Board concluded) that is how this Board of Directors came into being.

He allowed himself his first smile then. "Are there any questions at this point?" he asked mildly.

A new member from Japan rose and wanted to know why, if this was the case, the whole world should be told otherwise?

We thought it best (said the President). Just as we, on this Board, have great powers for progress and construction, so do we have no inconsiderable powers of concealment and alteration. The people of the United States and the United Kingdom might have accepted the knowledge that Steve Kovac brought this Board of Directors into being, but certainly in the Soviet Union and China, such knowledge might have been most disconcerting and destructive. Remember that once we had established an open trade area in the Soviet Union and had brought three of her leading government

## *The Cold, Cold Box*

people onto our Board of Directors, our situation changed radically. We were enabled then, through a seizure of all fuel supplies on earth, to prevent the imminent outbreak of World War III.

At that point, neither the extent of our holdings nor the amount of our profits could be further concealed. I say we (the Chairman deferred modestly) but of course it was our predecessors who faced these problems. Our cash balance was larger than that of the United States Treasury, our industrial potential greater than that of any major power. Believe me, without planned intent or purpose, this Board of Directors suddenly found itself the dominant force on earth. At that point, it became desperately necessary for us to explain what we represented.

A new member from Australia rose and asked, "How long was that, Mr. Chairman, if I may inquire, after the visit of Mr. Kovac to Dr. Frederick?"

The Chairman nodded. "It was the year Dr. Frederick died—twenty-two years after the treatment began. By then, five types of cancer had already surrendered their secret to science. But there was not yet any cure for Mr. Kovac's disease."

"And all the time, the treatment had remained secret?"

"All the time," the Chairman nodded.

You see (he went on), at that time, the Board felt that the people of Earth had reached a moment of crisis and decision. A moment, I say, for the power was only momentarily in the hands of this Board. We had no armies, navies or air-fleets—all we had were a major portion of the tools of production. We knew we had not prevented war but simply staved it off. This was a Board of Directors for management, not for power, and any day the installations and plants we owned and controlled could have been torn from our grasp. That was when our very thoughtful and wise predecessors decided to embark on a vast, global propaganda campaign to convince the world that we represented a secret Parliament of the wisest and best forces of mankind—that we were in effect a Board of Directors for the complex of mankind.

And in this, we succeeded, for the television stations, the

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newspapers, the radio, the film and the theatre—all these were ours. And in that brief, fortunate moment, we launched our attack. We used the weapons of Steve Kovac—let us be honest and admit that. We acted as he would have acted, but out of different motives entirely.

We bought and bribed and framed. We infiltrated the parliaments of all mankind. We bought the military commanders. We dissolved the armies and navies in the name of super-weapons, and then we destroyed the super-weapons in the name of mankind. Where leaders could not be bought or bribed, we brought them into our Board. And above all, we bought control—control of every manufacturing, farming or mining unit of any consequence upon the face of the earth.

It took the Board of Directors twenty-nine years more to accomplish this; and at the end of that twenty-nine years, our earth was a single complex of production for use and happiness—and if I may say so, for mankind. A semblance of national structure remained, but it was even then as ritualistic and limited as any commonwealth among the old states of the United States. Wars, armies, navies, atom bombs—all of these were only ugly memories. The era of reason and sanity began, the era of production for use and life under the single legal code of man. Thus, we have become creatures of law, equal under the law, and abiding by the law. This Board of Directors was never a government, nor is it now. It is what it proposes to be, a group management for the holding company.

Only today, the holding company and the means of mankind are inseparable. Thereby, our very great responsibility.

The Chairman of the Board wiped his face and took a few more sips of water. A new member from the United States rose and said,

"But, Mr. Chairman, the cure for all types of cancer was discovered sixty-two years ago."

"So it was," the Chairman agreed.

"Then, Steve Kovac—" The new member paused. She was a beautiful, sensitive woman in her middle thirties, a physicist of note and talent, and also an accomplished musician.

"You see, my dear," the Chairman said, lapsing into a most informal mode of address, pardonable only because of his

## *The Cold, Cold Box*

years and dignity, "it faced us. When we make a law for mankind and submit to it, we must honor it. Sixty-two years ago, Steve Kovac owned the world and all its wealth and industry, a dictator beyond the dream of any dictator, a tyrant above all tyrants, a king and an emperor to dwarf all other kings and emperors—"

As he spoke, two of the older members left the meeting room. Minutes later, they returned, wheeling into the room and up to the podium a rectangular object, five feet high, seven feet long and three feet wide, the whole of it covered with a white cloth. They left it there and returned to their seats.

"—yes, he owned the world. Think of it—for the first time in history, a just peace governed the nations of mankind. Cities were being rebuilt, deserts turned into gardens, jungles cleared, poverty and crime a thing of the past. Man was standing erect, flexing his muscles, reaching out to the planets and the stars—and all of this belonged to a single savage, merciless, despotic paranoid, Steve Kovac. Then, as now, my dear associates, this Board of Directors was faced with the problem of the man to whom we owed our existence, the man who all unwittingly unified mankind and ushered in the new age of man—yes, the man who gave us the right and authority to hold and manage, the man whose property we manage. Then as now, we were faced with Steve Kovac!"

Almost theatrical in his conclusion and gestures, the Chairman of the Board stepped down from the podium and with one motion swept the cloth aside. The entire Board fixed their eyes on the cabinet where, under a glass cover, in a cold beyond all concept of cold, a man lay sleeping in what was neither life nor death, but a subjective pause in the passage of time. He was a handsome man, big and broad, ruddy of face and with a fine mane of white hair. He seemed to sleep lightly, expectantly, confidently—as if he were dreaming hungrily but pleasantly of what he would awaken to.

"Steve Kovac," the President said. "So he sleeps, from year to year, no difference, no changes. So he appeared to our predecessors sixty-two years ago, when they first had the means to cure him and the obligation to awaken him. They committed the first of sixty-two crimes; they took no action in the face of a promise, a duty, a legality and an al-

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most sacred obligation. Can we understand them? Can we forgive them? Can we forgive the board that voted this same decision again and again? Above all, can we forgive ourselves if we stain our honor, break the law, and ignore our own inheritance of an obligation?

"I am not here to argue the question. It is never argued. The facts are presented, and then we vote. Therefore, will all those in favor of awakening Mr. Kovac raise their right hands?"

The President of the Board waited. Long moments became minutes, but no hands were raised. The two older members covered the cold, cold box and wheeled it out. The Chairman of the Board took a sip of water, and announced,

"We will now have the reading of the agenda."

# THE MARTIAN SHOP

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These are the background facts given to Detective Sergeant Tom Bristol when he was instructed to break down the door and go into the place. It is true that the locksmiths at Centre Street have earned the reputation of being able to open anything that has been closed; and that reputation is not undeserved. But this door was an exception. So Bristol went to break down the door with two men in uniform and crow-bars and all the other tools that might be necessary. But before that he studied a precis of the pertinent facts.

It had been established that three stores had been opened on the same day and the same hour; and more than that, as an indication of a well-organized and orderly mind, the space for each of the stores had been rented on the same day, the leases signed on the same hour. The store in Tokyo was located in the very best part of The Ginza. The space had been occupied by a fine jewelry and watchmaking establishment, perhaps the second or third best in all Japan; they vacated the premises, refusing to give the press any explanation whatsoever at the time. Later, however, it was revealed that the price paid to the jewelry establishment for

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the purchase of its lease consisted of fifty diamonds of exactly three carats each, all of them so perfectly matched, so alike in their flawlessness, that diamond experts consider the very existence of the collection—hitherto unknown—to be a unique event in the long history of jewels.

The store in Paris was, of course, on Faubourg St. Honore. There were no stores vacant at the time, and the lease of a famous couturier was purchased for forty million francs. The couturier (his name is omitted at specific request of the French government) named the price facetiously, for he had no intention of surrendering his place. When the agent for the principal wrote out a check on the spot, holding him to his word, he had no choice but to go through with the deal.

