An Anthology of Brand New SF Stories

ORBIT 6

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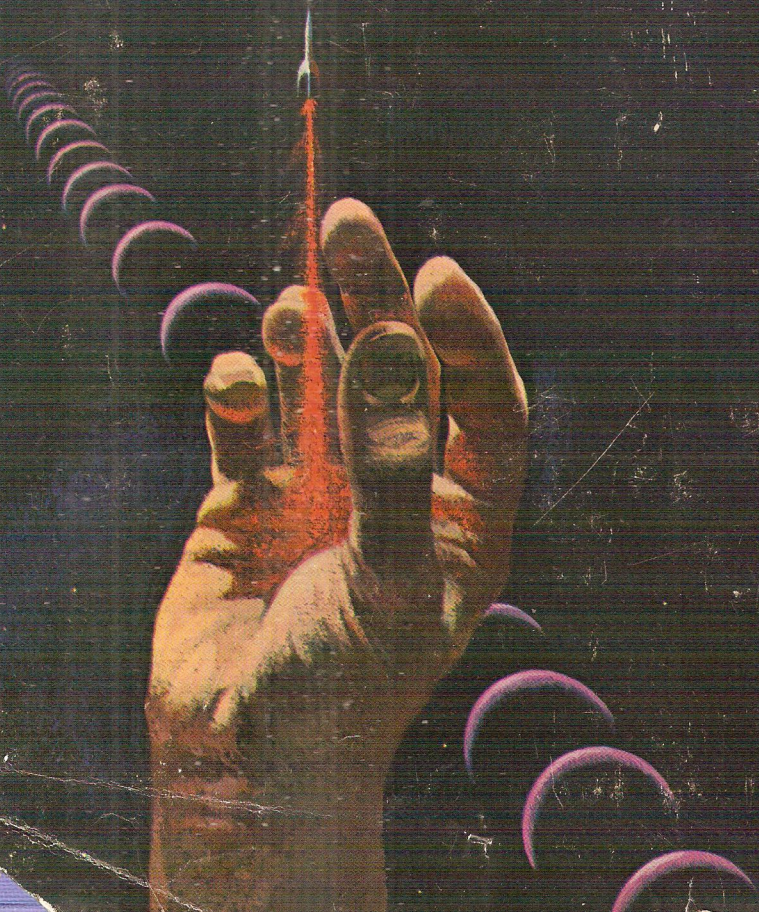

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ORBIT 6

An Anthology of New Science Fiction Stories

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The Second Inquisition

by Joanna Russ

If a man can resist the influences of his townsfolk, if he can cut free from the tyranny of neighborhood gossip, the world has no terrors for him; there is no second inquisition.

—John Jay Chapman

I often watched our visitor reading in the living room, sitting under the floor lamp near the new, standing Philco radio, with her long, long legs stretched out in front of her and the pool of light on her book revealing so little of her face: brownish, coppery features so marked that she seemed to be a kind of freak and hair that was reddish black but so rough that it looked like the things my mother used for scouring pots and pans. She read a great deal, that summer. If I ventured out of the archway, where I was not exactly hiding but only keeping in the shadow to watch her read, she would often raise her face and smile silently at me before beginning to read again, and her skin would take on an abrupt, surprising pallor as it moved into the light. When she got up and went into the kitchen with the gracefulness of a stork, for something to eat, she was almost too tall for the doorways; she went on legs like a spider's, with long swinging arms and a little body in the middle, the strange proportions of the very tall. She

looked down at my mother's plates and dishes from a great, gentle height, remarkably absorbed; and asking me a few odd questions, she would bend down over whatever she was going to eat, meditate on it for a few moments like a giraffe, and then straightening up back into the stratosphere, she would pick up the plate in one thin hand, curling around it fingers like legs, and go back gracefully into the living room. She would lower herself into the chair that was always too small, curl her legs around it, become dissatisfied, settle herself, stretch them out again —I remember so well those long, hard, unladylike legs—and begin again to read.

She used to ask, "What is that? What is that? And what is this?" but that was only at first.

My mother, who disliked her, said she was from the circus and we ought to try to understand and be kind. My father made jokes. He did not like big women or short hair—which was still new in places like ours—or women who read, although she was interested in his carpentry and he liked that.

But she was six feet four inches tall; this was in 1925.

My father was an accountant who built furniture as a hobby; we had a gas stove which he actually fixed once when it broke down and some outdoor tables and chairs he had built in the back yard. Before our visitor came on the train for her vacation with us, I used to spend all my time in the back yard, being underfoot, but once we had met her at the station and she shook hands with my father—I think she hurt him when she shook hands—I would watch her read and wish that she might talk to me.

She said: "You are finishing high school?"

I was in the archway, as usual; I answered yes.

She looked up at me again, then down at her book. She said, "This is a very bad book." I said nothing. Without looking up, she tapped one finger on the shabby hassock

on which she had put her feet. Then she looked up and smiled at me. I stepped tentatively from the floor to the rug, as reluctantly as if I were crossing the Sahara; she swung her feet away and I sat down. At close view her face looked as if every race in the world had been mixed and only the worst of each kept; an American Indian might look like that, or Ikhnaton from the encyclopedia, or a Swedish African, a Maori princess with the jaw of a Slav. It occurred to me suddenly that she might be a Negro, but no one else had ever seemed to think so, possibly because nobody in our town had ever seen a Negro. We had none. They were "colored people."

She said, "You are not pretty, yes?"

I got up. I said, "My father thinks you're a freak."

"You are sixteen," she said, "sit down," and I sat down. I crossed my arms over my breasts because they were too big, like balloons. Then she said, "I am reading a very stupid book. You will take it away from me, yes?"

"No," I said.

"You must," she said, "or it will poison me, sure as God," and from her lap she plucked up *The Green Hat: A Romance*, gold letters on green binding, last year's best-seller which I had had to swear never to read, and she held it out to me, leaning back in her chair with that long arm doing all the work, the book enclosed in a cage of fingers wrapped completely around it. I think she could have put those fingers around a basketball. I did not take it.

"Go on," she said, "read it, go on, go away," and I found myself back at the archway, by the foot of the stairs with *The Green Hat: A Romance* in my hand. I turned it so the title was hidden. She was smiling at me and had her arms folded back under her head. "Don't worry," she said. "Your body will be in fashion by the time of the next war." I met my mother at the top of the stairs and had to hide the book from her; my mother said, "Oh, the poor

woman!" She was carrying some sheets. I went to my room and read through almost the whole night, hiding the book in the bedclothes when I was through. When I slept, I dreamt of Hispano-Suizas, of shingled hair and tragic eyes; of women with painted lips who had Affairs, who went night after night with Jews to low dives, who lived as they pleased, who had miscarriages in expensive Swiss clinics; of midnight swims, of desperation, of money, of illicit love, of a beautiful Englishman and getting into a taxi with him while wearing a cloth-of-silver cloak and a silver turban like the ones shown in the society pages of the New York City newspapers.

Unfortunately our guest's face kept recurring in my dream, and because I could not make out whether she was amused or bitter or very much of both, it really spoiled everything.

My mother discovered the book the next morning. I found it next to my plate at breakfast. Neither my mother nor my father made any remark about it; only my mother kept putting out the breakfast things with a kind of tender, reluctant smile. We all sat down, finally, when she had put out everything, and my father helped me to rolls and eggs and jam. Then he took off his glasses and folded them next to his plate. He leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs. Then he looked at the book and said in a tone of mock surprise, "Well! What's this?"

I didn't say anything. I only looked at my plate.

"I believe I've seen this before," he said. "Yes, I believe I have." Then he asked my mother, "Have you seen this before?" My mother made a kind of vague movement with her head. She had begun to butter some toast and was putting it on my plate. I knew she was not supposed to discipline me; only my father was. "Eat your egg," she said. My father, who had continued to look at *The Green*

Hat: A Romance with the same expression of unvarying surprise, finally said:

"Well! This isn't a very pleasant thing to find on a Saturday morning, is it?"

I still didn't say anything, only looked at my food. I heard my mother say worriedly, "She's not eating, Ben," and my father put his hand on the back of my chair so I couldn't push it away from the table, as I was trying to do.

"Of course you have an explanation for this," he said. "Don't you?"

I said nothing.

"Of course she does," he said, "doesn't she, Bess? You wouldn't hurt your mother like this. You wouldn't hurt your mother by stealing a book that you knew you weren't supposed to read and for very good reason, too. You know we don't punish you. We talk things over with you. We try to explain. Don't we?"

I nodded.

"Good," he said. "Then where did this book come from?"

I muttered something; I don't know what.

"Is my daughter angry?" said my father. "Is my daughter *being rebellious?*"

"She told you all about it!" I blurted out. My father's face turned red.

"Don't you dare talk about your mother that way!" he shouted, standing up. "Don't you *dare* refer to your mother in that way!"

"Now, Ben—" said my mother.

"Your mother is the soul of unselfishness," said my father, "and don't you forget it, missy; your mother has worried about you since the day you were born and if you don't appreciate that, you can damn well—"

"Ben!" said my mother, shocked.

"I'm sorry," I said, and then I said, "I'm very sorry,

Mother." My father sat down. My father had a mustache and his hair was parted in the middle and slicked down; now one lock fell over the part in front and his whole face was gray and quivering. He was staring fixedly at his coffee cup. My mother came over and poured coffee for him; then she took the coffeepot into the kitchen and when she came back she had milk for me. She put the glass of milk on the table near my plate. Then she sat down again. She smiled tremblingly at my father; then she put her hand over mine on the table and said:

"Darling, why did you read that book?"

"Well?" said my father from across the table.

There was a moment's silence. Then:

"Good morning!"

and

"Good morning!"

and

"Good morning!"

said our guest cheerfully, crossing the dining room in two strides, and folding herself carefully down into her breakfast chair, from where her knees stuck out, she reached across the table, picked up *The Green Hat,* propped it up next her plate and began to read it with great absorption. Then she looked up. "You have a very progressive library," she said. "I took the liberty of recommending this exciting book to your daughter. You told me it was your favorite. You sent all the way to New York City on purpose for it, yes?"

"I don't–I quite–" said my mother, pushing back her chair from the table. My mother was trembling from head to foot and her face was set in an expression of fixed distaste. Our visitor regarded first my mother and then my father, bending over them tenderly and with exquisite interest. She said:

"I hope you do not mind my using your library."

"No no no," muttered my father.

"I eat almost for two," said our visitor modestly, "because of my height. I hope you do not mind that?"

"No, of course not," said my father, regaining control of himself.

"Good. It is all considered in the bill," said the visitor, and looking about at my shrunken parents, each hurried, each spooning in the food and avoiding her gaze, she added deliberately:

"I took also another liberty. I removed from the endpapers certain—ah—drawings that I did not think bore any relation to the text. You do not mind?"

And as my father and mother looked in shocked surprise and utter consternation—at each other—she said to me in a low voice, "Don't eat. You'll make yourself sick," and then smiled warmly at the two of them when my mother went off into the kitchen and my father remembered he was late for work. She waved at them. I jumped up as soon as they were out of the room.

"There were no drawings in that book!" I whispered.

"Then we must make some," said she, and taking a pencil off the whatnot, she drew in the endpapers of the book a series of sketches: the heroine sipping a soda in an ice-cream parlor, showing her legs and very chic; in a sloppy bathing suit and big grin, holding up a large fish; driving her Hispano-Suiza into a tree only to be catapulted straight up into the air; and in the last sketch landing demure and coy in the arms of the hero, who looked violently surprised. Then she drew a white mouse putting on lipstick, getting married to another white mouse in a church, the two entangled in some manner I thought I should not look at, the lady mouse with a big belly and two little mice inside (who were playing chess), then the little mice coming out in separate envelopes and finally the whole family having a picnic, with some things around the

picnic basket that I did not recognize and underneath in capital letters "I did not bring up my children to test cigarettes." This left me blank. She laughed and rubbed it out, saying that it was out of date. Then she drew a white mouse with a rolled-up umbrella chasing my mother. I picked that up and looked at it for a while; then I tore it into pieces, and tore the others into pieces as well. I said, "I don't think you have the slightest right to—" and stopped. She was looking at me with—not anger exactly—not warning exactly—I found I had to sit down. I began to cry.

"Ah! The results of practical psychology," she said dryly, gathering up the pieces of her sketches. She took matches off the whatnot and set fire to the pieces in a saucer. She held up the smoking match between her thumb and forefinger, saying, "You see? The finger is—shall we say, perception?—but the thumb is money. The thumb is hard."

"You oughtn't to treat my parents that way!" I said, crying.

"You ought not to tear up my sketches," she said calmly.

"Why not! Why not!" I shouted.

"Because they are worth money," she said, "in some quarters. I won't draw you any more," and indifferently taking the saucer with the ashes in it in one palm, she went into the kitchen. I heard her voice and then my mother's, and then my mother's again, and then our visitor's in a tone that would've made a rock weep, but I never found out what they said.

I passed our guest's room many times at night that summer, going in by the hall past her rented room where the second-floor windows gave out onto the dark garden.

The electric lights were always on brilliantly. My mother had sewn the white curtains because she did everything like that and had bought the furniture at a sale: a marble-topped bureau, the wardrobe, the iron bedstead, an old Victrola against the wall. There was usually an open book on the bed. I would stand in the shadow of the open doorway and look across the bare wood floor, too much of it and all as slippery as the sea, bare wood waxed and shining in the electric light. A black dress hung on the front of the wardrobe and a pair of shoes like my mother's, T-strap shoes with thick heels. I used to wonder if she had silver evening slippers inside the wardrobe. Sometimes the open book on the bed was Wells's *The Time Machine* and then I would talk to the black glass of the window, I would say to the transparent reflections and the black branches of trees that moved beyond it:

"I'm only sixteen."

"You look eighteen," she would say.

"I know," I would say. "I'd like to be eighteen. I'd like to go away to college. To Radcliffe, I think."

She would say nothing, out of surprise.

"Are you reading Wells?" I would say then, leaning against the door jamb. "I think that's funny. Nobody in this town reads anything; they just think about social life. I read a lot, however. I would like to learn a great deal."

She would smile then, across the room.

"I did something funny once," I would go on. "I mean funny ha-ha, not funny peculiar." It was a real line, very popular. "I read *The Time Machine* and then I went around asking people were they Eloi or were they Morlocks; everyone liked it. The point is which you would be if you could, like being an optimist or a pessimist or do you like bobbed hair." Then I would add, "Which are you?" and she would only shrug and smile a little more. She

would prop her chin on one long, long hand and look into my eyes with her black Egyptian eyes and then she would say in her curious hoarse voice:

"It is you who must say it first."

"I think," I would say, "that you are a Morlock," and sitting on the bed in my mother's rented room with *The Time Machine* open beside her, she would say:

"You are exactly right. I am a Morlock. I am a Morlock on vacation. I have come from the last Morlock meeting, which is held out between the stars in a big goldfish bowl, so all the Morlocks have to cling to the inside walls like a flock of black bats, some right side up, some upside down, for there is no up and down there, clinging like a flock of black crows, like a chestnut burr turned inside out. There are half a thousand Morlocks and we rule the worlds. My black uniform is in the wardrobe."

"I knew I was right," I would say.

"You are always right," she would say, "and you know the rest of it, too. You know what murderers we are and how terribly we live. We are waiting for the big bang when everything falls over and even the Morlocks will be destroyed; meanwhile I stay here waiting for the signal and I leave messages clipped to the frame of your mother's amateur oil painting of Main Street because it will be in a museum some day and my friends can find it; meanwhile I read *The Time Machine.*"

Then I would say, "Can I come with you?" leaning against the door.

"Without you," she would say gravely, "all is lost," and taking out from the wardrobe a black dress glittering with stars and a pair of silver sandals with high heels, she would say, "These are yours. They were my great-grandmother's, who founded the Order. In the name of Trans-Temporal Military Authority." And I would put them on.

It was almost a pity she was not really there.

Every year in the middle of August the Country Club gave a dance, not just for the rich families who were members but also for the "nice" people who lived in frame houses in town and even for some of the smart, economical young couples who lived in apartments, just as if they had been in the city. There was one new, red-brick apartment building downtown, four stories high, with a courtyard. We were supposed to go, because I was old enough that year, but the day before the dance my father became ill with pains in his left side and my mother had to stay home to take care of him. He was propped up on pillows on the living-room daybed, which we had pulled out into the room so he could watch what my mother was doing with the garden out back and call to her once in a while through the windows. He could also see the walk leading up to the front door. He kept insisting that she was doing things all wrong. I did not even ask if I could go to the dance alone. My father said:

"Why don't you go out and help your mother?"

"She doesn't want me to," I said. "I'm supposed to stay here," and then he shouted angrily, "Bess! Bess!" and began to give her instructions through the window. I saw another pair of hands appear in the window next to my mother's and then our guest—squatting back on her heels and smoking a cigarette—pulling up weeds. She was working quickly and efficiently, the cigarette between her teeth. "No, not that way!" shouted my father, pulling on the blanket that my mother had put over him. "Don't you know what you're doing! Bess, you're ruining everything! Stop it! Do it right!" My mother looked bewildered and upset; she passed out of the window and our visitor took her place; she waved to my father and he subsided, pulling the blanket up around his neck. "I don't like women who

smoke," he muttered irritably. I slipped out through the kitchen.

My father's toolshed and working space took up the farther half of the back yard; the garden was spread over the nearer half, part kitchen garden, part flowers, and then extended down either side of the house where we had fifteen feet or so of space before a white slat fence and the next people's side yard. It was an on-and-offish garden, and the house was beginning to need paint. My mother was working in the kitchen garden, kneeling. Our guest was standing, pruning the lilac trees, still smoking. I said:

"Mother, can't I go, can't I *go!*" in a low voice.

My mother passed her hand over her forehead and called "Yes, Ben!" to my father.

"Why *can't* I go!" I whispered. "Ruth's mother and Betty's mother will be there. Why couldn't you call Ruth's mother and Betty's mother?"

"Not that way!" came a blast from the living-room window. My mother sighed briefly and then smiled a cheerful smile. "Yes, Ben!" she called brightly. "I'm listening." My father began to give some more instructions.

"Mother," I said desperately, "why couldn't you—"

"Your father wouldn't approve," she said, and again she produced a bright smile and called encouragingly to my father. I wandered over to the lilac trees where our visitor, in her usual nondescript black dress, was piling the dead wood under the tree. She took a last puff on her cigarette, holding it between thumb and forefinger, then ground it out in the grass and picked up in both arms the entire lot of dead wood. She carried it over to the fence and dumped it.

"My father says you shouldn't prune trees in August," I blurted suddenly.

"Oh?" she said.

"It hurts them," I whispered.

"Oh," she said. She had on gardening gloves, though much too small; she picked up the pruning shears and began snipping again through inch-thick trunks and dead branches that snapped explosively when they broke and whipped out at your face. She was efficient and very quick.

I said nothing at all, only watched her face.

She shook her head decisively.

"But Ruth's mother and Betty's mother—" I began, faltering.

"I never go out," she said.

"You needn't stay," I said, placating.

"Never," she said. "Never at all," and snapping free a particularly large, dead, silvery branch from the lilac tree, she put it in my arms. She stood there looking at me and her look was suddenly very severe, very unpleasant, something foreign, like the look of somebody who had seen people go off to battle to die, the "movies" look but hard, hard as nails. I knew I wouldn't get to go anywhere. I thought she might have seen battles in the Great War, maybe even been in some of it. I said, although I could barely speak:

"Were you in the Great War?"

"Which great war?" said our visitor. Then she said, "No, I never go out," and returned to scissoring the trees.

On the night of the dance my mother told me to get dressed, and I did. There was a mirror on the back of my door, but the window was better; it softened everything; it hung me out in the middle of a black space and made my eyes into mysterious shadows. I was wearing pink organdy and a bunch of daisies from the garden, not the wild kind. I came downstairs and found our visitor waiting for me at the bottom: tall, bare-armed, almost beautiful, for she'd done something to her impossible hair and the rusty

reddish black curled slickly like the best photographs. Then she moved and I thought she was altogether beautiful, all black and rippling silver like a Paris dress or better still a New York dress, with a silver band around her forehead like an Indian princess's and silver shoes with the chunky heels and the one strap over the instep.

She said, "Ah! don't you look nice," and then in a whisper, taking my arm and looking down at me with curious gentleness, "I'm going to be a bad chaperone. I'm going to disappear."

"Well!" said I, inwardly shaking, "I hope I can take care of myself, I should think." But I hoped she wouldn't leave me alone and I hoped that no one would laugh at her. She was really incredibly tall.

"Your father's going to sleep at ten," said my mother. "Be back by eleven. Be happy." And she kissed me.

But Ruth's father, who drove Ruth and I and Ruth's mother and our guest to the Country Club, did not laugh. And neither did anyone else. Our visitor seemed to have put on a strange gracefulness with her dress, and a strange sort of kindliness, too, so that Ruth, who had never seen her but had only heard rumors about her, cried out, "Your friend's lovely!" and Ruth's father, who taught mathematics at high school, said (clearing his throat), "It must be lonely staying in," and our visitor said only, "Yes. Oh yes. It is," resting one immensely long, thin, elegant hand on his shoulder like some kind of unwinking spider, while his words and hers went echoing out into the night, back and forth, back and forth, losing themselves in the trees that rushed past the headlights and massed blackly to each side.

"Ruth wants to join a circus!" cried Ruth's mother, laughing.

"I do *not!*" said Ruth.

"You *will* not," said her father.

"I'll do exactly as I please," said Ruth with her nose in

the air, and she took a chocolate cream out of her handbag and put it in her mouth.

"You will *not*!" said Ruth's father, scandalized.

"Daddy, you know I will too," said Ruth, serenely though somewhat muffled, and under cover of the dark she wormed over to me in the back seat and passed, from her hot hand to mine, another chocolate cream. I ate it; it was unpleasantly and piercingly sweet.

"Isn't it *glorious?*" said Ruth.

The Country Club was much more bare than I had expected, really only a big frame building with a veranda three-quarters of the way around it and not much lawn, but there was a path down front to two stone pillars that made a kind of gate and somebody had strung the gate and the whole path with colored Chinese lanterns. That part was lovely. Inside, the whole first story was one room, with a varnished floor like the high school gym, and a punch table at one end and ribbons and Chinese lanterns hung all over the ceiling. It did not look quite like the movies but everything was beautifully painted. I had noticed that there were wicker armchairs scattered on the veranda. I decided it was "nice." Behind the punch table was a flight of stairs that led to a gallery full of tables where the grown-ups could go and drink (Ruth insisted they would be bringing real liquor for "mixes," although of course the Country Club had to pretend not to know about that) and on both sides of the big room French windows that opened onto the veranda and the Chinese lanterns, swinging a little in the breeze. Ruth was wearing a better dress than mine. We went over to the punch table and drank punch while she asked me about our visitor and I made up a lot of lies. "You don't know anything," said Ruth. She waved across the room to some friends of hers; then I could see her start dancing with a boy in front of the band, which was at the other end of the room. Older

people were dancing and people's parents, some older boys and girls. I stayed by the punch table. People who knew my parents came over and talked to me; they asked me how I was and I said I was fine; then they asked me how my father was and I said he was fine. Someone offered to introduce me to someone but I said I knew him. I hoped somebody would come over. I thought I would skirt around the dance floor and try to talk to some of the girls I knew, but then I thought I wouldn't; I imagined myself going up the stairs with Iris March's lover from *The Green Hat* to sit at a table and smoke a cigarette or drink something. I stepped behind the punch table and went out through the French windows. Our guest was a few chairs away with her feet stretched out, resting on the lowest rung of the veranda. She was reading a magazine with the aid of a small flashlight. The flowers planted around the veranda showed up a little in the light from the Chinese lanterns: shadowy clumps and masses of petunias, a few of the white ones springing into life as she turned the page of her book and the beam of the flashlight moved in her hand. I decided I would have my cigarette in a long holder. The moon was coming up over the woods past the Country Club lawns, but it was a cloudy night and all I could see was a vague lightening of the sky in that direction. It was rather warm. I remembered something about *an ivory cigarette holder flaunting at the moon.* Our visitor turned another page. I thought that she must have been aware of me. I thought again of Iris March's lover, coming out to get me on the "terrace" when somebody tapped me on the shoulder; it was Ruth's father. He took me by the wrist and led me to our visitor, who looked up and smiled vaguely, dreamily, in the dark under the colored lanterns. Then Ruth's father said:

"What do you know? There's a relative of yours inside!" She continued to smile but her face stopped moving; she

smiled gently and with tenderness at the space next to his head for the barely perceptible part of a moment. Then she completed the swing of her head and looked at him, still smiling, but everything had gone out of it.

"How lovely," she said. Then she said, "Who is it?"

"I don't know," said Ruth's father, "but he's tall, looks just like you—beg pardon. He says he's your cousin."

"*Por nada,*" said our guest absently, and getting up, she shook hands with Ruth's father. The three of us went back inside. She left the magazine and flashlight on the chair; they seemed to belong to the Club. Inside, Ruth's father took us up the steps to the gallery and there, at the end of it, sitting at one of the tables, was a man even taller than our visitor, tall even sitting down. He was in evening dress while half the men at the dance were in business suits. He did not really look like her in the face; he was a little darker and a little flatter of feature; but as we approached him, he stood up. He almost reached the ceiling. He was a giant. He and our visitor did not shake hands. The both of them looked at Ruth's father, smiling formally, and Ruth's father left us; then the stranger looked quizzically at me but our guest had already sunk into a nearby seat, all willowiness, all grace. They made a handsome couple. The stranger brought a silver-inlaid flask out of his hip pocket; he took the pitcher of water that stood on the table and poured some into a clean glass. Then he added whisky from the flask, but our visitor did not take it. She only turned it aside, amused, with one finger, and said to me, "Sit down, child," which I did. Then she said:

"Cousin, how did you find me?"

"*Par chance,* cousin," said the stranger. "By luck." He screwed the top back on the flask very deliberately and put the whole thing back in his pocket. He began to stir the drink he had made with a wooden muddler provided by the Country Club.

"I have endured much annoyance," he said, "from that man to whom you spoke. There is not a single specialized here; they are all half-brained: scattered and stupid."

"He is a kind and clever man," said she. "He teaches mathematics."

"The more fool he," said the stranger, "for the mathematics he thinks he teaches!" and he drank his own drink. Then he said, "I think we will go home now."

"Eh! This person?" said my friend, drawing up the ends of her lips half scornfully, half amused. "Not this person!"

"Why not this person, who knows me?" said the strange man.

"Because," said our visitor, and turning deliberately away from me, she put her face next to his and began to whisper mischievously in his ear. She was watching the dancers on the floor below, half the men in business suits, half the couples middle-aged, Ruth and Betty and some of their friends, and some vacationing college boys. The band was playing the fox-trot. The strange man's face altered just a little; it darkened; he finished his drink, put it down, and then swung massively in his seat to face me.

"Does she go out?" he said sharply.

"Well?" said our visitor idly.

"Yes," I said. "Yes, she goes out. Every day."

"By car or on foot?" I looked at her but she was doing nothing. Her thumb and finger formed a circle on the table.

"I don't know," I said.

"Does she go on foot?" he said.

"No," I blurted suddenly, "no, by car. Always by car!" He sat back in his seat.

"You would do anything," he said conversationally. "The lot of you."

"I?" she said. "I'm not dedicated. I can be reasoned with."

After a moment of silence he said, "We'll talk."

She shrugged. "Why not?"

"This girl's home," he said. "I'll leave fifteen minutes after you. Give me your hand."

"Why?" she said. "You know where I live. I am not going to hide in the woods like an animal."

"Give me your hand," he repeated. "For old time's sake." She reached across the table. They clasped hands and she winced momentarily. Then they both rose. She smiled dazzlingly. She took me by the wrist and led me down the stairs while the strange man called after us, as if the phrase pleased him, "For old time's sake!" and then "Good health, cousin! Long life!" while the band struck up a march in ragtime. She stopped to talk to five or six people, including Ruth's father who taught mathematics in the high school, and the band leader, and Betty, who was drinking punch with a boy from our class. Betty said to me under her breath, "Your daisies are coming loose. They're gonna fall off." We walked through the parked cars until we reached one that she seemed to like; they were all open and some owners left the keys in them; she got in behind the wheel and started up.

"But this *isn't your car!*" I said. "You can't just—"

"Get in!" I slid in next to her.

"It's after ten o'clock," I said. "You'll wake up my father. Who—"

"Shut up!"

I did. She drove very fast and very badly. Halfway home she began to slow down. Then suddenly she laughed out loud and said very confidentially, not to me but as if to somebody else:

"I told him I had planted a Neilsen loop around here that would put half of Greene County out of phase. A dead man's control. I had to go out and stop it every week."

"What's a Neilsen loop?" I said.

"Jam yesterday, jam tomorrow, but never jam today," she quoted.

"What," said I emphatically, "is a—"

"I've told you, baby," she said, "and you'll never know more, God willing," and pulling into our driveway with a screech that would have wakened the dead, she vaulted out of the car and through the back door into the kitchen, just as if my mother and father had both been asleep or in a cataleptic trance, like those in the works of E. A. Poe. Then she told me to get the iron poker from the garbage burner in the back yard and find out if the end was still hot; when I brought the thing in, she laid the hot end over one of the flames of the gas stove. Then she rummaged around under the sink and came up with a bottle of my mother's Clear Household Ammonia.

"That stuff's awful," I said. "If you let that get in your eyes—"

"Pour some in a water glass," she said, handing it to me. "Two-thirds full. Cover it with a saucer. Get another glass and another saucer and put all of them on the kitchen table. Fill your mother's water pitcher, cover that, and put that on the table."

"Are you going to *drink* that?" I cried, horrified, halfway to the table with the covered glass. She merely pushed me. I got everything set up, and also pulled three chairs up to the kitchen table; I then went to turn off the gas flame, but she took me by the hand and placed me so that I hid the stove from the window and the door. She said, "Baby, what is the specific heat of iron?"

"What?" I said.

"You know it, baby," she said. "What is it?"

I only stared at her.

"But you know it, baby," she said. "You know it better than I. You know that your mother was burning garbage today and the poker would still be hot. And you know

better than to touch the iron pots when they come fresh from the oven, even though the flame is off, because iron takes a long time to heat up and a long time to cool off, isn't that so?"

I nodded.

"And you don't know," she added, "how long it takes for aluminum pots to become cold because nobody uses aluminum for pots yet. And if I told you how scarce the heavy metals are, and what a radionic oven is, and how the heat can go *through* the glass and the plastic and even the ceramic lattice, you wouldn't know what I was talking about, would you?"

"No," I said, suddenly frightened, "no, no, no."

"Then you know more than some," she said. "You know more than me. Remember how I used to burn myself, fiddling with your mother's things?" She looked at her palm and made a face. "He's coming," she said. "Stand in front of the stove. When he asks you to turn off the gas, turn it off. When I say 'Now,' hit him with the poker."

"I can't," I whispered. "He's too big."

"He can't hurt you," she said. "He doesn't dare; that would be an anachronism. Just do as I say."

"What are you going to *do*?" I cried.

"When I say 'Now,' " she repeated serenely, "hit him with the poker," and sitting down by the kitchen table, she reached into a jam-jar of odds and ends my mother kept on the windowsill and began to buff her nails with a Lady Marlene emery stick. Two minutes passed by the kitchen clock. Nothing happened. I stood there with my hand on the cold end of the poker, doing nothing until I felt I had to speak, so I said, "Why are you making a face? Does something hurt?"

"The splinter in my palm," she said calmly. "The bastard."

"Why don't you take it out?"

"It will blow up the house."

He stepped in through the open kitchen door.

Without a word she put both arms palm upward on the kitchen table and without a word he took off the black cummerbund of his formal dress and flicked it at her. It settled over both her arms and then began to draw tight, molding itself over her arms and the table like a piece of black adhesive, pulling her almost down onto it and whipping one end around the table edge until the wood almost cracked. It seemed to paralyze her arms. He put his finger to his tongue and then to her palm, where there was a small black spot. The spot disappeared. He laughed and told me to turn off the flame, so I did.

"Take it off," she said then.

He said, "Too bad you are in hiding or you too could carry weapons," and then, as the edge of the table let out a startling sound like a pistol shot, he flicked the black tape off her arms, returning it to himself, where it disappeared into his evening clothes.

"Now that I have used this, everyone knows where we are," he said, and he sat down in a kitchen chair that was much too small for him and lounged back in it, his knees sticking up into the air.

Then she said something I could not understand. She took the saucer off the empty glass and poured water into it; she said something unintelligible again and held it out to him, but he motioned it away. She shrugged and drank the water herself. "Flies," she said, and put the saucer back on. They sat in silence for several minutes. I did not know what to do; I knew I was supposed to wait for the word "Now" and then hit him with the poker, but no one seemed to be saying or doing anything. The kitchen clock, which I had forgotten to wind that morning, was running down at ten minutes to eleven. There was a cricket making a noise close outside the window and I was afraid the

ammonia smell would get out somehow; then, just as I was getting a cramp in my legs from standing still, our visitor nodded. She sighed, too, regretfully. The strange man got to his feet, moved his chair carefully out of the way and pronounced:

"Good. I'll call them."

"Now?" said she.

I couldn't do it. I brought the poker in front of me and stood there with it, holding it in both hands. The stranger —who almost had to stoop to avoid our ceiling—wasted only a glance on me, as if I were hardly worth looking at, and then concentrated his attention on her. She had her chin in her hands. Then she closed her eyes.