The third store was on Fifth Avenue in New York City. After thirty years on the Avenue, the last ten increasingly unprofitable, the old and stodgy firm of Delbos gave up its struggle against modern merchandising. The store it had occupied was located on the block between 52nd and 53rd Street, on the east side of the street. The property itself was managed by Clyde and Abrahams, who were delighted to release Delbos from a twenty-five year lease that had been signed in 1937, and who promptly doubled the rent. The Slocum Company, acting as agents for the principals—who never entered into the arrangements at all, either with Clyde and Abrahams or subsequently with Trevore, the decorating firm—made no protest over the increased rent, signed the lease, and then paid a year's rent in advance. Arthur Lewis, one of the younger partners in the Slocum Company, conducted the negotiations. Wally Clyde of Clyde and Abrahams, remarked at the time that the Slocum Company was losing its grip. Lewis shrugged and said that they were following instructions; he said that if he had bargaining power himself, he would be damned before he ever agreed to such preposterous rent.

Lewis also conducted the negotiations with Trevore, turning over to them detailed plans for the redesigning and decoration of the store, and agreeing to the price they set. He did make it plain, however, that his specific instructions from his principal were to agree to all prices asked and to deal only with the firms he was told to deal with. He pointed out to Trevore that such practices were abhorrent

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to the Slocum Company and were not to be anticipated under any circumstances in the future.

When the information for this precis was gathered, Mr. Samuel Carradine of the Trevore Company produced the original plans for the remodeling and decoration of the store, that is the plans turned over to him by Mr. Lewis. They are hand-drawn on a fine but strong paper of pale yellow tint. Two paper experts, one of them chief chemist for Harlin Mills, have already examined these plans, but they are unable to identify the paper, nor have they seen similar paper before. They do assert that the paper has neither a pulp nor a rag base. Part of the paper is at present undergoing chemical analysis at Crestwood Laboratories.

From this point onward, the history of the three stores is sufficiently general for the data on the Fifth Avenue store to suffice. In all three cases, rental and alteration were managed under similar circumstances; in all three cases the subsequent progress of events was the same, making due allowance for the cultural patterns of each country. In each case, the decoration of the store was in excellent taste, unusual, but nevertheless artfully connected with the general decor of the particular avenue.

Trevore charged over a hundred thousand dollars for alteration and decoration. The storefront was done in stainless steel panels, used as tile. Window-space was enlarged, and a magnificent bronze-veneered door replaced the ancient oak portal of Delbos. The interior was done in tones of black and crimson, with drapes and carpeting of mustard yellow, and the display cases and platforms were of bronze and glass. Decorators whose opinions have been sought all concur in the assessment of results. Without doubt the three stores were done in excellent, if not superb, taste—the decoration bold, unique, but never vulgar or distressing. It must be noted, however, that Mr. Ernest Searles, who heads the decor department of the Fifth Avenue Association, pointed out certain angular—that is, unfamiliar degree angles—concepts never used before by American decorators.

On Fifth Avenue, as in the other cases, the center focus of the decorating scheme was the crystal replica of the Planet Mars, which was suspended from the ceiling in each shop, and which revolved at the same tempo as Mars itself. It has not yet been determined what type of mechanism

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activates these globes. The globes, which display a unique and remarkable map of Mars's surface, were installed by the principals, after Trevore had completed the overall alteration and decoration. While the Fifth Avenue storefront is striking, it was done with the type of expensive modesty that would do credit to Tiffany's. The last thing installed was the name of the shop itself, MARS PRODUCTS, in gold letters, each letter a half-inch in relief and five inches high. It has since been determined that these letters are cast out of solid gold.

The three shops opened their doors to the public at ten A.M., on the tenth of March—in local time and day. In New York, the letters spelling out MARS PRODUCTS had been displayed for eight days, and a good deal of curiosity had been aroused, both among the public and the press. But until actual opening, no information had been offered.

During those days, four objects had been on display in the shop windows. No doubt the reader of this precis has seen or examined these objects, each of which stood upon a small crystal display stand, framed in black velvet, for all the world like precious jewels, which in a sense they were. The display consisted of a clock, an adding machine, an outboard motor and a music box, although only the clock was recognizable through its appearance, a beautiful precision instrument, activated as a number of clocks are by the variation in atmospheric pressure. Yet the workmanship, materials and general beauty of this clock outdid anything obtainable in the regular market.

The adding machine was a black cube, measuring slightly more than six inches. The covering is of some as yet undetermined synthetic or plastic, inlaid with the curious hieroglyphs that have come to be known as the Martian script, the hieroglyphs in white and gold. This machine is quickly and easily adjusted or sensitized to the sound of an individual voice, and it calculates on the basis of vocal instruction. The results emerge through a thin slit in the top, printed on paper similar to that mentioned before. Theoretically, such a calculator could be built today, but, so far as we know, by only two shops, one in Germany and the other in Japan, and the cost would be staggering; certainly, it would take years of experimental work to develop it to the point where it would deal with thirteen digits, adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing entirely by vocal command.

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The outboard motor was an object about the size of a small electric sewing machine, fabricated of some blue metal and weighing fourteen pounds, six ounces and a fraction. Two simple tension clips attached it to any boat or cart or car. It generated forty horsepower in jet propulsion, and it contained, almost microcosmically, its own atomic generator, guaranteed for one thousand continuous hours of operation. Through a muffling device, which has so far defied even theoretical solution, it produced less sound than an ordinary outboard motor. In each shop, this was explained, not as a muffling procedure, but as a matter of controlled pitch beyond the range of the human ear. Competent engineers felt that this explanation must be rejected.

In spite of the breathtaking implications of this atomic motor, it was the music box that excited the most attention and speculation. Of more or less the same dimensions as the adding machine, it was of pale yellow synthetic, the hieroglyphs pricked out in dark gray. Two slight depressions on the top of this box activated it, a slight touch of one depression to start it, a second touch on the same depression to stop it. The second depression, when touched, changed the category of the music desired. There were twenty-two categories of music available—symphonic music in three chronological sections, chamber music in three sections, piano solo, violin solo with and without accompaniment, folk music for seven cultures, operatic in three sections, orchestra, full cast and orchestra, that is the complete opera, and selected renderings, religious music, divided into five religious categories, popular songs in national sections, instrumental music in terms of eighty-two instruments, jazz in five categories and three categories of children's music.

The salespeople in each of the three shops claimed that the music box had a repertoire of eleven thousand and some odd separate musical selections, but this, of course, could not be put to the test, and varying opinions on this score have been expressed. Also the use of vocal instruction to set the sound and pitch—which was not inferior to the best mass-produced high fidelity—was poo-pooed as fakery. But Mr. Harry Flannery, consulting sound engineer for the Radio Corporation of America, has stated that the music box could be compiled out of available technical knowledge, especially since the discovery of transistor electronics. As with the

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adding machine, it was less the technical achievement than the workmanship that was unbelievable. But Mr. Flannery admitted that a content of eleven thousand works was beyond present day knowledge or skill, providing that this enormous repertoire was a fact. From all witnesses interrogated, we have compiled a list of more than three hundred works played by the shop's demonstration music box.

These were the four objects displayed in the windows of each of the three stores. The same four objects were available for examination and demonstration inside each of the stores. The clock was priced at \$500.00, the adding machine at \$475.00, the outboard motor at \$1620.00 and the music box at \$700.00—and these prices were exactly the same, at the current exchange, in Tokyo and Paris.

Prior to the opening—that is, the previous day—quarter-page advertisements, in the *New York Times* only, stated simply and directly that the people of the Planet Mars announced the opening, the following day, of a shop on Fifth Avenue, which would display, demonstrate, and take orders for four products of Martian industry. It explained the limited selection of offerings by pointing out that this was only an initial step, in order to test the reactions of Earth buyers. It was felt, the advertisement stated, that commercial relations between the Earth and Mars should be on the friendliest basis, and the Martian industrialists had no desire to upset the economic balance of Earth.

The advertisement went on to say that orders would be taken for all of the products, and that delivery was guaranteed in twelve days. The advertisement expressed the hope that this would mark the beginning of a cordial and fruitful and lasting relationship between the inhabitants of both planets.

This advertisement was hardly the first word in the press concerning the Martian shops. Already, every columnist had carried an item or two about what was, without question, one of the most imaginative and novel publicity schemes of the space age. Several columnists had it on the best authority—for rumors were all over the city—that General Dynamics was behind the Martian shops. They were also credited to General Electric, the Radio Corporation, and at least a dozen of large industrial enclaves. Again, a brilliant young merchandiser was named, a Paris dress designer, and

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a Greek shipping magnate. Still others spoke of a scheme by German industrialists to break into the American market in force, and of course there were hints that the Soviet Union was behind the method of destroying capitalism. Engineers were willing to grant Russia the skill, but interior decorators refused to acknowledge the ability of the Russians to produce original and tasteful decor. But until the shops actually opened and the working capabilities of the machines were actually demonstrated, no one was inclined to take the matter too seriously.