"Put that down, please," she said tiredly.

I did not know what to do. She opened her eyes and took the saucer off the other glass on the table.

"Put that down right now," she said, and raised the glass of ammonia to her lips.

I swung at him clumsily with the poker. I was not sure what happened next, but I think he laughed and seized the end—the hot end—and then threw me off balance just as he screamed, because the next thing I knew I was down on all fours watching her trip him as he threw himself at her, his eyes screwed horribly shut, choking and coughing and just missing her. The ammonia glass was lying empty and broken on the floor; a brown stain showed where it had rolled off the white tablecloth on the kitchen table. When he fell, she kicked him in the side of the head. Then she stepped carefully away from him and held out her hand to me; I gave her the poker, which she took with the folded edge of the tablecloth, and reversing it so that she held the cold end, she brought it down with immense force—not on his head, as I had expected, but on his windpipe. When he was still, she touched the hot end of the poker to several places on his jacket, passed it across where his belt would

be, and to two places on both of his shoes. Then she said to me, "Get out."

I did, but not before I saw her finishing the job on his throat, not with the poker but with the thick heel of her silver shoe.

When I came back in, there was nobody there. There was a clean, rinsed glass on the drainboard next to the wooden sink and the poker was propped up in one corner of the sink with cold water running on it. Our visitor was at the stove, brewing tea in my mother's brown teapot. She was standing under the Dutch cloth calendar my mother, who was very modern, kept hanging on the wall. My mother pinned messages on it; one of them read "Be Careful. Except for the Bathroom, More Accidents Occur in the Kitchen Than in Any Other Part of the House."

"Where–" I said, "where is–is–"

"Sit down," she said. "Sit down here," and she put me into *his* seat at the kitchen table. But there was no *he* anywhere. She said, "Don't think too much." Then she went back to the tea and just as it was ready to pour, my mother came in from the living room, with a blanket around her shoulders, smiling foolishly and saying, "Goodness, I've been asleep, haven't I?"

"Tea?" said our visitor.

"I fell asleep just like that," said my mother, sitting down.

"I forgot," said our visitor. "I borrowed a car. I felt ill. I must call them on the telephone," and she went out into the hall, for we had been among the first to have a telephone. She came back a few minutes later. "Is it all right?" said my mother. We drank our tea in silence.

"Tell me," said our visitor at length. "How is your radio reception?"

"It's perfectly fine," said my mother, a bit offended.

"That's fine," said our visitor, and then, as if she

couldn't control herself, "because you live in a dead area, you know, thank God, a dead area!"

My mother said, alarmed, "I beg your par–"

"Excuse me," said our visitor, "I'm ill," and she put her cup into her saucer with a clatter, got up and went out of the kitchen. My mother put one hand caressingly over mine.

"Did anyone . . . insult her at the dance?" said my mother, softly.

"Oh no," I said.

"Are you sure?" my mother insisted. "Are you perfectly sure? Did anyone comment? Did anyone say anything about her appearance? About her height? Anything that was not nice?"

"Ruth did," I said. "Ruth said she looked like a giraffe." My mother's hand slid off mine; gratified, she got up and began to gather up the tea things. She put them into the sink. She clucked her tongue over the poker and put it away in the kitchen closet. Then she began to dry the glass that our visitor had previously rinsed and put on the drainboard, the glass that had held ammonia.

"The poor woman," said my mother, drying it. "Oh, the poor woman."

Nothing much happened after that. I began to get my books ready for high school. Blue cornflowers sprang up along the sides of the house and my father, who was better now, cut them down with a scythe. My mother was growing hybrid ones in the back flower garden, twice as tall and twice as big as any of the wild ones; she explained to me about hybrids and why they were bigger, but I forgot it. Our visitor took up with a man, not a nice man, really, because he worked in the town garage and was Polish. She didn't go out but used to see him in the kitchen at night. He was a thickset, stocky man, very

blond, with a real Polish name, but everyone called him Bogalusa Joe because he had spent fifteen years in Bogalusa, Louisiana (he called it "Loosiana") and he talked about it all the time. He had a theory, that the colored people were just like us and that in a hundred years everybody would be all mixed up, you couldn't tell them apart. My mother was very advanced in her views but she wouldn't ever let me talk to him. He was very respectful; he called her "Ma'am," and didn't use any bad language, but he never came into the living room. He would always meet our visitor in the kitchen or sometimes on the swing in the back garden. They would drink coffee; they would play cards. Sometimes she would say to him, "Tell me a story, Joe. I love a good story," and he would talk about hiding out in Loosiana; he had had to hide out from somebody or something for three years in the middle of the Negroes and they had let him in and let him work and took care of him. He said, "The coloreds are like anybody." Then he said, "The nigras are smarter. They got to be. They ain't nobody's fool. I had a black girl for two years once was the smartest woman in the world. Beautiful woman. Not beautiful like a white, though, not the same."

"Give us a hundred years," he added, "and it'll all be mixed."

"Two hundred?" said our visitor, pouring coffee. He put a lot of sugar in his; then he remarked that he had learned that in Bogalusa. She sat down. She was leaning her elbows on the table, smiling at him. She was stirring her own coffee with a spoon. He looked at her a moment, and then he said softly:

"A black woman, smartest woman in the world. You're black, woman, ain't you?"

"Part," she said.

"Beautiful woman," he said. "Nobody knows?"

"They know in the circus," she said. "But there they

don't care. Shall I tell you what we circus people think of you?"

"Of who?" he said, looking surprised.

"Of all of you," she said. "All who aren't in the circus. All who can't do what we can do, who aren't the biggest or the best, who can't kill a man barehanded or learn a new language in six weeks or slit a man's jugular at fifteen yards with nothing but a pocketknife or climb the Greene County National Bank from the first story to the sixth with no equipment. I can do all that."

"I'll be damned," said Bogalusa Joe softly.

"We despise you," she said. "That's what we do. We think you're slobs. The scum of the earth! The world's fertilizer, Joe, that's what you are."

"Baby, you're blue," he said. "You're blue tonight," and then he took her hand across the table, but not the way they did it in the movies, not the way they did it in the books; there was a look on his face I had never seen on anyone's before, not the high school boys when they put a line over on a girl, not on grown-ups, not even on the brides and grooms because all that was romantic or showing off or "lust" and he only looked infinitely kind, infinitely concerned. She pulled her hand out of his. With the same faint, detached smile she had had all night, she pushed back her chair and stood up. She said flatly:

"All I can do! What good is it?" She shrugged. She added, "I've got to leave tomorrow." He got up and put his arm around her shoulders. I thought that looked bad because he was actually a couple of inches shorter than she was.

He said, "Baby, you don't have to go." She was staring out into the back garden, as if looking miles away, miles out, far away into our vegetable patch or our swing or my mother's hybrids, into something nobody could see. He said urgently, "Honey, look—" and then, when she con-

tinued to stare, pulling her face around so she had to look at him, both his broad, mechanic's hands under her chin, "Baby, you can stay with me." He brought his face closer to hers. "Marry me," he said suddenly. She began to laugh. I had never heard her laugh like that before. Then she began to choke. He put his arms around her and she leaned against him, choking, making funny noises like someone with asthma, finally clapping her hands over her face, then biting her palm, heaving up and down as if she were sick. It took me several seconds to realize that she was crying. He looked very troubled. They stood there: she cried, he, distressed—and I hiding, watching all of it. They began to walk slowly toward the kitchen door. When they had gone out and put out the light, I followed them out into the back garden, to the swing my father had rigged up under the one big tree: cushions and springs to the ground like a piece of porch furniture, big enough to hold four people. Bushes screened it. There was a kerosene lantern my father had mounted on a post, but it was out. I could just about see them. They sat for a few minutes, saying nothing, looking up through the tree into the darkness. The swing creaked a little as our visitor crossed and uncrossed her long legs. She took out a cigarette and lit it, obscuring their faces with even that little glow: an orange spot that wavered up and down as she smoked, making the darkness more black. Then it disappeared. She had ground it out underfoot in the grass. I could see them again. Bogalusa Joe, the garage mechanic, said:

"Tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow," she said. Then they kissed each other. I liked that; it was all right; I had seen it before. She leaned back against the cushions of the swing and seemed to spread her feet in the invisible grass; she let her head and arms fall back onto the cushion. Without saying a word, he lifted her skirt far above her knees and put his hand

between her legs. There was a great deal more of the same business and I watched it all, from the first twistings to the stabbings, the noises, the life-and-death battle in the dark. The word *Epilepsy* kept repeating itself in my head. They got dressed and again began to smoke, talking in tones I could not hear. I crouched in the bushes, my heart beating violently.

I was horribly frightened.

She did not leave the next day, or the next or the next; and she even took a dress to my mother and asked if she could have it altered somewhere in town. My school clothes were out, being aired in the back yard to get the mothball smell out of them. I put covers on all my books. I came down one morning to ask my mother whether I couldn't have a jumper taken up at the hem because the magazines said it was all right for young girls. I expected a fight over it. I couldn't find my mother in the hall or the kitchen so I tried the living room, but before I had got halfway through the living-room arch, someone said, "Stop there," and I saw both my parents sitting on two chairs near the front door, both with their hands in their laps, both staring straight ahead, motionless as zombies.

I said, "Oh for heaven's sake, what're you—"

"Stop there," said the same voice. My parents did not move. My mother was smiling her social smile. There was no one else in the room. I waited for a little while, my parents continuing to be dead, and then from some corner on my left, near the new Philco, our visitor came gliding out, wrapped in my mother's spring coat, stepping softly across the rug and looking carefully at all the living-room windows. She grinned when she saw me. She tapped the top of the Philco radio and motioned me in. Then she took off the coat and draped it over the radio.

She was in black from head to foot.

I thought *black,* but black was not the word; the word was *blackness,* dark beyond dark, dark that drained the eyesight, something I could never have imagined even in my dreams, a black in which there was no detail, no sight, no nothing, only an awful, desperate dizziness, for her body—the thing was skintight, like a diver's costume or an acrobat's—had actually disappeared, completely blotted out except for its outline. Her head and bare hands floated in the air. She said, "Pretty, yes?" Then she sat crosslegged on our radio. She said, "Please pull the curtains," and I did, going from one to the other and drawing them shut, circling my frozen parents and then stopping short in the middle of the quaking floor. I said, "I'm going to faint." She was off the radio and into my mother's coat in an instant; holding me by the arm, she got me onto the living-room couch and put her arm around me, massaging my back. She said, "Your parents are asleep." Then she said, "You have known some of this. You are a wonderful little pickup but you get mixed up, yes? All about the Morlocks? The Trans-Temporal Military Authority?"

I began to say "Oh oh oh oh—" and she massaged my back again.

"Nothing will hurt you," she said. "Nothing will hurt your parents. Think how exciting it is! Think! The rebel Morlocks, the revolution in the Trans-Temporal Military Authority."

"But I— I—" I said.

"We are friends," she continued gravely, taking my hands. "We are real friends. You helped me. We will not forget that," and slinging my mother's coat off onto the couch, she went and stood in front of the archway. She put her hands on her hips, then began rubbing the back of her neck nervously and clearing her throat. She turned around to give me one last look.

"Are you calm?" she said. I nodded. She smiled at me.

"Be calm," she said softly. "*Sois tranquille.* We're friends," and then she put herself to watching the archway. She said once, almost sadly, "Friends," and then stepped back and smiled again at me.

The archway was turning into a mirror. It got misty, then bright, like a cloud of bright dust, then almost like a curtain; and then it was a mirror, although all I could see in it was our visitor and myself, not my parents, not the furniture, not the living room.

Then the first Morlock stepped through.

And the second.

And the third.

And the others.

Oh, the living room was filled with giants! They were like her, like her in the face, like her in the bodies of the very tall, like her in the black uniforms, men and women of all the races of the earth, everything mixed and huge as my mother's hybrid flowers but a foot taller than our visitor, a flock of black ravens, black bats, black wolves, the professionals of the future world, perched on our furniture, on the Philco radio, some on the very walls and drapes of the windows as if they could fly, hovering in the air as if they were out in space where the Morlocks meet, half a thousand in a bubble between the stars.

Who rule the worlds.

Two came through the mirror who crawled on the rug, both in diving suits and goldfish-bowl helmets, a man and a woman, fat and shaped like seals. They lay on the rug breathing water (for I saw the specks flowing in it, in and out of strange frills around their necks, the way dust moves in air) and looking up at the rest with tallowy faces. Their suits bulged. One of the Morlocks said something to one of the seals and one of the seals answered, fingering a thing attached to the barrels on its back, gurgling.

Then they all began to talk.

Even if I'd known what language it was, I think it would have been too fast for me; it was very fast, very hard-sounding, very urgent, like the numbers pilots call in to the ground or something like that, like a code that everybody knows, to get things done as fast as you can. Only the seal-people talked slowly, and they gurgled and stank like a dirty beach. They did not even move their faces except to make little round mouths, like fish. I think I was put to sleep for a while (or maybe I just fell asleep) and then it was something about the seal-people, with the Morlock who was seated on the radio joining in—and then general enough—and then something going round the whole room —and then that fast, hard urgent talk between one of the Morlocks and my friend. It was still business, but they looked at *me*; it was awful to be looked at and yet I felt numb; I wished I were asleep; I wanted to cry because I could not understand a word they were saying. Then my friend suddenly shouted; she stepped back and threw both arms out, hands extended and fingers spread, shaking violently. She was shouting instead of talking, shouting desperately about something, pounding one fist into her palm, her face contorted, just as if it was not business. The other Morlock was breathing quickly and had gone pale with rage. He whispered something, something very venomous. He took from his black uniform, which could have hidden anything, a silver dime, and holding it up between thumb and forefinger, he said in perfectly clear English, while looking at me:

"In the name of the war against the Trans-Tempor—"

She had jumped him in an instant. I scrambled up; I saw her close his fist about the dime with her own; then it was all a blur on the floor until the two of them stood up again, as far as they could get from each other, because it was perfectly clear that they hated each other. She said very distinctly, *"I do insist."* He shrugged. He said some-

thing short and sharp. She took out of her own darkness a knife—only a knife—and looked slowly about the room at each person in it. Nobody moved. She raised her eyebrows.

"Tcha! grozny?"

The seal-woman hissed on the floor, like steam coming out of a leaky radiator. She did not get up but lay on her back, eyes blinking, a woman encased in fat.

"You?" said my friend insultingly. "You will stain the carpet."

The seal-woman hissed again. Slowly my friend walked toward her, the others watching. She did not bend down, as I had expected, but dove down abruptly with a kind of sidewise roll, driving herself into the seal-woman's side. She had planted one heel on the stomach of the woman's diving suit; she seemed to be trying to tear it. The seal-woman caught my friend's knife-hand with one glove and was trying to turn it on my friend while she wrapped the other gloved arm around my friend's neck. She was trying to strangle her. My friend's free arm was extended on the rug; it seemed to me that she was either leaning on the floor or trying to pull herself free. Then again everything went into a sudden blur. There was a gasp, a loud, mechanical click; my friend vaulted up and backward, dropping her knife and clapping one hand to her left eye. The seal-woman was turning from side to side on the floor, a kind of shudder running from her feet to her head, an expressionless flexing of her body and face. Bubbles were forming in the goldfish-bowl helmet. The other seal-person did not move. As I watched, the water began falling in the seal-woman's helmet and then it was all air. I supposed she was dead. My friend, our visitor, was standing in the middle of the room, blood welling from under her hand; she was bent over with pain and her face was horribly distorted but not one person in that room moved to touch her.

"Life—" she gasped, "for life. Yours," and then she crashed to the rug. The seal-woman had slashed open her eye. Two of the Morlocks rushed to her then and picked up her and her knife; they were dragging her toward the mirror in the archway when she began muttering something.

"Damn your sketches!" shouted the Morlock she had fought with, completely losing control of himself. "We are at war; Trans-Temp is at our heels; do you think we have time for dilettantism? You presume on being that woman's granddaughter! We are fighting for the freedom of fifty billions of people, not for your scribbles!" and motioning to the others, who immediately dragged the body of the seal-woman through the mirror and began to follow it themselves, he turned to me.

"You!" he snapped. "You will speak to nobody of this. Nobody!"

I put my arms around myself.

"Do not try to impress anyone with stories," he added contemptuously. "You are lucky to live," and without another look he followed the last of the Morlocks through the mirror, which promptly disappeared. There was blood on the rug, a few inches from my feet. I bent down and put my fingertips in it, and then with no clear reason, I put my fingers to my face.

"—come back," said my mother. I turned to face them, the wax manikins who had seen nothing.

"Who the devil drew the curtains!" shouted my father. "I've told you" (to me) "that I don't like tricks, young lady, and if it weren't for your mother's—"

"Oh, Ben, Ben! She's had a nosebleed!" cried my mother.

They told me later that I fainted.

I was in bed a few days, because of the nosebleed, but

then they let me up. My parents said I probably had had anemia. They also said they had seen our visitor off at the railroad station that morning, and that she had boarded the train as they watched her: tall, frizzy-haired, freakish, dressed in black down to between the knees and ankles, legged like a stork and carrying all her belongings in a small valise. "Gone to the circus," said my mother. There was nothing in the room that had been hers, nothing in the attic, no reflection in the window at which she had stood, brilliantly lit against the black night, nothing in the kitchen and nothing at the Country Club but tennis courts overgrown with weeds. Joe never came back to our house. The week before school I looked through all my books, starting with *The Time Machine* and ending with *The Green Hat;* then I went downstairs and looked through every book in the house. There was nothing. I was invited to a party; my mother would not let me go. Cornflowers grew around the house. Betty came over once and was bored. One afternoon at the end of summer, with the wind blowing through the empty house from top to bottom and everybody away, nobody next door, my parents in the back yard, the people on the other side of us gone swimming, everybody silent or sleeping or off somewhere —except for someone down the block whom I could hear mowing the lawn—I decided to sort and try on all my shoes. I did this in front of a full-length mirror fastened to the inside of my closet door. I had been taking off and putting on various of my winter dresses, too, and I was putting one particular one away in a box on the floor of the closet when I chanced to look up at the inside of the closet door.

She was standing in the mirror. It was all black behind her, like velvet. She was wearing something black and silver, half-draped, half-nude, and there were lines on her face that made it look sectioned off, or like a cobweb; she

had one eye. The dead eye radiated spinning white light, like a Catherine wheel. She said:

"Did you ever think to go back and take care of yourself when you are little? Give yourself advice?"

I couldn't say anything.

"I am not you," she said, "but I have had the same thought and now I have come back four hundred and fifty years. Only there is nothing to say. There is never anything to say. It is a pity, but natural, no doubt."

"Oh, please!" I whispered. "Stay!" She put one foot up on the edge of the mirror as if it were the threshold of a door. The silver sandal she had worn at the Country Club dance almost came into my bedroom: thick-heeled, squat, flaking, as ugly as sin; new lines formed on her face and all over her bare skin, ornamenting her all over. Then she stepped back; she shook her head, amused; the dead eye waned, filled again, exploded in sparks and went out, showing the naked socket, ugly, shocking and horrible.

"Tcha!" she said, "my grandma thought she would bring something hard to a world that was soft and silly but nice, and now it's silly and not so nice and the hard has got too hard and the soft too soft and my great-grandma—it is she who founded the order—is dead. Not that it matters. Nothing ends, you see. Just keeps going on and on."

"But you can't *see*!" I managed. She poked herself in the temple and the eye went on again.

"Bizarre," she said. "Interesting. Attractive. Stone blind is twice as good. I'll tell you my sketches."

"But you don't—you can't—" I said.

"The first," she said, lines crawling all over her, "is an Eloi having the Go-Jollies, and that is a bald, fat man in a toga, a frilled bib, a sunbonnet and shoes you would not believe, who has a crystal ball in his lap and from it wires plugged into his eyes and his nose and his ears and his

tongue and his head, just like your lamps. That is an Eloi having the Go-Jollies."

I began to cry.

"The second," she went on, "is a Morlock working; and that is myself holding a skull, like *Hamlet,* only if you look closely at the skull you will see it is the world, with funny things sticking out of the seas and the polar ice caps, and that it is full of people. Much too full. There are too many of the worlds, too."

"If you'll *stop—!*" I cried.

"They are all pushing each other off," she continued, "and some are falling into the sea, which is a pity, no doubt, but quite natural, and if you will look closely at all these Eloi you will see that each one is holding his crystal ball, or running after an animated machine which runs faster than he, or watching another Eloi on a screen who is cleverer and looks fascinating, and you will see that under the fat the man or woman is screaming, screaming and dying.

"And my third sketch," she said, "which is a very little one, shows a goldfish bowl full of people in black. Behind that is a smaller goldfish bowl full of people in black, which is going after the first goldfish bowl, and behind the second is a third, which is going after the second, and so on, or perhaps they alternate; that would be more economical. Or perhaps I am only bitter because I lost my eye. It's a personal problem."

I got to my feet. I was so close I could have touched her. She crossed her arms across her breast and looked down at me; she then said softly, "My dear, I wished to take you with me, but that's impossible. I'm very sorry," and looking for the first time both serious and tender, she disappeared behind a swarm of sparks.

I was looking at myself. I had recently made, passion-

ately and in secret, the uniform of the Trans-Temporal Military Authority as I thought it ought to look: a black tunic over black sleeves and black tights. The tights were from a high school play I had been in the year before and the rest was cut out of the lining of an old winter coat. That was what I was wearing that afternoon. I had also fastened a silver curling-iron to my waist with a piece of cord. I put one foot up in the air, as if on the threshold of the mirror, and a girl in ragged black stared back at me. She turned and frantically searched the entire room, looking for sketches, for notes, for specks of silver paint, for anything at all. Then she sat down on my bed. She did not cry. She said to me, "You look idiotic." Someone was still mowing the lawn outside, probably my father. My mother would be clipping, patching, rooting up weeds; she never stopped. Someday I would join a circus, travel to the moon, write a book; after all, I had helped kill a man. I had been somebody. It was all nonsense. I took off the curling-iron and laid it on the bed. Then I undressed and got into my middy-blouse and skirt and I put the costume on the bed in a heap. As I walked toward the door of the room, I turned to take one last look at myself in the mirror and at my strange collection of old clothes. For a moment something else moved in the mirror, or I thought it did, something behind me or to one side, something menacing, something half-blind, something heaving slowly like a shadow, leaving perhaps behind it faint silver flakes like the shadow of a shadow or some carelessly dropped coins, something glittering, something somebody had left on the edge of vision, dropped by accident in the dust and cobwebs of an attic. I wished for it violently; I stood and clenched my fists; I almost cried; I wanted something to come out of the mirror and strike me dead. If I could not have a protector, I wanted a monster, a mutation, a horror, a murderous disease, anything! anything at all to accom-

pany me downstairs so that I would not have to go down alone.

Nothing came. Nothing good, nothing bad. I heard the lawnmower going on. I would have to face by myself my father's red face, his heart disease, his temper, his nasty insistencies. I would have to face my mother's sick smile, looking up from the flowerbed she was weeding, always on her knees somehow, saying before she was ever asked, "Oh the poor woman. Oh the poor woman."

And quite alone.

No more stories.

Remembrance to Come

by Gene Wolfe

Leaves in his face.

He had chosen, in order to prepare himself, to go surface and walk in the sycamore-shaded park where he and Ruth had once received their diplomas. Surface the air had been cool and fragrant with autumn and rain just past; but once underground and on the belt again there was only the never-changing odorlessness, and the eighty-three-degree warmth, set to make coeds in body paint comfortable.

He was always a little apprehensive when he had to go in a classroom now. Already this semester he had received two student senate reprimands for speaking sharply to undergraduates ("in such a manner as to impugn or debase the human dignity of those addressed . . ."), and he could not afford a third.

On the other side of the door he could hear the coughing and shuffling of feet; he reminded himself that these were only more of the sleek young people he had watched streaking across the campus on their bikes a few minutes before. He glanced furtively at his notes, then entered the room and walked to the projector console. Several of the students, the good ones, or perhaps only those who hoped to lull his suspicions, called out, "Hiya, David," or "Hi, Dave," as he made his way up the aisle. He forced himself to nod and wave, although he would have preferred to

ignore these greetings. A few instructors did, but they were the ones who were always having complaints lodged against them. "Well, what did you think of it?" he asked.

There was a roar of comment, suggesting mixed reactions. He seated himself and allowed it to continue—not that he could have stopped it—as the more vociferous gathered knots of others around them and shouted to make themselves heard above the din. It occurred to him as it had many times before that it should be possible for them to do all this ranting before he came in; but he knew psychologists felt the effect would not be the same, and from what he had observed himself, they were correct. Without an instructor present the subject matter of all this gabble would rapidly swing to the eternal topics of politics, sex, and sport.

Gradually the volume of sound diminished, and when only a few diehards were holding out he rapped gently for order. Some of them, he knew, considered that an undemocratic procedure, but it was not forbidden yet, and clearing his throat simply did not work. By a gesture he called on a girl in the front row, choosing her because he knew she had a clear, sweet voice which would help quiet the noisier boys. She rose gracefully, a courtesy he could not demand but appreciated, and parted the long hair hanging over her face before she spoke. "I thought—" she said, and then paused, embarrassed. She was wearing the broadest possible belt, and in spite of the painted arrows stabbing inward on her thighs it seemed probable that she had not yet rejected completely the conservative influence of an old-fashioned family—an impression reinforced by the demure pink pastel she had selected for her breasts.

"I thought it was just lovely," she finished. "The lovely park, whatever it was—"

"The Champs Elysées," he prompted.

"Yes, and the lovely old carriage the woman rode in—I

mean, I thought it was just shattering." She sat down abruptly.

He nodded in appreciation and said, "Let's see it again, shall we?" touching a button on the console before him. Instantly the scene filled the wall in front of the class, an ink drawing filled in with broad splashes of tempera. From memory he quoted, "The idea of perfection which I had within me I had bestowed, in that other time, upon the height of a victoria, upon the raking thinness of those horses, frenzied and light as wasps upon the wing, with bloodshot eyes like the cruel steeds of Diomed, which now, smitten by a desire to see again what I had once loved, as ardent as the desire that had driven me, many years before, along the same paths, I wished to see renewed before my eyes at the moment when Mme. Swann's enormous coachman, supervised by a groom no bigger than his fist, and as infantile as Saint George in the picture, endeavored to curb the ardour of the flying, steel-tipped pinions with which they thundered along the ground."

The legend over Mme. Swann's head, enclosed in a balloon whose outlines were of the puffy sort used to indicate thoughts rather than speech, seemed hardly necessary—the cartoonist had conveyed them well enough in the look she directed toward a strolling group of high-hatted gentlemen—but his students were rereading them nonetheless, as he saw by their moving lips: " 'Oh yes, I do remember quite well; it was wonderful!', to another: 'How I should have loved to! We were unfortunate!', to a third: 'Yes, if you like! I must just keep in the line for a minute, then as soon as I can I will break away.' " Far in the background the slender figure of the young Marcel expressed mute admiration.

He was about to wipe out the picture when he sensed a disturbance far toward the back of the room, where the

tiered seats rose in semicircles. Heads were turning toward the door leading to the corridor belt and he heard a girl giggle nervously. Then something black and shapeless entered and sat down. There were more giggles.

For a moment he did not know what to do, then stabbing his fingers down at random he replaced Mme. Swann's victoria with another scene and announced briskly: "Student dialogue on this one; Shepherd and Weeks." Shepherd and Weeks were two of the brightest as well as the most talkative; they could be depended upon to keep their discussion going without him for as long as needed. The picture the projector had produced was of Marcel stealing glances at the former Princesse des Laumes as she sat with her feet on the tomb of Gilbert the Bad. He left it on long enough for the class to study it, then changed to a magnified view of the room itself with Shepherd and Weeks in the foreground. When they were well under way ("She represents the unattainable woman to him—he's more comfortable with that"), and the class had been at least partially distracted, he switched his personal monitor to a camera covering the back of the room.

In the last row, in the seat nearest the door, sat a figure completely draped in black cloth. Instead of the sandals worn by most students the feet were shod in black, very formal and rather old-fashioned, masculine shoes; and under the cloth, apparently, something like a box was worn over the head. Its square outline could be seen just above the triangular holes which allowed the wearer to see.

Twisting a knob, he zoomed the image in until he seemed to stand alongside the shrouded figure. The student—surely only a student would undertake such a prank—sat motionless, utterly quiet in his broad-armed chair.

It was, as he realized after a moment, a particularly difficult situation. Any of the fifty thousand students at the university could monitor any class he chose; the right

had been acquired as the result of undergraduate demonstrations at some time in the remote past, and in theory aided them to decide whether or not to register for the subject in a future semester. In practice it was most frequently used by campus agitators who wished to disrupt a class without paying tuition for it. He could ask the student under the cloth to establish that he *was* a student, but if he was it would gain nothing; and he might be walking into a trap, since if, as seemed likely, the student was an *agent provocateur* for some dissident group, this challenge was presumably what he was expecting and awaiting.

But for the time being at least he was well behaved and quiet; the wisest course was probably to ignore the whole matter until some overt action changed his own position from that of presumptive aggressor. Abstractedly he thought of how the boy must be sweltering under his shroud. His own clothing, tropical-weave coveralls whose design imitated the sweatshirt and jeans of more formal times, oppressed him in the underground heat. Still watching the monitor, he plucked at it to draw cooler air in at the neck. More conservative—and perhaps better salaried—faculty members stuck to the time-honored slogans for their shirts, the more respected because they were outmoded: things like GET OUT OF VIETNAM and GOD GROWS HIS OWN. The legend on his own chest read: MAKE LOVE NOT SLUDGE. Not prestigious, but the National Sewage Authority paid him a stipend for the space.

The remainder of the period seemed to pass without leaving an impression on his memory, and although he was certain afterward that he had asked the normal questions to begin discussions and elucidated correctly the few points referred to him, he could recall nothing of it when the class was shuffling out into the hall. He remained at

the console, waiting to see if the dark figure at the back of the room had left with the others, and by some trick of thought he felt he had been watching the proceedings himself through the eyes behind those black holes, and had found them remote and inconsequential.

The dark figure had not gone, but was still seated and, it seemed, staring at him across the long rows of empty chairs.

This was his last class of the day, and he was conscious of an overpowering urge to finish it without a disturbance; to go home and talk to Ruth and rest. The eyeholes which were the only visible feature of that strangely shaped, hooded head seemed to hold no malice or even impulse of activity, and for a moment he wondered if the student behind them could be asleep. Slowly he got up and walked toward an exit, ignoring him as well as he could. He reached the door and risked a glance over his shoulder. The black figure was standing now; he went out, grateful for the soft shushing the door made behind him.

He was halfway to the elevator when he heard the slow tread of heavily shod feet, very different from the patter of sandals or bare soles. He walked faster, pressed the elevator button, and was fortunate enough to have the doors open immediately. When they closed, the black figure was still fifteen feet or so away.

His bicycle was in the faculty rack at the south end of the campus and he made his way to it as quickly as he could, looking over his shoulder from time to time with the illogical feeling that he was still being followed. Somehow the sight of his own name, David P. Paramore, on the registration tag dangling from the handlebars, reassured him. He mounted and pedaled off toward home.

As always there was a multiplicity of bikes and pedal carts on the streets, plus a sprinkling of the slow and costly electric cars and a few heavily taxed internal combustion

trucks, mostly diesels. Since the government did not care much if the members of the liberal arts faculty survived a bomb blast or not, the underground on-campus apartments were the prerogatives of members of the scientific departments. He had worked his way through the traffic for nearly an hour and was approaching his own neighborhood before he glimpsed the dark figure far behind him. The student under that black cloth, whoever he was, had a bike too; a much newer one than his own, just as his legs were no doubt younger and his wind better. Block by block he gained steadily until he was not more than a few seconds behind.

A pushcart man from whom David sometimes bought vegetables waved from the curb: "Hiya, Professor, what's y'hurry?" and then was gone, a blur of unshaven face and glinting teeth. Twenty years ago he had ridden these same streets in this same way, commuting to the campus, thinking of the great day on which he would get his doctorate and anticipating a meeting with Ruth at the Student Center for lunch; and it suddenly occurred to him to wonder why indeed he was hurrying, now that all the goals he had set himself were reached in emptiness and it was possible to set no more. What could the student under the black cloth do to him that time had not? For a moment he slacked his pace, then the repulsion he had felt earlier for that enigmatic figure returned and he bent over the handlebars again, the breath whistling in his chest.

The house his mother had left him was two-storied, the ground floor of brick veneer, the second of the overhanging wooden construction the contractors of her period had found so cheap to build and so attractive to buyers. He careened up onto the lawn as recklessly as a boy, left his bicycle lying on the grass instead of pulling it up onto the porch, and slammed and locked the door behind him.

Ruth had heard him, and she called to him from her room at the top of the stairs. After a moment he began the daily ritual of his visit with her, mounting the steps one at a time and pausing a little to catch his breath at each.

She had fluffed and arranged her hair for him today, and applied the cosmetics she kept on the stand beside her bed. Seeing her smile, the little attempts she had made to please him, he knew he could not tell her what had happened today; then he saw the smile fade and remembered that Ruth had always known when anything went wrong for him. It would be kinder to tell her than to leave her in suspense.

Sitting on the bed beside her he described everything: the shrouded figure coming into his classroom, the pursuit home.