On the tenth of March, the shops opened in each of the three cities. The tenth of March was a Monday in New York. The shops remained open until Friday, and then they closed down for good—so far as we know.

But in those five days, thousands of people crowded into the Fifth Avenue store. The machines were demonstrated over and over. Thousands of orders were taken, but all deposits and prepayment were refused. The New York shop was staffed by one man and five tall, charming and efficient women. What they actually looked like is a matter of dispute, for they all wore skin-tight face masks of some latex-like material; but rather than to make them repulsive, the effect of the masks was quite pleasant. Gloves of the same material covered their hands, nor was any part of their skin anywhere exposed.

John Mattson, writing in the *News* the following day, said, "Never did the inhabitants of two planets meet under more promising circumstances. Having seen the Martian figure and having had a touch of the Martian charm, I am willing to take any chances with the Martian face. Uncover, my lovelies, uncover. Earth waits with bated breath."

Professor Hugo Elligson, the famous astronomer, visited the shop for *Life*. His report says in part, "If the masked people in this shop are Martians, then I say, Space must be conquered. I know it is strange for an astronomer to dwell on shapely legs and muted, rippling accents, yet I know that from here on my wife will eye me strangely whenever I look at the Red Planet. As to the relationship of an excellent publicity scheme to the Planet Mars, common intelligence orders me to withhold comment—"

Perhaps the Soviet Union thought different; for on the second day of the shop's business, two gentlemen from the

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Russian Embassy were known to enter and offer a cool million United States dollars for the demonstration sample of the atomic outboard. The Martians were polite but firm.

By Wednesday, Mars Products occupied more space in the New York press than international news. It crowded out the crises in the Middle East, and Formosa was relegated to page seventeen of the *Times*. A dozen authorities were writing scholarly opinions. Traffic on Fifth Avenue was impossible, and one hundred extra police were detailed to maintain order and make it possible for any of the Fifth Avenue stores to do business. The Fifth Avenue Association decided to apply for an injunction, on the grounds that Mars Products disrupted the ordinary practice of business.

Much the same was happening on Faubourg St. Honore, and on the Ginza.

Also on Wednesday, American industry awoke and panicked. Boards of Directors were convened all over the nation. Important industrial magnates flew to Washington, and the stock of electronic, business-machine and automobile companies sent the Dow-Jones averages down twenty-six points. The largest builder of systems and calculating machines in America saw its stock sell ten minutes ahead of the ticker, down one hundred and eighty points for the day. So also on the London, Paris and Tokyo exchanges.

But the intelligence service was not perturbed until Thursday, when it sent formal requests to the F.B.I. and to the New York City Police Department to determine who and what the principals behind Mars Products were—and to ascertain where these machines had been manufactured, whether they had been imported, and whether duty had been paid. The Sûreté and the Tokyo Police were by then taking similar steps.

Without going into the details of this investigation, it suffices to say that in every case, the investigating authorities were baffled. All three bank accounts were the result of large cash deposits by very commonplace men who were no different from thousands of other average men. The acting agents were given, by mail, full power of attorney as well as instructions. The investigations were not completed until Friday evening.

By Friday, each of the three shops was under surveillance by various government and police agencies. In New York,

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city detectives put a twenty-four hour watch on Mars Products Wednesday evening, even before any instructions or requests came from Washington. But no member of the staff left the shop after closing hours, or at any other time. Curtains were drawn across the windows, blocking off the display products. At ten A.M., the curtains were drawn back.

During Friday, in New York and Washington, discussions were held on the advisability of issuing injunctions or search warrants. At the same time, there was understandable hesitancy. If this was a publicity scheme of some industrial group, whatever agency acted could be the laughing stock of the nation—as well as opening itself to considerable liability, if legal action was taken by the injured party. Plainclothesmen had been in and out of the shop a hundred times, searching for some violation. None had been found. No loophole had been detected.

Friday night, the shop on Fifth Avenue closed as usual. The curtains were drawn. At eleven P.M., the lights went out. At three A.M., the door of the shop opened.

At that time on Saturday morning, Fifth Avenue was deserted. The shop was then being observed by four city detectives, two federal agents, two members of Central Intelligence, and three private operatives hired by the National Association of Manufacturers. The eleven men made no attempt at concealment. There was only one store entrance. Across the avenue, four cars waited.

When the door of Mars Products opened, the five members of the staff walked out. They all carried packages. At precisely the same moment, a large black automobile drew up at the curb in front of the shop. The man opened the back door of this car, and all five staff members entered. Then the door closed and they drove away. They were followed by the four cars. The agents who were watching them had instructions not to interfere, to make no arrests, but to follow any member of the staff to his or her destination and to report along the way by radio.

We have an exact description of the automobile. Shaped somewhat like a Continental, it was at least a foot longer, though no broader. It had a strange hood, more rounded than a stock car; but it was larger than any known sport car.

It headed uptown, well within the speed limits, turned into Central Park, emerged at 7th Avenue and 110th Street, pro-

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ceeded north and then beneath 155th Street to the Harlem River Speedway. When it reached the Speedway, two police cars had joined the caravan behind it. Toward the George Washington Bridge approach-ramp, it began to pick up speed, and when it passed the ramp, continuing on the deserted Speedway, it was already doing eighty miles an hour. The police cars opened their sirens, and by radio, additional police cars were instructed to set up a roadblock at Dyckman Street.

At that point, the black car put out wings, at least seven feet on either side, and went over to jet power. It left the pursuing cars as if they were standing still. It is impossible to arrive at any accurate estimate of its ground speed then, but it was certainly well over a hundred and thirty miles an hour. It was airborne in a matter of seconds, gained altitude quickly, and disappeared, by its sound, eastward. It was picked up twice by radar at an altitude of twenty thousand feet, moving at very high speed, even for jet power. The airforce was immediately notified and planes took off within minutes, but there is no report of the black car—or plane—being sighted again, nor was it again raised with radar.

It is sufficient to note that the progress of events in Tokyo and Paris was more or less identical. In no case, was the staff of the shop interfered with or taken.

Such was the precis that Detective Sergeant Bristol reviewed before he went uptown to break in the door of Mars Products. It told him nothing that he did not already know, and in all truth, he knew a great deal more. His own specialty was *entry and search*, but like almost every other citizen of New York, he had speculated during the past days on the intriguing problem of Mars Products. He was well trained in the art of rejecting any conclusions not founded on facts he could test with sight, touch or smell; but in spite of this training, his imagination conjured up a host of possibilities behind the locked door of Mars Products. He was still young enough to view his work with excitement, and all during this day, his excitement had been mounting.

Both the city police and the F.B.I. had decided to wait through Saturday before opening the shop, and these decisions were communicated to Tokyo and Paris. Actually, the New York shop was opened a few hours later than the others.

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When Bristol arrived at 52nd Street and Fifth Avenue, at least a dozen men were waiting for him. Among them were the police commissioner, the mayor, General Arlen Mack, the Chief of Staff, a colonel in Military Intelligence and several F.B.I. officials. There were also at least a hundred onlookers, held back by policemen. The police commissioner was irritated and indicated that Bristol was the type to be late at his own funeral.

"I was told to be here at seven o'clock, sir," Bristol said. "It is still a few minutes before seven."

"Well, don't argue about it. Get that door open!"

It was easier said than done. When they ripped off the bronze plate, they found solid steel underneath. They burned through it and hammered off the bolted connection. It took almost an hour before the door was open—and then, as had been the case in Tokyo and Paris, they found the store empty. The beautiful crystal reproduction of the Planet Mars had been pulverized; they found the shards in a waste basket, and it was taken to Centre Street for analysis. Otherwise, none of the decorations had been disturbed or removed, not even the solid gold letters on the store front—a small fortune in itself. But the eight products, the four from the window and the four used in the shop as demonstrators, were gone.

The high brass prowled around the place for an hour or so, examining the decorations and whispering to each other in corners. Someone made the inevitable remark about fingerprints, and the commissioner growled, "People whose skin is covered don't leave fingerprints." By nine o'clock, the brass had left, and Bristol went to work. Two F.B.I. men had remained; they watched the methods of the three men from Centre Street in silent admiration.