"But it's so easy!" she said when he had finished. She had held his hand pressed between hers as he talked, and now she gave it a little pat. "They did it before, years ago—when you and I were in school ourselves. A boy got into a big black sack and began attending classes that way; he wouldn't tell anyone who he was, or speak above a mumble at all. At first everyone laughed, and then when he kept coming day after day like that they were rude to him and began to play cruel jokes. Finally when he still wouldn't tell them anything they just ignored him. Then at the end of the term it came out that it was an experiment some graduate students had worked out with one of the men in the psychology department."

He looked at her, wanting to believe.

"It's so obvious, David. Someone has revived that old experiment. We say we're so much freer and more humane than people used to be, but are we really? Well, he's going to make the same test again and see if the results are any different. David, don't look so frightened."

"Why did he wait for me after class, then? Why did he follow me home?"

She squeezed his hand, as though trying to show physically her sincerity. "He wanted to see how you'd react, so he had to give you time to react *in.* And I don't believe he followed you at all. Don't you see, he couldn't take off the bag on campus, or someone would see who he was; he was probably on his way home, and it just happens to be down our street. There are lots of those boarding houses for students who can't get dorm space scattered all over."

He said nothing, but she could see he was still unconvinced.

"He didn't actually stop here, did he, David?"

"I didn't wait to see." He was already ashamed of having run. "I just went inside."

"There, you see! He hasn't rung the bell or anything, has he? Or tried to climb through a window? Go out and look around for him. I'll bet you can't find him anywhere."

He did not go outside, or even look through the windows that evening, but nothing happened to prove Ruth incorrect. He did his usual housework, watched television with her for an hour, and read himself to sleep.

The next morning the dark, shapeless figure was waiting for him, and it attended every class he gave for the next two days.

He made an appointment with Saunders, the head of his department. Saunders' secretary, it seemed to him, looked at him oddly as he came in, but he managed to smile at her while she spoke into the intercom.

Saunders fancied himself a sportsman and had had his office decorated that way, absurd as it was for a room a hundred and fifty feet below ground. Stuffed fish and color photographs of glacial lakes adorned the walls; there was even a copy of Sassoon's *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting*

Man, bound in scuffed leather and left lying conspicuously on top of a microfilm cabinet. David had always felt ill at ease in this room, psychically shaken by its falsity.

Saunders was leaning back in his swivel chair and staring at the ceiling as he came in, and did not immediately look at him. "What is it, Paramore? The girl said you wanted to see me. Sit down."

The chairs were covered with vinyl made to look like cowhide and rather too strongly impregnated with the real substance's odor. David settled himself gingerly in one as Saunders shifted his weight to tilt his seat forward until he could see him. "Well, what is it? Paramore, you look awful. Are you sick?"

As briefly as he could he described what had been happening for the past three days. When he had finished Saunders remained silent.

"Can't you see?" David leaned forward, trying to make the man understand. "It's an attempt to entrap me, or the department, or the school. They're waiting for us to do something, or to say something that can be used against us. Then there'll be another riot, just like the old days. Speeches—demonstrations—and when it's all over—"

"We haven't had many riots since we moved the campus underground," Saunders said mildly. "After all, they can't break our windows when we haven't got any, and the belts in the corridors just keep sweeping along anybody who sits down on them until they get dumped off at the end. When did you say this started?"

"Monday." He had lost. Saunders was not willing to recognize what they were trying to do.

"You say he sleeps on your porch at night?" Saunders was shuffling through the papers in a desk drawer and did not look at him as he spoke.

"Yes." It was an effort to prevent his voice from

cracking. "Yes, just like a dog someone won't let into the house at night, with his back against the front door."

"But your wife has never seen him?"

"What difference does that make? Ruth is an invalid; you must know that."

Saunders had found the paper he had been looking for, and disregarded the last remark. Reading it upside down from his position on the far side of the desk, David saw that it was his own class schedule. "What do you want with that?" he asked.

"Monday the subject of your class was *Swann's Way.* One of your favorites, isn't it?"

"I wrote my thesis—"

"And Tuesday you covered *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs—Within a Budding Grove*; yesterday's schedule calls for *The Guermantes Way,* and today—"

"*Cities of the Plain.* What does that have to do with it?"

"It strikes me that this figure has only appeared—thus far—when you are doing Proust. You said he followed you home. Does he also follow you into the Language Research Complex here? Is he outside in my reception room now?"

"No." David shook his head. "I hadn't really thought of it that way, but you're right; he doesn't come here. He rides half a block behind me when I'm coming in the morning, then I lose him in the corridors on my way here to L.R.C., and don't see him again until I go to class." Suddenly he understood what the other man was driving at. "You think it's my imagination, don't you?" It was shocking, humiliating. He felt the blood surge into his face and was afraid to allow himself to say anything more for fear that he would actually insult Saunders.

Saunders looked distressed. "We live in an age of tension, Paramore. You know the slogan: 'Only one out of every twelve will never suffer mental illness.' A person like

yourself, hardworking, conscientious, perhaps a little introverted, is almost certain to have a little trouble sooner or later. Why do you think we have machines in the coffee shop selling the psycho-specific drugs?"

"But other people see him too. The students do, in class—they look toward him, they giggle." It was preposterous, but it was that which made him feel so helpless; if Saunders could not see the absurdity of his accusation at first glance, how could he be made to see it?

"But they don't speak to him?"

"I told you that. I don't speak to him myself; I don't want to give him an opening."

"Undergraduates are liable to let their eyes wander during class, and they laugh at almost anything." Saunders' tone was soothing. "Perhaps if there were nothing there they might look at a spot toward which you yourself seemed to be staring."

"I refuse to continue this." He stood up.

Saunders half rose himself, thrusting out a hand in a gesture of apology. "Listen now, about this black figure; will you do what I ask you to?"

"You're head of the department."

"Fine. I want you to take the rest of the day, and the next four days, off from teaching. I'll have Henderson take your classes. And don't forget what I said about the psycho-specifics. Here—" Digging into a pocket, Saunders produced an opened packet still containing two rather linty para-reserpine capsules. "These ought to hold you until you can get some of your own; I'll buy some more when I go to lunch."

David wanted to object, but only managed to say, "It is real."

"If it's real, fine. I hope it is. And if so it will come to the classroom just as you say it has for the past three days

and Henderson will report it to me. But in any case you should have a rest, Dave; you look ready to drop."

He threw the para-reserpine into the first trash recepticle he passed in the corridor, but following Saunders' instructions did not go to his classes that day, and when he pedaled home in the evening he was not followed. Presumably, he reflected, the student under the black cloth was following poor old Henderson. He wondered how Henderson liked it.

That evening he talked to Ruth as little as he decently could, saying nothing about his interview with Saunders. Long after she had dropped off to sleep, still propped up by pillows in her big bed, he remained awake, thinking about the black shape and speculating on the exact nature of the plot in which it must be involved. It was nearly daylight when it occurred to him that he might be able to frustrate it and that it was indeed his duty to do so.

After much searching in the attic he found an old robe which would serve his purpose, and, providentially in the same box, a square-topped hat that would lend the correct shape to his head. The next morning, after he had carried up Ruth's breakfast, he put them into a large grocery sack and rode to the campus with it clamped under his arm. Once in the study cell assigned him, he stowed it in an empty file drawer. A few minutes before the beginning of the final lecture period he left unobtrusively with the bundle again under his arm.

In a rest room he put on the hat and flung the cloak over his head, reminded of how as a child he had believed that if his own eyes were concealed he could walk unseen by others, like Gollum with the One Ring. The old robe smelled musty and the cuts he had made in it were difficult to keep aligned with his eyes, but the hooded student, whoever he might be, would surely take him for a

second member of the conspiracy sent to help him. He stepped onto the belt, and a moment later he was opening the door of the classroom that was normally his own.

The other had not come yet. Neither, it seemed, had Henderson. He took a seat in the back of the room, grateful that the students seemed disposed to ignore him.

The lights dimmed, and in the split second before the projector switched itself on, the realization that he knew what was about to come came rushing down upon him like a wind from the mountains, shrieking in his face.

In bright primary colors the screen showed the rumpled bedroom with its cork-lined walls and the bearded man in the bed. Involuntarily the words formed themselves in his mind: *For a long time I used to go to bed early. Sometimes when I had put out my candle, my eyes would close so quickly that I had not even time to say "I'm going to sleep." . . . Sometimes, too, just as Eve was created from a rib of Adam, so a woman would come into existence while I was sleeping, conceived from some strain in the position of my limbs. . . . When a man is asleep, he has in a circle round him the chain of the hours, the sequence of the years, the order of the heavenly hosts.* It was the beginning of *Swann's Way* again.

He knew what was happening now, and when Mme. Swann's victoria swung through the Porte Dauphine he crept silently out of the room to watch, invisible, his own bent form arrive on the belt; then reentered to see himself start with fear.

Without lapse of time he found himself on his bicycle again, pursuing his own back under the towering white shapes of the sycamores. He pulled the gown from his face, letting it hang properly, and straightened the mortarboard on his head. Soon—the red and yellow leaves were racing past his ears—he would be back. Soon—he seemed to fly.

He looked at his hands, and they were liver-spotted still, but the spots were fading. He would not teach. He would tell Ruth as they sat together in the folding tin chairs and listened to the droning speakers. He would not teach. He would wake up.

How the Whip Came Back

by Gene Wolfe

Pretty Miss Bushnan's suite was all red acrylic and green-dyed leather. Real leather, very modern—red acrylic and green, real leather were the modern things this year. But it made her Louis XIV secretary, Sal, look terribly out of place.

Miss Bushnan had disliked the suite from the day she moved in—though she could hardly complain, when there was a chance that the entire city of Geneva and the sovereign Swiss nation might be offended. This evening she did her best to like red and green, and in the meantime turned her eyes from them to the cool relief of the fountain. It was a copy of a Cellini salt dish and lovely, no matter how silly a fountain indoors on the hundred and twenty-fifth floor might be. In a characteristic reversal of feeling she found herself wondering what sort of place she might have gotten if she had had to find one for herself, without reservations, at the height of the tourist season. Three flights up in some dingy suburban *pension,* no doubt.

So bless the generosity of the sovereign Swiss Republic. Bless the openhanded city of Geneva. Bless the hotel. And bless the United Nations Conference on Human Value, which brought glory to the Swiss Republic et cetera and inspired the free mountaineers to grant free hotel suites in

the height of the season even to non-voting Conference observers such as she. Sal had brought her in a gibson a few minutes ago, and she picked it up from the edge of the fountain to sip, a little surprised to see that it was already three-quarters gone; *red and green.*

A brawny, naked triton half-reclined, water streaming from his hair and beard, dripping from his mouth, dribbling from his ears. His eyes, expressionless and smooth as eggs, wept for her. Balancing her empty glass carefully on the rim again, she leaned forward and stroked his smooth, wet stone flesh. Smiling she told him—mentally—how handsome he was, and he blushed pink lemonade at the compliment. She thought of herself taking off her clothes and climbing in with him, the cool water soothing her face which now felt hot and flushed. Not, she told herself suddenly, that she would feel any real desire for the triton in the unlikely event of his being metamorphosed to flesh. If she wanted men in her bed she could find ten any evening, and afterward edit the whole adventure from Sal's memory bank. She wanted a man, but she wanted only one, she wanted Brad (whose real name, as the terrible, bitter woman who lived in the back of her skull, the woman the gibson had not quite drowned, reminded her, had proved at his trial to be Aaron). The triton vanished and Brad was there instead, laughing and dripping Atlantic water on the sand as he threw up his arms to catch the towel she flung him. Brad running through the surf . . .

Sal interrupted her revery, rolling in on silent casters. "A gentleman to see you, Miss Bushnan." Sal had real metal drawer-pulls on her false drawers, and they jingled softly when she stopped to deliver her message, like costume jewelry.

"Who?" Miss Bushnan straightened up, pushing a stray wisp of brown hair away from her face.

Sal said blankly, "I don't know." The gibson had made

Miss Bushnan feel pleasantly muzzy, but even so the blankness came through as slightly suspicious.

"He didn't give you his name or a card?"

"He did, Miss Bushnan, but I can't read it. Even though, as I'm sure you're already aware, Miss Bushnan, there's an Italian language software package for me for only two hundred dollars. It includes reading, writing, speaking, and an elementary knowledge of great Italian art."

"The advertising package," Miss Bushnan said with wasted sarcasm, "is free. And compulsory with your lease."

"Yes," Sal said. "Isn't it wonderful?"

Miss Bushnan swung around in the green leather chair from which she had been watching the fountain. "He did give you a card. I see it in one of your pigeonholes. Take it out and look at it."

As if the Louis XIV secretary had concealed a silver snake, one of Sal's arms emerged. With steel fingers like nails it took the card and held it in front of a swirl of ornament hiding a scanner.

"Now," Miss Bushnan said patiently, "pretend that what you're reading isn't Italian. Let's say instead that it's English that's been garbled by a translator post-processor error. What's your best guess at the original meaning?"

" 'His Holiness Pope Honorius V.' "

"Ah." Miss Bushnan sat up in her chair. "Please show the gentleman in."

With a faint hum of servomotors Sal rolled away. There was just time for a last fragment of daydream. Brad with quiet eyes alone with her on the beach at Cape Cod. Talking about the past, talking about the divorce, Brad really, *really* sorry . . .

The Pope wore a plain dark suit and a white satin tie embroidered in gold with the triple crown. He was an elderly man, never tall and now stooped. Miss Bushnan rose. She sat beside him every day at the council sessions,

and had occasionally exchanged a few words with him during the refreshment breaks (he had a glass of red wine usually, she good English tea or the horrible Swiss coffee laced with brandy), but it had never so much as occurred to her that he might ever have anything to discuss with her in private.

"Your Holiness," she said as smoothly as the gibson would let her manage the unfamiliar words, "this is an unexpected pleasure."

Sal chimed in with, "May we offer you something?" and looking sidelong Miss Bushnan saw that she had put Scotch, a bottle of club soda, and two glasses of ice on her fold-out writing shelf.

The Pope waved her away, and when he had settled in his chair said pointedly, "I deeply appreciate your hospitality, but I wonder if it would be possible to speak with you privately."

Miss Bushnan said, "Of course," and waited until Sal had coasted off in the direction of the kitchen. "My secretary bothers you, Your Holiness?"

Taking a cigar from the recesses of his coat, the Pope nodded. "I'm afraid she does. I have never had much sympathy with furniture that talks—you don't mind if I smoke?" He had only the barest trace of Italian accent.

"If it makes you more comfortable I should prefer it."

He smiled in appreciation of the little speech, and struck an old-fashioned kitchen match on the imitation marble of the fountain. It left no mark, and when he tossed in the matchstick a moment later, it bobbed only twice in the crystal water before being whisked away. "I suppose I'm out of date," the Pope continued. "But back in my youth when people speculated about the possibility of those things we always thought of them as being shaped more or less like us. Something like a suit of armor."

"I can't imagine why," Miss Bushnan said. "You might

as well shape a radio like a human mouth—or a TV screen like a keyhole."

The Pope chuckled. "I didn't say I was going to defend the idea. I only remarked that that was what we expected."

"I'm sure they must have considered it, but—"

"But too much extra work would have had to go into just making it look human," the Pope continued for her, "and besides, a furniture cabinet is much cheaper than articulated metal and doesn't make the robot look dead when it's turned off."

She must have looked flustered because he continued, smiling, "You Americans are not the only manufacturers, you see. It happens that a friend of mine is president of Olivetti. A skeptic like all of them today, but . . ."

The sentence trailed away in a shrug and a puff of smoke from the black cigar. Miss Bushnan recalled the time she had asked the French delegate about him. The French delegate was handsome in that very clean and spare fashion some Frenchmen have, and she liked him better than the paunchy businessman who represented her own country.

"You do not know who the man who sits by you is, mademoiselle?" he asked quizzically. "But that is most interesting. You see, I know who he is, but I do not know who *you* are. Except that I see you each day and you are much more pretty than the lady from Russia or the lady from Nigeria, and perhaps in your way as chic as that bad girl who reports on us for *Le Figaro*—but I hope not quite so full of tricks. Now I will trade you information."

So she had had to tell him, feeling more like a fool each second as the milling crush of secretaries of delegates, and secretaries of secretaries, and unidentifiable people from the Swiss embassies of all the participating nations, swirled around them. When she had finished he said, "Ah, it is kind of you to work for charity, and especially for one

that does not pay you, but is it necessary? This is no longer the twentieth century after all, and the governments take care of most of us quite well."

"That's what most people think; I suppose that's why so few give much any more. But we try to bring a little human warmth to the people we help, and I find I meet the class of people I want to meet in connection with it. I mean my co-workers, of course. It's really rather exclusive."

He said, "How very great-hearted you are," with a little twist to the corner of his mouth that made her feel like a child talking to a grown-up. "But you asked the identity of the old gentleman. He is Pope."

"Who?" Then she had realized what the word meant and added, "I thought there weren't any more."