Bristol's specialty was, as we noted, *entry and search*. He had four children, a wife he adored, and he was soberly ambitious. He had long since decided to turn his specialty into a science and then to develop that science to a point unequaled elsewhere. First he brought in lights and flooded the store with three thousand additional watts of illumination. Since there was only the main room and a small office and lavatory behind it, he brightened the space considerably. Then he and his two assistants hooked portable lights onto their belts. He told the F.B.I. men:

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"The first element of search is find it."

"Do you know what to look for?"

"No," Bristol said. "Neither does anyone else. That makes it easier in a way."

First they removed all drapery, spread white sheets, brushed the drapery carefully on both sides, folded it and removed it. The dust was collected and labeled. Then they swept all the floors, then went over them a second time with a vacuum cleaner. The dust was sifted, packaged and labeled. Then, fitting the vacuum cleaner with new bags each time, they went over every inch of space, floor, walls, ceiling, molding and furniture. Again, the bags were packaged and labeled. Then they took the upholstered furniture apart, bit by bit, shredding the fabric and filling. The foam rubber in the cushions was needled and then picked apart. Once again, everything was labeled.

"This is more or less mechanical," Bristol explained to the government men. "Routine. We do the chemical and microscopic analysis downtown."

"Routine, eh?"

"I mean for this type of problem. We don't get this kind of problem in terms of search more than two or three times a year."

At two o'clock in the morning, the government men went to buy coffee and sandwiches. They brought back a box of food for the city men. By four A.M., the carpeting had been taken down to Centre Street, the toilet walls stripped of tile, the plumbing removed and checked, the toilet and sink entirely dismantled. At six o'clock on Sunday morning, in the cold gray light of dawn, Bristol was supervising the taking apart of every piece of bonded wood or metal in the shop.

He made the find in a desk, a modern desk of Swedish design that had been supplied by the decorators. Its surface was of polished birch, and there was a teak strip across the front. When this strip was removed, Bristol found a bit of film, less than an inch long and about three millimeters in width. When he held it up to the light with tweezers and put a magnifying glass on it, it was discovered to be film strip. It contained sixteen full frames and part of a seventeenth frame.

Minutes later, he was in a car with the government men,

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racing down to Centre Street; and only then did he permit himself the luxury of a voiced opinion.

"They must have been editing that film," he remarked. "I have been reading how orderly and precise they are. But even an orderly person can lose something. Even a Martian," he finished doubtfully.

Strangely enough, the government men made no comment at all.

Bristol is remembered, and it has been said in many places that he will go far. He has already been promoted, and without question he will be mentioned by historians for years to come. He was an honest and thorough man, and he had an orderly mind to match other orderly minds.

Professor Julius Goldman will also be remembered. The head of the Department of Semitic Languages at Columbia University, he was also the leading philologist in the Western Hemisphere, if not the world; and to him as much as to any other goes the credit for breaking through the early Cretan script. He pioneered the brilliant—if again failing—recent Etruscan effort. Along with Jacobs of Oklahoma, he is the leading authority on American Indian languages, specializing there in the Plains dialects. It is said that there is no important language on earth, living or dead, that he cannot command fluently.

This is possibly an exaggeration, but since he was reached by the White House that same Sunday, flown to Washington, put at the head of a team of five of the country's finest philologists—and since he accomplished what was expected of him in thirty-two hours, it might be said that his reputation was deserved.

Yet by the grace of God or whatever force determines our destiny, he was given a "Rosetta Stone," so to speak. Without it, as he was the first to point out, the Martian script would not have been broken, not now and possibly not ever. The "Rosetta Stone"—which, you will recall, originally enabled philologists to break the mystery of the Egyptian hieroglyphs by providing them, on the same stone tablet, with translations in known tongues—was in this case a single frame of the film strip, containing both an English and Martian inscription. Acting on the possibility that one was a

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translation of the other, Professor Goldman found an opening for the attack. Nevertheless, it remains perhaps the most extraordinary case of reconstruction in all the history of language.

That Tuesday, the Tuesday after the store had been broken into, the President of the United States held an enlarged meeting of his cabinet at the White House. In addition to the regular members of the cabinet, some forty-two other persons were present, Julius Goldman among them; and it was not Goldman alone who appeared haggard from want of sleep. Each of the men present had a precis—somewhat enlarged—that was not too different from the one presented here. Each of them had read it and pondered it. Opening the meeting, the President reviewed the facts, mentioned some of the opinions already gathered from experts, and then said:

"What are we to think, gentlemen? Our own halting probes into outer space have removed the starry realm from the province of fiction writers and gullible fools. As yet we have no firm conclusions, but I do hope that at the end of this meeting, we will formulate a few and be able to act upon them. I need not repeat that some of the keenest minds in America still consider the Martian shops to be a remarkable hoax. If so, a practical joke costing its originator a great many millions of dollars, has been played out to no point. In all fairness, I reject this conclusion, nor can I, at this point in my knowledge, support any arguments that we have seen a great publicity campaign. I have come to certain conclusions of my own, but I shall withhold them until others have been heard.

"As most of you know, through the energy and resourcefulness of the New York City police department, we found a tiny bit of film strip at the Fifth Avenue shop. Nothing of any value was found either in Paris or Tokyo. Nevertheless, I have invited the Japanese and French ambassadors to be present tonight, since their countries have been chosen, even as ours was. I do not say that their interest is higher than that of other nations, for perhaps—"

The President hesitated then—and shrugged tiredly. "Well, at this point, I will turn the meeting over to Professor Julius Goldman of Columbia University, our greatest philologist, whose contribution to the unravelling of this problem cannot be overestimated."

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Professor Goldman said quietly that, for the record, he had made no contribution not shared equally by his colleagues, who were not present this evening. They had, all six of them, prepared an affidavit, which he would read in the name of the entire team. First, he would like the people assembled to see the film strip for themselves.

The room was darkened. The first frame appeared on a prepared screen at one end of the room. It was covered with vertical lines of what had already come to be called the Martian Hieroglyphic. So with the second and the "Rosetta Stone." At the top, in English block letters:

"Compound for white males—16 to 19 years of age."

And directly beneath, again in English, "General warning. Any discussion of escape or resistance will be met by permanent stimulation of the tri-geminal nerve."

And beneath that, "Feeding room—yellow-skinned females, 7 to 10 years of age."

And as a final line in English, "Much have I travelled in the realms of gold."

Beneath these English lines were a number of vertical hieroglyph columns.

The voice of Professor Goldman explained, "This frame gave us our key, but we do not claim any clear knowledge of what these inscriptions mean. Medical authorities consulted have suggested that a certain type of irritation of the tri-geminal nerve can result in the most trying pain man knows. The line from Keats is utterly meaningless, so far as we can determine; the reason for its inclusion remains to be explained in the future, if ever. The remaining frames, as you see, are in the hieroglyph."

The lights went on again. Professor Goldman blinked tiredly, wiped his glasses, and said, "Before I present our affidavit, I must ask your indulgence for a few words concerning language. When we philologists claim to have cracked the mystery of some ancient tongue, we do not talk as a cryptographer who has broken a code. Philology and Cryptography are very different sciences. When a code is broken, its message is known. When a language is broken, only the first step in a long and arduous process is taken. No single man or single group of men has ever revealed an ancient language; that is an international task and must of necessity take generations to complete.

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"I say this because perhaps your hopes have been raised too high. We have very little to work from, only a few words and numerals; we are dealing with an unrelated tongue, totally alien; and we have had only a few hours to grapple with the problem. Therefore, though we have been able to extract some meaning from two of the frames, there are many blank spaces and many perplexities. In our favor are these facts: first—all language, possibly anywhere in the universe, appears to have a developmental logic and relationship; secondly, these frames deal with life on earth; and finally, it is our good fortune that this is an alphabetic form of writing, consisting, so far as we can determine, of forty-one sound signs, at least thirty of them consonantal. These consonantal forms suggest a vocal arrangement not unlike our own—that is in physical structure, for sounds are to a large extent determined by the physical characteristics of the creature producing them. My colleagues agree that there is no indication of any relationship between this alphabet and language and any known language of Earth. For my part, I will make no comment on the origin of this language. It is not my field—nor is it my purpose."

The President nodded. "We understand that, Professor Goldman."