"Oh no." The French delegate winked. "It is still there. Much, much smaller, but still there . . . But we are so crowded here, and I think you are tired of standing. Let me buy you a liqueur and I will tell you all about it."

He had taken her to a place at the top of some building overlooking the lake, and it had been very pleasant listening to the waiters pointing him out in whispers to the tourists, even though the tourists were mostly Germans and no one anyone knew. They were given a table next to the window of course, and while they sipped and smoked and looked at the lake he told her, with many digressions, about a great-aunt who had been what he called "a believer" and two ex-wives who had not. (History at Radcliffe had somehow left her with the impression that the whole thing had stopped with John XXIII, just as the Holy Roman Empire had managed to vanish out of sheer good manners when it was no longer wanted. On the teaching machines you filled in a table of Holy Roman Emperors and Popes and Sultans and such things by touching multiple-choice buttons. Then when you had it

all done the screen glowed with rosy light for a minute—which was called reinforcement—and told you your grade. After which, unless you were lucky, there was another table to be filled—but Popes had disappeared and you put the Kings of Sweden in that column instead.)

She remembered having asked the French delegate, "There are only a hundred thousand left? In the whole world?"

"That is my guess, of real believers. Of course many more who continue to use the name and perhaps have their children wetted if they think of it. It may be that that is too low—say a quarter million. But it has been growing less for a long time. Eventually—who knows? It may turn about and grow more. It would not be the first time that happened."

She had said, "It seems to me the whole thing should have been squashed a long time ago." . . .

The Pope straightened his shoulders a little and flicked ashes into the fountain. "At any rate, they make me uncomfortable," he said. "I always have the feeling they don't like me. I hope you don't mind."

She smiled and said something about the convenience factor, and having Sal shipped in a crate from New York.

"I suppose it's a good thing my predecessor got the government to take responsibility for the Vatican," the Pope said. "We couldn't possibly staff it now, so we'd be using those things. Doubtless ours would have stained glass in them."

Miss Bushnan laughed politely. Actually she felt like coughing. The Pope's cigar was the acrid, cheap kind smoked in the poorer sort of Italian cafés. Briefly she wondered if he himself had not been born into the lowest class. His hands were gnarled and twisted like an old gardener's, as though he'd been weeding all his life.

He was about to say something else, but Sal, reentering

on silent wheels, interrupted him. "Phone, Miss Bushnan," Sal said at her elbow.

She swiveled in her chair again and touched the "On" and "Record" buttons on the communications console, motioning as she did for the Pope to keep his seat. The screen lit up, and she said, "Good evening," to the office robot who had placed the call.

The robot answered with an announcement: "Her Excellency the Delegate Plenipotentiary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Comrade Natasha Nikolayeva." The image flickered and a striking blonde, about forty and somewhat overblown and overdressed, but with a remarkably good complexion and enormous eyes, replaced the robot. The Russian delegate had been an actress at one time and was currently the wife of a general; gossip said that she owed her position at the conference to favors granted the Party Secretary.

"Good evening," Miss Bushnan said again, and added, "Comrade Nikolayeva."

The Russian delegate gave her a dazzling smile. "I called, darling, to ask if you like my little speech today. I was not too long? You did not find it difficult, wearing the headphones for translation?"

"I thought it was very moving," Miss Bushnan said carefully. Actually, she had been appalled by the Russian delegate's references to Hitler's gas chambers and her cant phrases about restoring economic value to human life. It came to saying that if people had no value alive they should be made into soap, but she had no intention of telling the Russian delegate that.

"I convinced you?"

Brad made into soap. It should have been funny, but it wasn't. One of Brad's fingers slowly exposed as she scrubbed herself with the bar. The Russian dele-

gate was still looking at her, waiting for her to reply.

"It isn't necessary that you convince me, is it?" She smiled, trying to turn the question aside. "I'm merely an observer, after all."

"It is necessary to me," the Russian delegate said, "in my *soul.*" She pressed a hand flashing with diamonds against one upholstered breast. "I myself feel it so deeply."

"I'm sure you do. It was a wonderful speech. Very dramatic."

"You understand, then." The Russian delegate's mood changed in an instant. "That is wonderful, darling. Listen, you know I am staying at our embassy here—would you have dinner with us? It will be Tuesday, and nearly everyone will be there."

Miss Bushnan hesitated for a moment, looking briefly at the Pope, seated out of range of the Russian's vision, for guidance. He was expressionless.

"Darling, I will tell you a secret. I have sworn not to, but what is an oath when it is for you? The French delegate asked me to invite you. I would have in any case, of course, but he came to me. He is so shy; but if you come I have promised him I will seat you beside him. Do not say I told you."

"I'd be delighted to come."

"That too is wonderful then." The Russian delegate's smile said: *We are women together and I love you, little one.*

"Tuesday? The day after the final vote?"

"Yes, Tuesday. I will be looking forward so much."

When the screen went dark Miss Bushnan said to the Pope, "Something's up."

The Pope only looked at her, as though trying to weigh what might be behind her attractive but not arresting face and brown eyes.

After a moment Miss Bushnan continued, "The French delegate might buy me a dinner, but he wouldn't ask for me as a dinner partner at an official function, and that Russian woman has been ignoring you and me ever since the conference opened. What's going on?"

"Yes," the Pope said slowly, "something has happened, as you say. I see you hadn't heard."

"No."

"I was more fortunate. The Portuguese delegate confides in me sometimes."

"Will you tell me?"

"That is why I came. The delegates caucused this afternoon after the public session. They decided to ask for our votes at the final meeting."

"Us?" Miss Bushnan was nonplused. "The observers?"

"Yes. The votes will have no legal validity, of course. They cannot be counted. But they want total unanimity —they want to get us down on the record."

"I see," said Miss Bushnan.

"Church and charity. People surrendered their faith in us to put it in the governments, but they're losing that now, and the delegates sense it. Perhaps the faith won't return to us, but there's a chance it might."

"And so I'm to be wined and dined."

The Pope nodded. "And courted too, I should imagine. The French are very enthused about this; their penal system has been at loose ends ever since they lost their African colonies over fifty years ago."

Miss Bushnan had been staring at her lap, smoothing her skirt absently where it lay across her knees; she looked up suddenly, meeting his eyes. "And you? What are they going to offer you?"

"Not the lost sees of eastern Europe, you may be sure. Mostly flattery, I suspect."

"And if we oppose them—"

"If we oppose them we will be raising standards about which all the millions who detest the idea, and all the millions more who will come to detest it when they see it in operation, can rally."

"My husband—my former husband, technically—is in prison, Your Holiness. Did you know that?"

"No, of course not. If I had—"

"We plan to be remarried when he is released, and I know from visiting him what the alternative to the motion is. I know what we've got now. It's not as though they're going to be snatched from some Arcadia."

Unexpectedly Sal was at her elbow again. "Phone, Miss Bushnan."

The American delegate's puffy face filled the screen. "Miss—ah—Bushnan?"

She nodded.

"This is—ah—a pleasure I have had to postpone too long."

In order to save him time she said, "I've heard about the decision to ask the observers to vote."

"Good, good." The American delegate drummed his fingers on his desk and seemed to be trying to avoid her eyes. "Miss Bushnan, are you aware of the—ah—financial crisis now confronting our nation?"

"I'm not an economist—"

"But you are an informed laywoman. You know the situation. Miss Bushnan, there are close to a quarter of a million men and women in state and federal prisons today, and to maintain each of them there costs—costs us, Miss Bushnan, the taxpayers—five thousand dollars a year *each.* That's a total of a billion dollars a year."

"I believe you brought out those figures during your speech at the third session."

"Perhaps I did. But we are all interested in restoring the preeminent place the United States once held in world affairs, aren't we? Miss Bushnan, to do that we have had to take quite a few pages from the Soviet book. And it's been good for us. We've learned humility, if you like."

She nodded.

"We used to believe in job security for everybody, and a wage based on classification and seniority. That was what we called Free Enterprise, and we were proud of it. Well, the Communists showed us differently: incentives, and discipline for underachievers. They forced us to the wall with those until we learned our lesson, and now—well, you can say whatever you like, but by God things are better."

"So I understand," Miss Bushnan said. Here it came.

"Now they've got a new trick," the American delegate continued. "They used, you know, to have these gangs of—ah—laborers out in Siberia. Then one day some smart commissar thought to himself: By God, if the peasants can grow more vegetables on private plots, couldn't the prisoners be used more effectively that way too?"

"If I recall your speech correctly," Miss Bushnan said, "you pointed out that if half the federal and state prisoners could be leased out to private owners at five thousand a year, the revenue would take care of the remaining half."

"Lessees, not owners," the American delegate said. "Lessees with option to renew. It will lift a billion dollar millstone from about our nation's neck."

"But," Miss Bushnan continued innocently, "surely we could do the same thing without entering into the international agreement being discussed here."

"No, no." The American delegate waved a hand in protest. "We should enter the world community with this. After all, Miss Bushnan, international trade is one of the

few, and one of the strongest, cohesive forces. We need by all means to establish a supranational market structure."

The Pope, sitting outside the range of the American delegate's view, said softly, "Ask him if they're still going to call them slaves."

Miss Bushnan inquired obediently, "Are you still going to call them slaves? I mean in the final agreement."

"Oh, yes." The American delegate leaned closer to the scanner and lowered his voice. "In English language usage. I don't mind telling you, however, that we—I mean the British and Canadians as well as our own country—have had a hard time getting that one past the Soviets. It comes from the root-word 'slav,' you know, and they don't like that. But it's a *selling* word. People like the idea of having slaves; robots have gotten us used to it and tranquilizers and anti-aggressants have made it practical; what's more, it's a link with the past at a time when too many such links are phasing out. People feel manipulated today, Miss Bushnan. They want to be master of someone themselves."

"I see. And it will get them out of prison. Place them in decent surroundings."

"Oh, it certainly will. And—ah—you asked about the necessity of an international agreement and an international market a moment ago. You must remember that our nation needs hard currencies very badly today; and we have the curse—or, ah—the blessing, blessing if you think of it in a positive fashion, of having the highest crime rate among major nations. The United States will be an exporter in this market, Miss Bushnan."

"I see," Miss Bushnan said again.

"You may have heard some of these rumors about the Soviets pressing a certain number of—ah—country people into the market to satisfy the demand. These are slanders, of course, and in any event that sort of thing would be

unthinkable in the United States. I understand you're a wealthy woman, Miss Bushnan; your father is in the government, I suppose?"

"He was," Miss Bushnan said. "He's dead now. The Department of Agriculture."

"Then with a family background of public service you understand that in a democracy we have to listen to the voice of the people; and the people want this. The—ah—most recent polls have shown seventy-nine percent favoring. I won't try to hide the fact that it would be an embarrassment to our country if you voted in opposition, and it would not benefit the organization you represent—in fact it would do it a great deal of harm."

"Are you threatening us?"

"No, of course not. But I'm asking you to consider what would happen to your organization if you lost your tax-exempt status. I believe a vote in opposition to the motion might—ah—make Washington feel that you were engaged in political activity. That would mean loss of the exemption, naturally."

"But a vote in favor of the motion wouldn't be political activity?"

"Washington would expect your organization to support this humanitarian cause as a matter of course. I doubt very much that the matter would come up. You must understand, Miss Bushnan, that when—ah—a measure as revolutionary as this is under consideration humanity must be practically unanimous. Even a token opposition could be disastrous."

Paraphrasing the Pope, Miss Bushnan said, "It would raise a standard about which all the millions who detest the idea could rally."

"Millions is surely an exaggeration; thousands perhaps. But in principle you are correct, and that must not be

allowed to happen. Miss Bushnan, Washington has sent me a dossier on you. Did you know that?"

"How could I?"

"Your former husband is confined in the federal penitentiary at Ossining, New York. In the letters you have exchanged both of you have stated an intention to remarry upon his release. Were those letters sincere, Miss Bushnan?"

"I don't see what my personal life has to do with this."

"I merely wish to use your own case as an example—one which will strike home, so to speak. It will be at least five years before your former husband will be released under the present system; but if the motion passes it will be possible for you to lease—ah—" The American delegate paused, looking at some paper on his desk.

"Brad," Miss Bushnan said.

"Yes, Brad. You could lease Brad from the government for those five years. You would have him, he would have you, and your government would be twenty-five thousand dollars to the better as the direct result of your happiness. What's the matter with that, eh? In fact, in your case I think I could promise that your husband would be one of the first prisoners to be made available for the plan, and that he would be, so to speak, reserved. There would be no danger of someone else leasing him, if that's worrying you. Of course you would be expected to supervise him."

Miss Bushnan nodded slowly. "I understand."

"May I ask then if you intend to support the measure?"

"I hesitate to tell you. I know you're going to misunderstand me."

"Oh?" The American delegate leaned forward until his face filled the small screen. "In what way?"

"You think that this is going to help Brad and me, and that because of that I'm going to consent to your selling

the Americans you don't want, selling them to die in somebody's mines. You are wrong. This is going to ruin whatever may be left between Brad and me, and I know it. I know how Brad is going to feel when his wife is also his keeper. It will strip away whatever manhood he has left, and before the five years are out he'll hate me—just as he will if I don't buy him when he knows I could. But you are going to do this thing whether the organization I represent favors it or not, and to save that organization—for the good it does now and the good it will do among the slaves when you have them—I am going to vote for the motion."

"You will support the motion?" His eyes seemed to bore into her.

"I will support the motion. Yes."

"Fine."

The American delegate's hand was moving toward the "Off" switch of his console, but Miss Bushnan called, "Wait. What about the other observer? The Pope?"

"He can be taken care of, I feel sure. His church is almost entirely dependent today on the goodwill of the Italian government."

"He hasn't agreed yet?"

"Don't worry," the American delegate said, "the Italians will be contacting him." His hand touched the switch and his image vanished.

"So you gave in," the Pope said.

"And you wouldn't?" Miss Bushnan asked. "Even if you knew you'd be running your church from an empty store the day after you voted no?"

"I might abstain," the Pope admitted slowly, "but I could never bring myself to give a favorable vote."

"How about lying to them, if that were the only way you could get to vote?"

The Pope looked at her in surprise, then his eyes smiled.

Miss Bushnan continued, "Could you tell them you were

going to vote yes when you were really going to vote against them, Your Holiness?"

"I don't suppose I could. It would be a matter of my position, if you understand me, as well as my conscience."

"Fortunately," Miss Bushnan said, "I don't feel that way. Hasn't it occurred to you that this business of asking for our votes must be predicated on the idea that they'll be favorable? It hasn't been announced, has it?"

The Pope nodded. "I see what you mean. If the decision had been made public they couldn't change it; but as it is, if they don't like what they hear from us—"

"But they'll have every news agency in the world there when the vote is actually taken."

"You are a clever girl." The Pope shook his head. "It is a lesson to me to think of how very much I have underestimated you, sitting in the gallery there beside me all these days, and even this evening when I came here. But that is good; God wants me to learn humility, and He has chosen a child to teach it, as He so often does. I hope you understand that after the council I will be giving you all the support I can. I'll publish an encyclical—"

"If you feel you can't lie to them," Miss Bushnan interposed practically, "we'll need some excuse for your being absent from the vote."

"I have one," the Pope said. "I don't"— he paused—"suppose you've heard of Mary Catherine Bryan?"

"I don't think so. Who is she?"

"She is—or at least she was—a nun. She was the last nun, actually, for the past three years. Ever since Sister Carmela Rose died. I received a call this morning telling me Mary Catherine passed away last night, and her rites are to be this coming Tuesday. The government still lets us use St. Peter's sometimes for that sort of thing."

"So you won't be here." Miss Bushnan smiled. "But a nun sounds so interesting. Tell me about her."

"There isn't a great deal to tell. She was a woman of my mother's generation, and for the last four years she lived in an apartment on the Via del Fori. Alone, after Sister Carmela Rose died. They never got along too well, actually, being from different orders, but Mary Catherine cried for weeks, I remember, after Sister Carmela Rose was gone."

"Did she wear those wonderful flowing robes you see in pictures?"

"Oh, no," the Pope said. "You see, nuns no longer have to—" he stopped in the middle of the sentence, and the animation left his face, making him at once a very old man. "I'm sorry," he said after a moment, "I had forgotten. I should have said that for the last seventy years or so of their existence nuns no longer wore those things. They abandoned them, actually, just a few years before we priests dropped our Roman collars. You have to understand that from time to time I have tried to persuade someone to . . ."

"Yes?"

"Well, the old phrase was 'take the veil.' It would have kept the tradition alive and would have been so nice for Mary Catherine and Sister Carmela Rose. I always told the girls all the things they wouldn't have to give up, and they always said they'd think about it, but none of them ever came back."

"I'm sorry your friend is dead," Miss Bushnan said simply. To her surprise she found she really was.

"It's the end of something that had lived almost as long as the Church itself—oh, I suppose it will be revived in fifty or a hundred years when the spirit of the world turns another corner, but a revival is never really the same thing. As though we tried to put the Kyrie back into the mass now."