Goldman continued: "The affidavit itself will be projected on the screen, since we consider it more effective for the partial translation to be read rather than heard."

The room was then darkened again, and the following appeared on the screen:

"A tentative and partial translation of the first two frames of a film strip, given to the undersigned for translation purposes:

"— — greedy lustful—[dedicated?] [practicing?] mass [murder?] [death?] — [time] generations [of?] murder — [docile?] [willing?] O when shown pleasure — — — [titled?] [self styled?] [boastful self styled?] man [or humanity?] — — — [compare to?] [equate with?] disease [or plague or rust] on face of [fair?] [rich?] planet [or globe] — — — — —"

The voice of Professor Goldman cut in, "That is the first frame. As you see, our translation is tentative and incomplete. We have very little to work from. Where the word is within brackets and coupled with a question mark, we are

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making what might be called a calculated surmise not a guess, but a surmise from too few facts. Now the second frame.

"Force [or violence] understood [or reacted to] — man [or humanity] — — primitive [or number 1] development of atomic [force or power or engine] — — — [space station or small planet] — [non-possession-relating possibly to space station] — — [outer space?] [void?] negative [long arm?] [weapon?] — — — — [superstition?] [ignorance?] [mindless] — —"

The inscription remained on the screen, and Goldman's voice, flat, tired and expressionless, explained:

"When we bracket a number of words, one after another, we are uncertain as to which is preferable. Actually, only a single word is being translated—" His voice faded away. The names of the six philologists appeared on the screen. The lights went on, but the silence was as deep and lasting as the darkness before it. Finally, the Secretary of State rose, looked at the President, received his nod, and said to Professor Goldman:

"I desire your opinion, Professor. Are these faked? Do they originate on earth? Or are we dealing with Martians? That's not a dirty word. Everyone is thinking it; no one will say it. I want your opinion."

"I am a scientist and a scholar, sir. I form opinions only when I have sufficient facts to make them credible. This is not the case now."

"You have more facts than anyone on earth! You can read that outlandish gibberish!"

"No more than you can, sir," Goldman replied softly. "What I have read, you have read."

"You come to it as a philologist," the Secretary of State persisted.

"Yes."

"Then as a philologist, is it your opinion that this language originated on earth?"

"How can I answer that, sir? What is my opinion worth when fashioned out of such thin stuff?"

"Then tell us—do you detect any relationship to any known Earthly language?"

"No—no, I do not," Goldman answered, smiling rather sadly.

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And then there was silence again. Now one of the President's secretaries appeared, and distributed copies of the affidavit to everyone present. A longer silence now, while the affidavits were studied. Then the French ambassador asked for the floor.

"Mr. President," he said, "members of the cabinet and gentlemen—many of you know that my own government discussed this same problem yesterday. I am instructed, if the occasion should so determine, to make a certain request of you. I think the occasion does so determine. I request that you send immediately for the Soviet Ambassador."

No one was shocked or surprised by the suggestion. The Soviet Ambassador was sent for. He had evidently been waiting, for he arrived within minutes; and when he stated immediately that he would also represent the People's Republic of China or take his leave, the President of the United States suppressed a smile and nodded. He was given a precis and a copy of the affidavit, and after he had read both, the meeting began. It went on until three o'clock on Wednesday morning, during which time thirty-two technical specialists arrived, gave opinion or testimony, and departed. Then the meeting was suspended for five hours—and came together again with the representatives of India, China, Great Britain, Italy and Germany in attendance. At six o'clock Wednesday evening, the meeting was adjourned, and the following day an extraordinary session of the Assembly of the United Nations was called. By that time, Professor Goldman, with the assistance of Japanese, Chinese and Russian philologists, had completed a tentative translation of the film strip. Before this complete translation was published in the international press, it was made available to all delegates to the United Nations Assembly.

On Saturday, only a week after Detective Sergeant Bristol had forced the door of the Fifth Avenue shop, the Premier of India arose to address the Assembly of the United Nations.

"It is more than ironic," he said with some sadness, "that we who have been so savagely condemned by another planet, another culture and people, can find more than a little truth in the accusations. How close we have come, time and again, to accomplishing the destruction outlined by these people from outer space! And how unhappy it is to know that

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our own fitful dream of a peaceful future must be laid aside, perhaps forever! Shall it be some consolation that we must join hands to fight another enemy rather than each other? I pray so, for it is not without deep grief that my country lays aside the slim shield of neutrality it has clung to so desperately. Gentlemen, India is yours; its teeming millions will labor in the common defense of our mother earth. Its inadequate mills and mines are at the world's disposal, and I hope with all my heart that we have time to build more."

Then Russia spoke, then the United States. China and eight other countries were admitted to the United Nations without a veto; but this was only the beginning of a series of actions which led, within the month, to the creation of World Spaceways—an international plan for the building of four great space stations circling the earth, a mighty fleet of atomically powered space-ships, and the construction of a military defense base on the moon, under the control of the United Nations. A three-year plan for the defense of Earth was put into operation; and, as so few had anticipated, the beginnings of world government in terms of actual sovereign power, came with a comprehensive world general staff.

Within three months after Detective Sergeant Bristol's discovery, the first world code of law was drafted and presented to the General Assembly. The antiquated and rusting ships of the navies of earth, the discarded and useless artillery, the already archaic guided missiles, the laughable small arms—all of them bore witness to the beginning of world government.

And in less than a year, Culpepper Motors, one of the largest industrial complexes on earth, announced that they had duplicated the Martian outboard atomic motor. The people of earth laughed and flexed their arms. When they looked up at the sky, at the tiny red orb of Mars, it was with growing confidence and lessening fear.

For they had discovered a new name for themselves; they had discovered that they were a nation of mankind. It was a beginning—rough and fumbling and uneasy in many of its aspects, but nevertheless a beginning. And all over the earth, this *beginning* was celebrated in a variety of ways.

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At the home of Franklin Harwood Plummer, its eighty-three rooms nestled securely in the midst of an eleven hundred acre estate in New York's Putnam County, it was celebrated in a style befitting the place and circumstances. Mr. Plummer could and did give dinners that were large and important and unnoticed by the press—a fact not unrelated to his control of a great deal of the press, among other things. But even for his baronial halls, this evening's gathering was large and unique, three hundred and twenty-seven men and women, apart from Mr. Plummer himself and his eighteen colleagues who composed the Board of Directors of Culpepper Motors.

At fifty-eight, Mr. Plummer was President of Culpepper. Culpepper Motors had a net value of fifteen million dollars, a private industrial worth exceeded, in all the world, only by American Tel and Tel; but if one were to trace the interlocking and various influences of the nineteen board members, the question of worth became so large as to be meaningless. As the nominal lord of this giant enterprise, Mr. Plummer was best defined by his history. He had started, thirty-five years before, as a lathe operator in the old Lewett Shop, and he had fought and smashed and cut his way to the eventual top. In the recent history of America, there have been a few cases like his, but not more than you could count on the fingers of one hand.

Even in his own circles, he was not loved; feared and respected he was, but without family or university, he remained a strange, violent and unpredictable interloper. He was tall and broad and red-faced and white-haired; and as he stood at one end of the great dining room in his over-large and over-furnished home, he made reference to the fact that he did not even play golf. His three hundred and twenty-seven guests and his eighteen colleagues permitted themselves to smile slightly at that.

"No," Mr. Plummer continued, "no golf, no tennis, no sailing—I have been what most of you would call a preoccupied man, and my preoccupation has been the making of money. If I have ever laved my conscience with any sop, it was to recollect that single witty remark of a man who was otherwise remarkably humorless, Calvin Coolidge—who gave folk like myself grace by stating that the business of the United States was business."

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Mr. Plummer grinned. He had an infectious grin—the smile of a man who has made it beyond belief, who drives back to the old home town in a chrome-plated Cadillac.

"I enjoy making money," he said simply. "I am accused of lusting for power. Hogwash! I lust for a naked and nasty word—profit; always have and I always will. It embarrasses my eighteen colleagues, sitting here on either side of me, for me to be as blunt and ignoble as this; but I thank whatever gods may be that I have never been inhibited by breeding. I also make a double point. Firstly, the question of profit—I succeeded. Not only have I been able to insure and secure the future existence of Culpepper Motors; not only have I developed a situation where its profits will increase every year—perhaps double every five years, which makes our stock a pretty good investment for any of you—but I have been able to bring together under this roof as fine a collection of human beings as mankind can provide. I will not try to explain what that means to me—what it has meant to know and work with each of the three hundred and twenty-seven people here. I think you can guess.

"Secondly, I said what I said to ease the feelings of those among you who have cooperated in our enterprise and have been paid for their cooperation—as against those who would accept no pay. Those who have been paid may feel a certain guilt. To that I say—nonsense! No one does anything strictly for money; there are always other factors. I know. I went into this for dollars and cents—plain and simple, and so did my holier than God colleagues on my Board of Directors. We have all changed in the process. My colleagues can stop wishing me dead. I love them for what they are now. I did not love them for what they were when we began this enterprise two years ago.

"Sitting among you, there is one Jonas Wayne, of Fort Fayette, Kentucky. He is an old-fashioned blacksmith, and possibly the finest hand worker in metal in America. Our enterprise would have been more difficult, if not impossible, without him. Yet he would not take a dollar from me—not even for expenses. He is a God-fearing man, and he saw himself as doing God's work, not mine. Perhaps so. I don't know. At the same table with him is M. Orendell, the Ambassador of France. He is far from being a rich man, and his

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expenses have been paid. We have no secrets here. We live and die with our knowledge, as a unique fraternity. Professor Julius Goldman—would you please stand up, Professor—was, as you know, central to our whole scheme. If it was painless for him to decipher the Martian script, it was far from painless for him to devise it—a task that took more hours of work than the building of the motor. He would take no money—not because he is religious but because as he puts it, he is a scientist. Komo Aguchi, the physicist—he is at the table with Dr. Goldman, accepted one hundred thousand dollars, which he spent in an attempt to cure his wife, who is dying of cancer. Shall we judge him? Or shall we put cancer on the immediate agenda?

“And what of Detective Sergeant Tom Bristol? Is he an honest cop or a dishonest cop? He accepted four hundred shares of Culpepper Motors—a hundred for each of his children. He wants them to go to college, and they will. Miss Clementina Arden, possibly the finest decorator here or on Mars, charged us forty thousand dollars for her contribution to the decor. The price was reasonable. She is a hard-headed business woman, and if she does not look after herself, who will? Yet she has turned down other jobs. She didn’t turn down this one—

“Well, my good friends, ladies and gentlemen—we will not meet again, ever. My father, a working man all his life, once said that perhaps if I opened a store, even a small store, I would no longer have my life subject to the crazy whim of this boss or that. Maybe he was right. Finally, with your good help, I opened three stores. The total cost, if you are interested, was twenty-one million dollars, more or less—and a shrewd investment, I don’t mind saying. Culpepper Motors will add five times that sum to its profits over the next three months. And our three stores, I do believe, have accomplished a little something that wiser men have failed to do.

“That is all I have to say. Many of you may regret that no monuments will enshrine our work. I wish we could change that, but we can’t. For myself, I feel that when a man’s wealth reaches a certain point of large discomfort, he does better to remain out of the public’s eye. So guard our secret—not because you will be believed if you reveal it, but because you will be laughed at . . .”

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As time passed, the question arose as to the disposition of the one thing of value left by the "space merchants" as they came to be called—the solid gold letters. Finally, those from the Fifth Avenue shop were set in a glass display case at the United Nations. So visitors to the national museum of France or Japan—or to the United Nations, have always before them to remind them, in letters of gold:

### MARS PRODUCTS



# THE SIGHT OF EDEN

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They were in orbit, and it was over. They had crossed the void, leaped all the gaps of time and imagination, and bridged the unbridgeable, and they had been through the seven fires of hell. They were sane, although they had touched all the fringes of insanity. They could smile, although they had known all the profound depths of grief and suicidal profession; and they were alive, although they had flirted with all the varieties of death that boundless space can concoct.

They had come through fear and terror indescribable, and now they could speak about it and to each other. There were seven of them, three women and four men, and they had been locked away in this starship for five interminable years. They were light years from the Planet Earth beyond calculation; they had leaped their ship across the strange curves and tricks of space, played havoc with all the calculus and geometry known to men, and had flung themselves over the void to where the stars clustered thick as grapes on the autumn vines. They had done what they were ordained to do, and what no people from the Planet Earth had ever done before. And now they were in silent, flow-

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ing orbit over a planet as blue and green and lovely as the one they had left behind them.

It was something to think about and to crow about. It gave them a sense of themselves that was understandable. It made them look at each other in a certain way as they sat together in the wardroom. They had done it.

For that reason, all words that could be said to the point were pointless; in five years, all the words had been said; all the reactions had been tested; all the tears had been wept. Now there remained only the fact, and the fact was the planet beneath them, bathed in sunshine, washed with air, and laced with rivers and lakes and lagoons. It was the proof of the universe, all they had ventured their lives and sanity to prove, that life was not limited to the Planet Earth and the Solar System, but was a part of the logic of the universe. The fact was a planet slightly larger than Earth, perhaps of somewhat less density, with a breathable nitrogen-oxygen atmosphere, well-watered and with abundant plant life. Its revolution upon its axis was thirty-two hours; its year, as well as they could calculate, was four hundred and fifteen days. Its sun was a Sol-type sun, somewhat better than 900,000 miles in diameter and at this moment 112,000,576 miles from the planet it warmed. There were eleven other planets in the system; first this one, the other ten could wait.

Their own orbit time was five hours and sixteen minutes, and since they had gone into orbit to study the planet, their starship had made eight revolutions. This was their final meeting in the wardroom for comparative discussion. It would be a short meeting, and then they would descend.

## 2

Briggs, the pilot and as much the captain as anyone was captain upon the starship, looked from face to face and said, "Not very much left to talk about, unless someone can come up with a reason not to go down?"

"All the reasons," Frances Rhodes, the physician, nodded. "Bugs, germs, virus, radiation—and none of them hold water." She smiled—and she was lovely then, as they all were in the radiance of their accomplishment. "We'd go down if it was a leper colony, wouldn't we?"

They would have gone down if it were boiling lava under

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them, because they had endured all the confinement that is endurable and had felt all the nakedness of empty space that men can feel and remain sane.

"I'm not worried about bugs," Carrington, the agronomist, said. "Disease doesn't work that way. Not about radiation either. Something else."

Gene Ling, second navigator and Nobel Prize winner, nodded. She was a slender, gentle half-Chinese from San Francisco. "Yes, something else," she said. "No oceans."

"No deserts either," said Carrington.

"No lights in the cities at night," said Gluckman, the engineer.

"If they are cities," McCaffery, the navigator.

"The nights are full of starlight," Briggs thought. "Perhaps they sleep at night. It must be different. Why do we forget how different it must be?"

"They must see us," said Laura Shawn, the biologist. "Why don't they call to us, signal us, come up to us?"

"They?"

"In the scopes, it looks like fairyland," Phillips, 2nd engineer, observed self-consciously. "I don't like that."

"Where was your childhood, Phillips?"

"I don't like it."

"Arms?" Gluckman wanted to know.

"I suppose so," said Briggs uneasily. "Sidearms anyway."

"In fairyland?" Laura Shawn smiled.

But it wasn't as light and pleasant as it seemed, and if it went on this way, Briggs realized, it could top a note of hysteria. They were clinging to reality with a thin hold, and the meeting was pointless and becoming too long.

"We go down now," Briggs said. "Go to your stations."

They were relieved, and they didn't want to talk about it. They went to their stations, and the starship slid down its electro-magnetic web until it rode its anti-gravatic tensors a foot above the planet's surface. Then they opened their airlocks and went out.

The air was sweet as honey. Where the sun shone, it was warm and beneficent and in the shade it was seventy degrees Fahrenheit. They had landed upon a broad meadow,

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half a thousand acres of meadow where the green grass was cropped an inch high; but when they examined it, they saw that it bent upon itself and controlled and conditioned itself. Through the meadow, winding lazily, a little river took its way, and the banks of the river were lined with a million flowers of red and blue and yellow and every other color. Bees hummed among the flowers and the air was full of their fragrance, and here and there about the meadow was a tree heavy with blue or golden fruit. About a half a mile down the river, a filigree bridge crossed it.

They had been five years in the starship, so at first they just stood and looked and breathed the air. Then some of them sat down on the grass. They all wept a little; that was to be expected. If they had faced danger or horror or the unbelievable, their reaction would have been different. It was the beauty and the peace, almost unendurable, that made them weep. They felt better when they had discharged some of their emotion.