Miss Bushnan, who did not know what he was talking about, said, "I suppose so, but–"

"But what has it to do with the matter at hand? Not a great deal, I'm afraid. But while they are voting that is where I shall be. And afterward perhaps we can do something." He stood up, adjusting his clothing, and from somewhere in the back of the apartment Sal came rolling out with his hat positioned on her writing shelf. It was red, Miss Bushnan noticed, but the feather in the band was black instead of green. As he put it on he said, "We started among slaves, more or less, you know. Practically all the early Christians who weren't Jews were either slaves or freedmen. I'll be going now to say the funeral mass of the last nun. Perhaps I'll also live to administer the vows of the first."

Sal announced, "Saint Macrina, the sister of Saint Basil, founded the first formal order of nuns in three fifty-eight." The Pope smiled and said, "Quite right, my dear," and Miss Bushnan said vaguely, "I bought her the World's Great Religions package about a year ago. I suppose that's how she knew who you were." She was thinking about Brad again, and if the Pope made any reply she failed to hear it. Brad a slave . . .

Then the door shut and Sal muttered, "I just don't trust that old man, he makes me feel creepy," and Miss Bushnan knew he was gone.

She told Sal, "He's harmless, and anyway he's going to Rome now," and only then, with the tension draining away, did she feel how great it had been. "Harmless," she said again. "Bring me another drink, please, Sal."

Tuesday would be the day. The whole world would be watching, and everyone at the conference would be in red and green, but she would wear something blue and stand out. Something blue and her pearls. In her mind Brad

would somehow be waiting behind her, naked to the waist, with his wrists in bronze manacles. "I'll have them made at Tiffany's," she said, speaking too softly for Sal, busy with the shaker in the kitchen, to hear. "Tiffany's, but no gems or turquoise or that sort of junk."

Just the heavy, solid bronze with perhaps a touch here and there of silver. Sal would make him keep them polished.

She could hear herself telling their friends, "Sal makes him keep them shined. I tell him if he doesn't I'm going to send him back—just kidding, of course."

Goslin Day

by Avram Davidson

It was a goslin day, no doubt about it, of course it can happen that goslin things can occur, say, once a day for many days. But *this* day was a *goslin* day. From the hour when, properly speaking, the ass brays in his stall, but here instead the kat kvells on the rooftop—to the hour when the cock crows on his roost, but here instead the garbageman bangs on his can—even that early, Faroly realized that it was going to be a goslin day (night? let be night: *It was* evening *and* [after that] *it was morning: one day.* Yes or no?). In the warbled agony of the shriekscream Faroly had recognized an element present which was more than the usual ketzelkat expression of its painpleasure syndrome. In the agglutinative obscenities which interrupted the bangcrashes of the yuckels emptying eggshells orangerinds coffeegrounds there was (this morning, different from all other mornings) something unlike their mere usual brute pleasure in waking the dead. Faroly sighed. His wife and child were still asleep. He saw the dimlight already creeping in, sat up, reached for the glass and saucer and poured water over his nails, began to whisper his preliminary prayers, already concentrating on his Intention in the name *Unity*: but aware, aware, aware, the hotsticky feeling in the air, the swimmy looks in the dusty corners of windows, mirrors; something a tension, here a twitch and there a twitch. Notgood notgood.

In short: a goslin day.

Faroly decided to seek an expert opinion, went to Crown Heights to consult the kabbalist, Kaplánovics.

Rabbaness Kaplánovics was at the stove, schauming off the soup with an enormous spoon, gestured with a free elbow toward an inner room. There sat the sage, the sharp one, the teacher of our teachers, on his head his beaver hat neatly brushed, on his feet and legs his boots brightly polished, in between his garments well and clean without a fleck or stain as befits a disciple of the wise. He and Faroly shook hands, greeted, blessed the Name. Kaplánovics pushed across several sheets of paper covered with an exquisitely neat calligraphy.

"Already there," the kabbalist said. "I have been through everything three times, twice. The *NY Times,* the *Morgen Dzshornal,* I. F. Stone, Dow-Jones, the *Daph-Yomi,* your name-Text, the weather report, Psalm of the Day. Everything is worked out, by numerology, analogy, gemátria, noutricon, anagrams, allegory, procession and precession. So.

"Of course today as any everyday we must await the coming of the Messiah: 'await'—*expect? today?* not today. Today he wouldn't come. Considerations for atmospheric changes, or changes for atmospheric considerations, *not—bad. Not—bad.* Someone gives you an offer for a good airconditioner, cheap, you could think about it. Read seven capitals of psalms between afternoon and evening prayers. One sequence is enough. The day is favorable for decisions on growth stocks, but avoid closed-end mutual funds. On the corner by the beygal store is an old woman with a pyshka, collecting dowries for orphan girls in Jerusalem: the money, she never sends, this is *her* sin, it's no concern of yours: give her eighteen cents, a very auspicious number: merit, cheaply bought (she has sugar diabetes and the daughter last week gave birth to a

weak-headed child by a schwartzer), what else?" They examined the columns of characters.

"Ahah. Ohoh. If you get a chance to buy your house, don't buy it, the Regime will condemn it for a freeway, where are they all *going* so fast?—every man who has two legs thinks he needs three automobiles—besides—where did I write it? oh yes. There. The neighborhood is going to change very soon and if you stay you will be killed in three years and two months, or three months and two years, depending on which system of gemátria is used in calculating. You have to warn your brother-in-law his sons should each commence bethinking a marriagematch. Otherwise they will be going to cinemas and watching televisions and putting arms around girls, won't have the proper intentions for their nighttime prayers, won't even read the protective psalms selcted by the greatgrandson of the Baalshemtov: and with what results, my dear man? Nocturnal emissions and perhaps worse; is it for nothing that The Chapters of the Principles caution us, 'At age eighteen to the marriage canopy and the performance of good deeds,' hm?"

Faroly cleared his throat. "Something else is on your mind," said the kabbalist. "Speak. Speak." Faroly confessed his concern about goslins. Kaplánovics exclaimed, struck the table. "Goslins! you wanted to talk about goslins? It's already gone past the hour to say the Shema, and I certainly didn't have in mind when I said it to commence constructing a kaméa—" He clicked his tongue in annoyance. "Am I omniscient?" he demanded. "Why didn't you let me know you were coming? Man walks in off the street, expects to find—"

But it did not take long to soothe and smooth him—Who is strong? he who can control his own passion.

And now to first things first, or, in this case, last things first, for it was the most recent manifestation of goslinness which Faroly wished to talk about. The kabbalist listened

politely but did not seem in agreement with nor impressed by his guest's recitation of the signs by which a goslin day might make itself known. " 'Show simônim,' " he murmured, with a polite nod. "This one loses an object, that one finds it, let the claimant come and 'show simônim,' let him cite the signs by which his knowledge is demonstrated, and, hence, his ownership . . ." but this was mere polite fumfutting, and Faroly knew that the other knew that both knew it.

On Lexington a blackavised goslin slipped out from a nexus of cracked mirrors reflecting dust at each other in a disused nightclub, snatched a purse from a young woman emerging from a ribs joint; in Bay Ridge another, palepink and blond, snatched a purse from an *old* woman right in front of Suomi Evangelical Lutheran. Both goslins flickersnickered and were sharply gone. In Tottenville, a third one materialized in the bedroom of an honest young woman still half asleep in bed just a second before her husband came back from the nightshift in Elizabeth, New Jersey; uttered a goslin cry and jumped out the window holding his shirt. Naturally the husband never believed her—would *you*? Two more slipped in and out of a crucial street corner on the troubled bordermarches of Italian Harlem, pausing only just long enough to exchange exclamations of *guineabastard!/goddamnigger!* and goslin looks out of the corners of their goslin eyes. Goslin cabdrivers curseshouted at hotsticky pregnant women dumb enough to try and cross at pedestrian crossings. The foul air grew fouler, thicker, hotter, tenser, muggier, murkier: and the goslins, smelling it from afar, came leapsniffing through the vimveil to nimblesnitch, torment, buffet, burden, uglylook, poke, makestumble, maltreat, and quickshmiggy back again to gezzle guzzle goslinland.

The kabbalist had grown warm in discussion, eagerly inscribed circles in the air with downhooked thumb apart from fist, " '. . . they have the forms of men and also they have the lusts of men,' " he quoted.

"You are telling me what every schoolchild knows," protested Faroly. "But from *which* of the other three of the four worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation, and Effectation—from *which* do they come? And why more often, and more and more often, and more and more and more often, and—"

Face wrinkled to emphasize the gesture of waving these words away, Kaplánovics said, "If Yesod goes, how can Hod remain? if there is no Malchuth, how can there be Quether? Thus one throws away with the hand the entire configuration of Adam Qadmon, the Tree of Life, the Ancient of Days. Men tamper with the very vessels themselves, as if they don't know what happened with the Bursting of the Vessels before, as though the Husks, the Shards, even a single shattered Cortex, doesn't still plague and vex and afflict us to this day. They look down into the Abyss, and they say, 'This is high,' and they look up to an Eminence and they say, 'This is low.' . . . And not thus alone! And not thus alone! Not just with complex deenim, as, for example, those concerning the fluxes of women—no! no! but the simplest of the simple of the Six Hundred and Thirteen Commandments: to place a parapet around a roof to keep someone from falling off and be killed. What can be simpler? What can be more obvious? What can be easier?

"—but do they do it? What, was it only three weeks ago, or four? a Puertorican boy didn't fall off the roof of an apartment house near here? Dead, perished. Go talk to the wall. Men don't want to know. Talk to them *Ethics,* talk to them *Brotherhood,* talk to them *Ecumenical Dialogue,* talk to them any kind of nonsenseness: they'll listen. But

talk to them, It's written, textually, in the Torah, to build a parapet around your rooftop to prevent blood being shed—no: to this they won't listen. They would neither hear nor understand. They don't know *Torah,* don't know *Text,* don't know *parapet, roof*—this they never heard of either—"

He paused. "Come tomorrow and I'll have prepared for you a kaméa against goslins." He seemed suddenly weary.

Faroly got up. Sighed. "And tomorrow will you also have prepared a kaméa against goslins for everyone else?"

Kaplánovics didn't raise his eyes. "Don't blame the rat," he said. "Blame the rat-hole."

Downstairs Faroly noticed a boy in a green and white skullcap, knotted crispadin coming up from inside under his shirt to dangle over his pants. "Let me try a sortilegy," he thought to himself. "Perhaps it will give me some remez, or hint . . ." Aloud, he asked, "Youngling, tell me, what text did you learn today in school?"

The boy stopped twisting one of his stroobley earlocks, and turned up his phlegm-green eyes. " 'Three things take a man out of this world,' " he yawned. " 'Drinking in the morning, napping in the noon, and putting a girl on a wine-barrel to find out if she's a virgin.' "

Faroly clicked his tongue, fumbled for a handkerchief to wipe his heatprickled face. "You are mixing up the texts," he said.

The boy raised his eyebrows, pursed his lips, stuck out his lower jaw. "Oh indeed. You ask me a question, then you give me an answer. How do you know I'm mixing up the texts? Maybe I cited a text which you never heard before. What are you, the Vilna Gaon?"

"Brazen face—look, look, how you've gotten your crispadin all snarled," Faroly said, slightly amused, fingering

the cinctures passed through one belt-loop—then, feeling his own horrified amazement and, somehow, *knowing . . . knowing . . .* as one *knows* the refrigerator is going to stop humming one half second before it does stop, yet—"What is this? What is this? The cords of your crispadin are tied in *pairs*?"

The filthgreen eyes slid to their corners, still holding Faroly's. "Hear, O Israel," chanted the child; "the Lord our God, the Lord is Two."

The man's voice came out agonyshrill. "Dualist. Heresiarch. Sectary. Ah. Ah ah *ah—goslin!*"

"Take ya hands outa my pants!" shrieked the pseudo-child, and, with a cry of almost totally authentic fear, fled. Faroly, seeing people stop, faces changing, flung up his arms and ran for his life. The goslin-child, wailing and slobbering, trampled up steps into an empty hallway where the prismatic edge of a broken windowpane caught the sunlight and winkyflashed rainbow changes. The goslin stretched thin as a shadow and vanished into the bright edge of the shard.

Exhausted, all but prostrated by the heat, overcome with humiliation, shame, tormented with fear and confusion, Faroly stumbled through the door of his home. His wife stood there, looking at him. He held to the doorpost, too weary even to raise his hand to kiss the mazuzah, waiting for her to exclaim at his appearance. But she said nothing. He opened his mouth, heard his voice click in his throat. "Solomon," his wife said. He moved slowly into the room. "Solomon," she said.

"Listen—"

"Solomon, we were in the park, and at first it was so hot, then we sat under a tree and it was so *cool*—"

"Listen . . ."

". . . I think I must have fallen asleep . . . Solomon, you're so quiet . . . Now you're home, I can give the Heshy his bath. Look at him, Solomon! Look, look!"

Already things were beginning to get better. "*And the High Priest shall pray for the peace of himself and his house.* Tanya Rabbanan:—*and his house.* This means, his wife. He who has no wife, has no home." Small sighs, stifled sobs, little breaks of breath, Faroly moved forward into the apartment. Windows and mirrors were still, dark, quiet. The goslin day was almost over. She had the baby ready for the bath. Faroly moved his eyes, squinting against the last sunlight, to look at the flesh of his first-born, unique son, his Kaddish. What child was this, sallow, squinting back, scrannel, preternaturally sly—? Faroly heard his own voice screaming screaming changeling! changeling!

—Goslin!

Maybe Jean-Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet, Chevalier de Lamarck, Was a Little Bit Right

by Robin Scott

The end of the world has come with a bang; there has been little time for whimpering. Three survivors, two men and a woman, stand on a low knoll beside their newly returned Moon ship and survey fields and forests and the sea, a scene which is, except for them, almost totally devoid of land-based chordate life. The gas has dissipated; the residual radiation has dropped to a safe level; already the grasses and coniferae have begun to recover. There are fresh green shoots everywhere, and it is only two months since Earth had blazed up in the lunar night. The survivors know they will not starve even if they stay clear of the blackened stumps of the cities, where canned foods must still exist relatively undamaged.

Because she sunburns easily, Celia Bingham sits on the ground in the ship's shadow. It is shortly after noon, and the April sun paints a Dali landscape. Celia is happy to be free of the confinement of the ship and its oil-taste air. She does not share the dazed despair of her companions, principally because she has nearly all her life found her center and her focus in a concentration on the memory of her stern father. He had died of prostate cancer when she was twelve—after four or five years of obsessive attention to her—and her mother had thereafter increased both the frequency and the variety of her lovers. He had been a dentist in Skokie, Illinois.

Celia, a plump, pink sausage of a woman, had been generally considered one of the three or four best astrophysicists in the world. Now, at thirty-two, she is unquestionably the best.

Because she is in love with a memory, she feels no great sense of loss in the destruction of the world. She is confident that her companions will see to her survival and it does not occur to her that she may have some role to play in the world they will fashion. She is satisfied that she is still alive. Without conscious awareness, she describes the harsh landscape, only slightly softened by a pointillist's viridian, to her father, a topical continuation of the internal monologue she has maintained for twenty years.

Corder, the biophysicist, is first to perceive the problem. "It is the genetic pool," he says, addressing the sky and the water and the faintly green fields. He is a tall, shy man in his early forties, and he is still numbed at the loss of wife and children, whom he had come to think of as the sole source of his happiness and stability. Because he had always sought solace in the certitudes of his discipline before his marriage, he is now eager to begin on the problem. He is eager to seek a solution, because a solution involves for him futurity, and the past, for him, involves horror. "We must maximize the genetic diversity we possess and keep very careful records for second and third generation mating." He is a little embarrassed and carefully avoids looking at the other two, who in any case are not looking at him.

As a professional biologist, Corder has always been something of a Lamarckian heretic. He has never been able to ignore certain evidence which seems to suggest that environment may produce qualitative changes in speciation. A series of rejected articles has made him sensitively aware of his heresy, and he has hidden an even deeper heresy which stemmed from his early preoccupation with

biopsychology and the genetic basis of personality. Now he worries that, under the circumstances, environmental effects may change genetic patterns in some unforeseeable way. He resolves to attempt such environmental controls as he can. He peers at the blasted forests and fields and wonders if preservation of the human species as it has been is a good idea. But he is full of Shavian life-force and he is full of sentiment, and he rejects the notion as the greatest heresy of all.