They walked around a little, but mostly they sprawled on the grass and listened to the soft breeze blowing. No one said anything and no one wanted to say anything. A half hour went by, and Briggs said,

"We can't just stay here."

"Why not?" Laura Shawn wanted to know.

They were all thinking, as Briggs also thought, that it was a dream or an illusion or that they were dead. It was a bubble that could burst, they were thinking; and Briggs said,

"Gluckman and Phillips—go into the ship and follow us!"

Then the other five set out on foot, with the great, shining starship sliding behind them on its magnetic web. They walked to the filigree bridge, which seemed to be made of crystal lace, and they crossed the river. A little road or pathway, full of dancing light and color, led up over the brow of a low hill. On the other side of the hill was a garden and in the center of the garden a building that was like a castle in fairyland or a dream, or the laughter of children, if a building can be like the laughter of children.

If the building was like the laughter of children, then the garden was like all the dreams that city children ever dreamed about a garden. It was about a mile square, and as Briggs led them on a winding path through it, it appeared to open endless arms of delight and wonder. There were the

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fountains. Golden water from one, pink water from another, green water from a third, a rainbow of colors from a fourth—and there were hundreds of fountains, ornamented with dancing, laughing children carved out of stone of as many different shades as the water showed. There were nooks and corners of secret delight. There were benches to rest on that were marvels of beauty and comfort. There were hedges of green and yellow and blue. There were beds of flowers and bold beautiful birds, and there were drinking fountains to quench the thirst of those who used the garden.

Gene Ling bent to drink at one of these. They watched her, but they didn't try to stop her.

"It's water," she said. "Clean and cold."

Then they all drank. They didn't care. Their defenses were crumbling too quickly.

Gluckman brought the starship to rest in front of the building, and all seven of them went inside together. As they entered, music began, and they stopped nervously.

"It's automatic," McCaffery guessed. "Body relay or photo electric."

Their momentary nerves could not contend against the music—an outpouring of sound that vibrated with welcome and assurance and sheer delight—that filled them with a sense of innocence and purity. Wherever they went in the building, the music was with them. They went into an auditorium large enough to hold a thousand people, but empty, and with a great silver screen at one end. They wandered along empty corridors, lined with colorful and masterful murals of naked children at play. They looked into rooms full of couches, where the music made them drowsy almost immediately, and there were other rooms that were dining rooms, play rooms, classrooms—all recognizable and all different. In each case, they sensed that this was how it should be, and in each case, the memories of earth which they used for comparison became crude and senseless and ugly.

They left the building and went back to the starship.

With its viewplates open, the starship moved across the planet's surface, a hundred feet above the ground. They saw gardens as beautiful and more beautiful than the one they

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had been in. They saw forests of old and splendid trees, with colored paths among the trees. They saw mighty amphitheatres that could seat a hundred thousand people and smaller ones too. Buildings of glass and alabaster, pink stone and violet stone, green crystal. They saw groups of buildings that reminded them of the Acropolis of ancient Athens, if the Athenians had but a thousand years more to work and plan for some ultimate beauty. They saw lakes where boats were moored to docks, ready for use, but small boats, pleasure boats. They saw bathing pavilions—or so they surmised—playing fields, arbors, bowers,—every structure for beauty and delight that they had ever imagined and a thousand that they had never imagined.

But nowhere did they see a living man, woman or child.

### 5

After nightfall, after they had eaten, they sat and talked. Their talk went in circles, and it was full of fear and speculation. They had come too far; space had enveloped them, and although their starship hung a thousand feet in the air above a planet as large as the Planet Earth, they felt that they had passed across the edge of nowhere.

"Just suppose," Carrington said, "that all our dreams had taken shape."

"All the memories and wishes of our childhoods," said Frances Rhodes.

"Taken shape," Carrington repeated. "Who knows what the fabric of space is or what it does?"

"It does strange things," Gene Ling, the physicist, agreed.

"Or what thought is," Carrington persisted. "A planet like this one—it's a fairy land—it's the stuff of dreams—all the dreams we brought with us from home, all the longings and desires, and out of our thoughts it was shaped."

"Who was it said, we will make the earth like a garden?"

"Oh, I don't buy any of that," Briggs said, more harshly than was called for, because he found himself leaning toward the madness of their theories. "I don't buy it one bit! It's metaphysical bosh, and you're all falling for it. You don't think a planet into existence."

"How do you know?" Laura Shawn asked dreamily.

"How do I know? I know. I know the fact and the sub-

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stance of dreams and the fact and the substance of matter, and the two are different!"

"And we trap a curve of space and go from tomorrow into yesterday—is that real?" asked Gene Ling.

"This planet is real," Briggs insisted.

"Without people?"

"Or cities?"

"Industry? You don't spin palaces out of thin air—or do you, Briggs? Where is the industry?"

"Who cultivates it?" Carrington, an agronomist and in mental agony over this. "Who tends a million flower beds? Who fertilizes it? Who plants? Who crops the hedges?"

"And who paints the murals of earth children? And who carves the statues of earth children?"

"Why must they be earth children?" Briggs said slowly and doggedly. "Why must man be a freak of the earth, an accident on one planet out of a billion? Is the sun an accident?"

Carrington said, "I could swear by all we believe in that those flower beds were tended yesterday. Where are the people today?"

"If there is any today—"

"Enough of that," Briggs snapped. "We've seen only a tiny corner of this world. Tomorrow, we'll see more of it. Eight hours sleep won't hurt any of us, and maybe it'll clear some of the metaphysical cobwebs away."

Tomorrow came, and at the speed of five hundred miles an hour, the starship raced across the planet, a thousand feet high. They sat at the viewplates, and looked at gardens and lakes and golden, winding rivers, and palaces and all the joyous beauty that man had ever imagined and so much that he had never imagined. They watched it until it became unbearable in its glowing abundance, and then the sun set. But they saw no people. The world was empty.

That night, they talked again; and when they had talked themselves close to the edge of madness, Briggs ordered them to silence and sleep. But he knew that he was not too far from the edge of madness himself.

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of a lake, whose shores were marked with pleasure houses and dream places. They could think of no other names for the buildings. Phillips and Gluckman remained with the ship; Briggs led the others down to a dock that appeared to be carved out of alabaster, and he selected a boat moored there large enough to hold them all. As they took their places in the boat, it stirred to life with the strange, haunting music of the planet, and the music washed away their fears and their cares, and Briggs saw that they were smiling at some inner fulfillment.

"We could remain here," Laura Shawn said lazily.

Briggs knew what she meant. Five years in the starship had merged all their secrets, all their memories. Laura Shawn was a product of poverty, unhappiness, and finally divorce. Her scientific triumphs had left a string of emotional defeats behind her. She had never been happy before, and Briggs wondered whether any of them had. Yet they were happy now—and he himself, too, for all of his struggle to preserve in himself a fortress of skepticism and wary doubt. Doubt was an anathema in this place.

The boat had a wheel and a lever. The lever gave it motion; the wheel steered it. There was no sign of a propeller; it glided through the water by its own inner force; but this was not disturbing since their own starship rode the waves and currents of magnetism and force that pervaded the universe. So it was, Briggs thought to himself, with all the mysteries and wonders that man had faced from his very beginning; they were miracles and beyond explanation until man discovered the reason, and then in the simplicity and self-evidence of the reason, he could smile at his former fear and superstition. Was this planet any more wonderful or puzzling than the web of force that held the universe in place and order? And when the explanation came, if it ever did, he was certain it would be simple and even obvious.

Meanwhile, he steered the boat across the lake, and as they skirted the shore, building after building welcomed them with music and invited them to its own particular pleasure. He ran the boat through a canal bordered with great, flower-bearing trees, into another lake, where the water was so clear and pure that they could see all the gold and red and purple rocks on the bottom and watch gold and silver fish swimming and darting here and there. Then

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they entered a winding river, placid and lovely and bucolic, and they had gone a mile or so along this river, when they saw the man.

He stood on a landing place of pink, translucent stone, where there were a circle of carved benches, and he waved to them, almost casually. "Did we also think him into being?" Briggs asked caustically, as he turned the boat toward the dock. They rode to the mooring, and the man helped them out of the boat onto the steps that led up to the dock. He was a tall, well-built man, smiling and pleasant, his brown hair cut in the page-boy style of the olden times on earth. He was of an indeterminate middle age, and he wore a robe of some light blue material, belted at the waist.

"Please—join me and make yourselves comfortable," he said to them, his voice warm and rich and his English without an accent. "I am sorry for these three days of bewilderment, but there were things I had to do. Now, if you will sit down here, we can relax for a while and talk about some problems we have in common."

His four companions were speechless; as for Briggs, he could only say, "Well, I'll be damned!"

### 7

"Call me Smith," he said. "I don't have a name in your sense of the word. Smith will make it easier for you. No, you're not dreaming. I am real. You are real. The place we are in is real. There is no reason for fear, believe me. Please sit down."

They sat down on the translucent benches. He answered the thought in their minds,

"No, I am not an Earth Man. Only a man."

"Then you read our minds?" Frances Rhodes wondered, not speaking aloud.

"I read your minds," Smith nodded. "That is one reason why I talk your language so easily."

"And the other reason?" McCaffery was thinking.

"We've listened to your radio signals many years—a great many years. I'm a student of English."

"And this planet," Briggs whispered. "Do you live here, alone?"

"No one lives here," Smith smiled, "except the custodians.

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And when we knew you would land here, we asked them to leave for a little while."

"In God's name," Carrington cried, "what is this place?"

"Only what it appears to be." Smith smiled and shook his head. "No mystery, believe me. What does it appear to be?"

"A garden," Laura Shawn said slowly, "the garden of all my dreams."

"Then you dream well, Miss Shawn," Smith nodded. "You have places like this on your planet, parks, playgrounds. This is a park, a playground for children. That's why no one lives here. It's a place for children to come to and play and learn a little about life and beauty—you see, in our culture, the two are not separate."

"What children?"

"The children of the Galaxy," Smith nodded, waving a hand toward the sky. "There are a great many children—a great many playgrounds and parks, not unlike this one. Today, it is empty—tomorrow, five million children—they come and they go, even as they do in your own parks—"

"Our own parks," Briggs was thinking bitterly.

"No, I am not sneering, Pilot Briggs. I am trying to answer your questions and your thoughts—and to connect these things with what you know and understand."

"You're telling us that the Galaxy is inhabited—by men?"

"Why not by men? Can you really believe that man is an accident on one planet in a billion? Wherever there is life, in time man appears—and he lives now on more than half a million planets—in our galaxy alone. And he makes places like this place for his children."

"And who are you?" Carrington said. "And why are you here alone?"

"How would you think of me?" Smith wondered. "We don't have government in your terms. We don't have nations. I could call myself an administrator—we have a good many. And I was sent here to meet you and talk to you. We have been watching you for a long time, tracing you—we've watched the earth too, for a long time."

"Talk to us—" Frances Rhodes said softly.

"Yes."

"About what?" Briggs demanded.

"About your sickness," Smith replied sadly.

An hour had passed. They sat silently, looking at Smith, and he watched them, and then Briggs said,

"For heaven's sake, don't pity us. We don't ask for pity—not from you or any of your breed of supermen."

"Not pity," Smith told them. "We don't have pity—it's a part of yourselves, not of us. Sorrow is a better word."

"Spare us that too," said Gene Ling.

Carrington refused to allow anger or impatience to disturb his own reasoning. He felt a compulsion to demonstrate to Smith that he could reason dispassionately, and he said quietly and firmly,

"You see, Smith—you ask a great deal when you ask us for an admission of our own insanity. You pointed out, quite properly, I think, that we were egotistical and unscientific to believe that man was limited by nature to one obscure planet on the edge of the Galaxy. I hold that it is just as unscientific for you to claim that of all the races of man on all the planets, only the people of Earth are mentally sick, emotionally unstable—yes, insane, the one word you were kind enough not to use—"

"Carrington, you're wasting your time," Briggs said sourly. "He can read our thoughts—all of them."

"Which doesn't change any of my arguments," Carrington said to Smith. "You mention our wars, our history of mass slaughter, our use of atomic weapons, our record of murdering and destroying each other—but these are the particulars and the wasteful errors of our development—"

"They are the specifics of your development," Smith nodded reluctantly. "I hate to repeat that no other race of man in all the universe pursue murder as his major occupation and force of development—yet I must. Only on Earth—"

"But we are not all murderers," Frances Rhodes protested. "I am a physician. If you know Earth so well, you know the history of medicine and healing on Earth."

"A physician who carries a gun in a holster at her side," Smith shrugged.

"For my protection only!" she cried.

"Protection? Against whom, Miss Rhodes?"

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"We didn't know—"

"I'm sorry," Smith sighed. "I'm sorry."

"I told you it's no use," Briggs snapped. "He reads our thoughts. He knows. God help us, he knows!"

"Yes, I know," Smith agreed.

"Then you must know that people like ourselves are not murderers," Carrington persisted, his voice still calm and controlled. "We are scientists. We are civilized people. You speak of how we are ridden with superstition, with gargantuan lies, with a love of the obscene and the monstrous. You mention half a billion Earth people who vocalize Christianity while none of them practice it. You talk about the millions we have slain in the name of freedom, brotherhood and God. You talk of our greed, our meanness, our perversion of love and sex and beauty—don't you realize that we know these things, that our best and bravest have struggled against them for ages?"

"I realize that," Smith nodded.

"He reads our thoughts," Briggs repeated stubbornly.

"We are scientists," Carrington continued. "We built this starship that brought us here. We lay in its hull for five endless years—that the frontiers of space might be conquered. And now, when we discover a universe of men—men talented and wonderful beyond all our dreams and imaginings, you tell us that this is barred to us forever—that we must live and die on our own speck of dust—"

"Yes, I am afraid it must be that way," Smith agreed.

"Everything but pity," said Laura Shawn.

Smith opened his robe, let it slip off his body to the ground, and stood before them naked. The women instinctively turned their heads away. The men reacted in shocked disbelief. Smith picked up his robe and clothed himself again.

"You see," he said.

The five men and women stared at him, their eyes full of realization now.

"In all the universe," Smith said, "there is only one race of man that holds its bodies in shame and contempt. All others walk naked in pride and unashamed. Only Earth has made the image of man into a curse and a shame. What else must I say?"

## *The Sight of Eden*

"Do you intend to destroy us?" Briggs asked harshly.

Smith looked at him with regret. "We don't destroy, Briggs. We don't kill."

"What then?"

"You have something we don't have," Smith said softly, gently. "We had no need of it, but you had to create it—otherwise you would have perished in your sickness. You know what it is."

"Conscience," Gene Ling whispered.

"Yes—conscience. It will help. Go back to your starship and plot your course for home. And then you must make the decision to forget. When you make that decision, we will help you—"

"If we make it," Briggs said.

"If you make it," Smith agreed.

"Hold out some hope," Laura Shawn begged him. "Don't send us away like this. We came across—we were the first—"

"You weren't the first," Smith said, the sadness in his voice unbearable. "There were others from Earth, but each time they destroyed each other and the knowledge too. You weren't the first and you won't be the last—"

"Can we hope?" Laura Shawn pleaded.

"All men hope," Smith said. "More than that—I don't know."

## 9

The starship circled the beautiful planet, and the seven people of Earth sat in the wardroom. Gluckman and Phillips had been told of the encounter, and by now they had all discussed it into silence and weariness. Only Briggs had said nothing—until now, and now he said,

"Why can't we remember that he reads our thoughts? He knew."

"I'm selfish," Laura Shawn whispered through her tears. "It is easier to give up all it might mean to mankind than to give up my own memories."

"Of three days of childhood?" Briggs said bitterly. "To hell with that! To hell with his damned utopia! To hell with the stars! We'll make an atmosphere on Mars and drain the poison gas from Venus! To hell with him and his gar-

## *The Edge of Tomorrow*

dens! We have a job of work! So set your stinking course for home, McCaffery—and the rest of you to bed. There's another day tomorrow!"

That was the virtue of Briggs; for he more than any of them knew how right Smith was, and he wept his own tears into his pillow for hours before sleep came. In the morning, he was better. By then, the starship had flung itself a hundred million miles in the direction of home, and that gave Briggs a good feeling.

Like the others, he remembered only a wasteland of burning suns, and in all the galaxy, no other planets than those of the Solar System. Like the others, he knew that he was returning to a place unique and precious in its singularity—Earth, the sole habitat of man.

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