Sturgis, the Moon-ship pilot, is an Air Force officer in his early thirties. He does not understand what Corder is talking about. He is too numbed by what has happened, and on the Moon, during the waiting period, he was reluctant to accept the fact that only the three of them had survived. Shocked as he had been, his training and discipline have enabled him to bring the ship back to a good landing. The meticulous performance of prescribed duty is his last anchor to reality; it is his obeisance to the only gods he has known, the icons of stars and eagles and oak-leaves. Now he is carefully surveying the surrounding landscape to pick the best spot to erect a survival shelter, although the undamaged interior of the ship is more than adequate to house the group. He nods without comprehension at Corder's words, his wrinkled, too-old eyes squinting against the bright horizon. He is busy recalling details from an Air Force survival course of a decade before; he wants everything to go in accordance with sound doctrine, the formulators of which he cannot yet believe are dead.

Corder continues: "If we estimate a thirteen-year maturation cycle and employ cross-generation breeding, we should be able to maximize our joint genetic resources in minimum time." He kneels and scratches some digits in the dust. He ponders them for a moment and stands. "Yes, that is the best we can do."

Celia comes to the end of her description and allows the

image of her father to dim as much as it ever does. She looks up brightly at Corder. "I'm sorry, Dr. Corder, what were you saying?" He explains and she looks away, her face still calm and round, her fine sandy hair lively in the breeze. Inside, she cries *Father!*

The first baby is a girl and Corder is relieved. She is Sturgis' daughter, but she will be Corder's mate. She is now six weeks old and it is time for him to reciprocate. He has not yet had intercourse with Celia, although after she became pregnant, there was no genetic reason not to do so. It has been important that Sturgis, being younger, father the first female so that he, Corder, with a somewhat lower life-expectancy, might have a better chance of genetic insertion into the second generation. He watches the baby playing with its toes in a spot of early-spring sunlight at the entrance to Sturgis' elaborate palisade shelter. He thinks he will make her a rattle of clam shells; they are easy to find now that there are no gulls to harvest them. The baby's innocence and beauty have cheered him, but he resolves to limit his playtime with Marianne so that he may condition himself to think of her as his mate. He thinks of his wife, dead now for nearly a year and a half. Of late he has begun to speak to her in his thoughts. He feels better after he has explained things to her. Most often, however, he simply apologizes: *I'm sorry, dear.*

Later, when it has grown dark, he goes with Celia into the ship and lies with her. There are insects again, and while he savors their evening music, he worries about ecological imbalance and the crops he is about to plant from wild seed salvaged in the fall. In the dark, in the wordless dark, he tries to imagine Celia is his dead wife, and then he rejects the notion as the ultimate infidelity. Lust born of long continence helps him to a blind, primordial consummation, and he awakens in the morning

feeling shame, and impatience with himself for feeling shame. He wonders only very briefly why Celia said "O Father!" in the spasm of orgasm, and although she repeats the phrase on succeeding nights, he takes no further note of it.

Sturgis is jealous. He feels no particular affection for Celia, but she had been virgin and he is a possessive and oddly puritanical man, a little unsure of his manhood. He had felt vaguely uneasy about her defloration and his subsequent pleasures until he recalled that he was technically still captain of the Moon ship and thus—perhaps—authorized to perform marriages. He had not, of course, mentioned his feelings to either Celia or Corder, nor has it occurred to him actually to solemnize the relationship. Still, he is upset by Corder's quiet words on genetic necessities; Corder's notions offend him. Now only the shelter is wholly and exclusively his creation, and he thinks of Corder with growing hatred. *Just let the son of a bitch lay a hand on the shelter and I'll break his fucking back.* . . . He begins to compose a mental memorandum of complaint and justification to the S&P Division of the Air Force, with a drop copy to NASA. *FROM: Sturgis, John L., Maj. USAF, 2337644/2201. TO: C.O., S&P Div. Pent. B-3389.* . . .

Celia lies passively, uncomfortable under the weight of Corder. It is not like it has been with Sturgis. Then, the initial pain had brought the bearded image of her father immediately to her, and Sturgis' clumsy brutality had kept the image there during subsequent encounters. Corder is too gentle, his experience confined to sex confused by love, enhanced by love. Here there is no love, and Corder is awkward, offensively diffident. With an effort of will, Celia concentrates on her memories, and although she tries hard to remain faithful, two images merge and shift in her mind. She tries to drive the newer image away, and at the

moment of orgasm she nearly succeeds. *O Father!* she says, and it is an apology.

Celia has grown immensely fat. Corder, at fifty-five, is bent from long hours in the fields, long hours mending the nets. Marianne is lithe and slim with new breasts that get in her way during the baseball games Corder organizes. Looking at her, Corder feels desire for the first time in fourteen years. But Marianne has not yet menstruated, and Corder cannot justify lying with her until there is a reasonable prospect of procreation, of fulfillment of the genetic plan.

Corder is deeply disturbed by the desire he recognizes in Sturgis' eyes and he contemplates fleeing with Marianne and the two boys, leaving behind only his own eleven-year-old daughter, Beth. It would make genetic and practical sense, but he hesitates, fearful for the younger girl.

Sturgis has grown more brutal with age. He is easily angered and he seems to take pleasure in beating the children. Celia's fat, white body is laced with little cuts and bruises after their lovemaking, although she does not complain.

Corder is sure Marianne would leave with him. She has no love for her biological father, and Corder has been careful to explain to her what she must do to preserve the race. When he finally makes the decision to leave, he justifies it by dwelling on the genetic ruin that would result if Sturgis and not he were to father a child on Marianne. Trapped by this logic, he leaves Beth behind, although he weeps at what she must suffer and hopes he has been successful in instilling in all the children the emotional independence he has himself never possessed.

He finds himself explaining and apologizing to Marianne

as they unearth the crude cart he has loaded with supplies and hidden in the verge of the field he has so long tilled. He no longer speaks to his dead wife.

Sturgis has also put on weight. Now he is beefy and jowled. He is putting the finishing touches on the "new wing." There has been a new wing every year, and the shelter sprawls in an ungainly half-circle around the rusting steel of the ship. Sturgis is very proud of his work. He has taken to composing mental memoranda of commendation to be forwarded to higher authority. He is modest but positive; he is careful to frame his self-praise in the passive voice: *It is believed that the new structure will constitute a major contribution to the survival potential of . . .* Over the years, he has in his mental memoranda promoted himself until he signs them *Sturgis, John L./Maj. Gen. USAF.*

A rough-cut pine beam slips and pins his hand momentarily but painfully against the adobe wall. He curses: "You bitch! You bitch! You bitch!" The pain makes him think briefly of Celia and he feels a faint arousal. Then he spots Marianne feeding his infant son, Celia's last baby, in the shade of the ship. Marianne is all brown limbs and taut skin and she croons to the infant in a high, piping voice. Sturgis climbs down his smooth ladder to talk to her. But as usual Corder intervenes and waves Marianne away. Sturgis feels a sudden renascence of anger that grows to a sunburn of rage and he resolves to kill Corder then and there.

Celia is ill. The fourth baby, Sturgis' son, had caused damage. She is badly overweight. S-shaped varicosities seam her broad legs. She can no longer enjoy a clear image of her father, and Sturgis is beginning to visit her less frequently, although more violently, at night. She feels despair and she worries about Sturgis and Marianne and she wishes she could tell her father about it. A child comes

to her for help with an arithmetic problem Corder had assigned. She heaves herself from her hammock to comply. There is sudden shouting, the shocking sound of men beyond control, and she waddles to the hatchway to see Corder and Sturgis rolling in the dust, the everpresent land crabs scuttling to safety. Sturgis bears the older man down and strikes at him with a knife. There is blood on Corder's upthrust arm. Marianne strikes Sturgis with a fist-sized rock and he rolls away and staggers to his feet, dazed and vomiting. The blood frightens Celia. The melon sound of rock on skull frightens her. Corder and Marianne shout for the older boy and run from the compound with the baby. Beth weeps. Celia feels sharp fright, almost panic, when she thinks of Sturgis' visit that night.

When his son returns from one of the regular, monthly scouting trips with the news that Beth is pregnant, Corder, without a word to Marianne, leaves that night to walk twenty miles back to the ship. It is morning when he arrives, but since Sturgis is still asleep, Corder has no difficulty approaching the shelter undetected. There are no dogs to bark and the land crabs scuttle noiselessly. Nor is it physically difficult for him to drive his pocketknife deep into Sturgis' throat, but Sturgis does not die immediately, and the shelter, big as it is, is splattered with his blood before he collapses, a questioning look on his face.

There is some noise, and Celia pulls herself up from the hammock in the ship and walks to the shelter to investigate. At first she is horrified, and then, when she looks at the dead Sturgis' face, she suddenly realizes the images in her mind have become separate, and she goes back to her hammock and her endless monologue, now with two discrete auditors.

Beth examines her dead mate with dry eyes, gathers her few belongings, and follows her father out of the shelter.

She must adjust to this new image of her father. He is no longer the one who abandoned her; now he is also the savior. She falls in love with him a little bit and together they return to Marianne and the other children.

Corder thinks: *The ship will take care of Celia as long as necessary. I will sometimes visit the ship.*

Corder thinks about genetics and controlled environment and Sturgis alive and Sturgis dead and Sturgis the father. Corder worries about all his heresies and he cannot prevent a sidelong look at the swollen abdomen of the girl walking beside him. Corder does not know whether or not he should hope that Lamarck was maybe a little bit right.

The Chosen

by Kate Wilhelm

"Lorin, where are you?" He heard Jan's call and wished she hadn't come out. She called again, closer. Reluctantly he left the tree trunk he had been leaning against and answered.

"I'm here, Jan. I'm coming."

He knew she couldn't see him in the dark under the mammoth trees, but she was plainly visible in the clearing at the edge of the woods: a slender, spectral figure with loose white-blond hair blowing in the wind, gleaming under the full moon. She had a long wrap about her, and it too was luminous in the silvery light. He hurried a bit; probably she was cold, and he sensed her fear. It had been in her voice; it was in her stance, her refusal to enter the woods to find him. She saw him then and took a step toward him, but again stopped and waited. When he reached her she threw her arms about him and clung for a moment.

"I was so worried," she said. "You were gone for hours."

"Honey, I'm sorry. I thought you were asleep." He turned so that he could see the forest over her head. The smooth trees at the edge of the woods reflected the pale moonlight, and behind them there was a solid black wall. No wind stirred under the trees; no sound was there. High above, hundreds of feet over them, the tops of the trees made whisper-soft rustlings. He remembered how it had

been walking under the black canopy, and he yearned to return to it, with Jan at his side sharing his awe. She was pulling him back toward the ship, and he put his arm about her waist and turned his gaze from the forest.

She was saying, "I was asleep, but when I woke up and found you gone, I couldn't go back to sleep. It was too quiet. I waited over an hour before I came out . . . I didn't tell any of the others."

He tensed with a flash of anger. It died rapidly. He was acting erratically; she was loyal and wouldn't report him. Simple as that. And she had shown courage in waiting alone, going out alone. He said nothing and they walked toward the dome-shaped tents at the side of the ship. The tents were all dark and silent. He paused once more and glanced back at the still woods, then they went inside their tent.

"I made coffee. It's so late . . . Maybe we should just go to bed."

"Jan, don't talk around it. We've never done that with each other. Not this time either. Okay? There's nothing wrong with my taking a walk in the night. I do it a lot."

"Yes, but that's different. People in the city wait until night but this is so . . . I just wish you wouldn't do it here."

He laughed and caught her to him, hugging her hard. She shivered and he realized how cold she was. "Honey, I'm sorry. You're freezing." He rubbed her arms and back briskly, then put her to bed, pulling the cover to her chin. He sat on the edge of the bed with his coffee. "Come out with me tomorrow. Let me show you the forest and the clearing I found."

"I did go for a walk with you, remember? Miles and miles of walking." She snuggled down lower in the bed and yawned.

"But that was with the group . . ." Jan had closed her

eyes already, and her face had softened with relaxation. Lorin kissed her forehead, then walked to the tent flap and stood looking out until the moon was hidden by clouds and there was only darkness. He put down the cold coffee and got into bed beside her. She fitted herself to his body without waking and with his arms around her he listened to the silence.

"It's such a lonely world," Jan had said the first night, staring at the dense blackness that was the forest. "It is so still that it is nightmare-like. Nothing but wind, sighing like ghosts through the trees. Whispering. Don't you feel it, Lorin, the whisper, too faint to catch the words?" She had cocked her head with an abstracted look on her pale face, and Lorin had caught her arm roughly.

"Jan, snap out of it! It's just silence. For the first time in your life you know what silence is like. The stuff we prayed for night after night."

"Never again," she had said, with a stiff, set look on her face, a look of fright denied, of anger at the causeless fear.

Lincoln Doyle, the leader of the expedition, worked them all unmercifully, but even with the full schedule there was not enough work to shut out the world that surrounded them. All the others seemed to share Jan's reaction to the silent world. There were twelve of them, all with sunup-to-dusk tasks to complete, and all with the same listening look when there was a pause in their own noise. Doyle turned on the recorder, blasting music through the valley, and that helped. But at night the silence returned, deeper, more ominous.

At first no one had believed Lorin's report that there was no animal life, but they had come to accept that, as they had come to accept the mammoth conifers that grew where oak and maple and birch trees had stood. The trees were giants, three hundred feet or higher, with tops that met and tangled in an impenetrable web of needled

branches. Their trunks were from ten to thirty feet through. There was scant undergrowth in the pervasive gloom of the forests, but at the river's edge where the ship stood, and in the clearings, there were bushes and vines and a vivid green, mossy groundcover. Other places had waist-high grasses, and he had seen a grove of deciduous trees in the distance on one of his exploratory trips. But no animal life. No birds. No insects. No fish. And stillness everywhere. As he was falling asleep the silence became an entity, a being with cradling arms and soothing fingers that penetrated him, searching out and healing bruised and torn nerves.

They had breakfast with the others in the group. The music blared so that talk was in shouts. Doyle looked especially grim that morning. He was a small, thin, intense man. Lorin could imagine him on a high stool frowning over a ledger after hours in a musty office.

"Steve tells me we can expect a storm tonight or in the morning," Doyle said precisely, clipping off each word, as if he had to pay for them in cash. "We have to get as many of our samples in today as possible. When the cold front comes through with the storm, we could get snow, and that would upset our schedule. Barring that, I am confident that we can finish here within a week, as planned."

Since there was no work for a biologist in this lifeless time, Lorin's daily tasks varied with the requests for assistance from the others. Today he was to accompany Lucas Tryoll to the coast, follow it south to the tip of Florida, go inland, and return over the area of the Mississippi River taking pictures of the land. He was pleased and excited by the assignment.

They flew due east to the coast where New York City once had been. Manhattan was gone, as was Long Island. There was only a bay that reached far inland, and was twenty miles across. Most of the New Jersey coast had

been swallowed by the ocean, and Delaware Bay was indistinguishable from the rest of the sea. A solid green roof of treetops hid the land almost to the edge of the ocean. There were no offshore islands.

"Spooky, isn't it?" Tryoll said after several hours. "I still say we should have settled for the last time."

Lorin looked at him quickly, but there was no humor on the man's brooding face. Lorin remembered the last time they had arrived to find people turned savage, and animals even more savage. They had all been in the last stages of severe malnutrition and radiation sickness. He tried to recall a time that he preferred to this, and failed. Sickness, or overcrowding, or a wasteland of radioactivity, or glaciation . . . He touched Tryoll on the arm and pointed: there was no Florida, no islands as far as they could see, hundreds of miles out of unbroken deep blue-green water.

Tryoll turned the plane and followed the coast to the delta of the gargantuan river that emptied into the Gulf. From their height they could see the brown water-swirl pattern as the river flowed into and finally became part of the pale blue of the sea. The Mississippi was miles wide here, shallow, and brown with silt. They followed it north, and the scenery below them was the same as everywhere else: forests, no signs of life. There was a great, shallow inland sea over what had been Nebraska, Kansas, or Iowa. Lorin couldn't tell where they were. Clouds were forming to the north of them when Tryoll turned eastward again, coming to mountains, and then heading north. There were only clouds under them now, gray concrete, rolling plains, but still the cameras worked, taking infrared movies through the dense layer, mapping the land that lay invisible under them. Once Tryoll said that they would have to land, and Lorin felt his heart thump with excitement. But Tryoll flew on grimly and Lorin knew that he'd risk crashing into the mountains or being iced by the storm

rather than land and spend the night here in the silent forests.

When they put down at the camp site a hard rain was driving in, cold and stinging against their faces as they raced back to the ship. Lorin showered and changed into warm clothing, then went to dinner with Jan.

"We're all going to sleep inside tonight," she said. "Steve predicts an all-night rain, and possibly snow by morning."

"Inside? But we have heat in the tent."

"But if it snows . . . It will be more comfortable inside the ship on a night like this."

Lorin put down his fork and took her hand between his. "Jan, please come back to the tent with me. Have you ever slept where you could hear rain in the night right over your head? Have you ever seen fresh white snow falling, covering everything with dazzling white?"

"You know I haven't."

"When we get back home we'll be on the sixty-third floor again, with forty-seven floors over us. All we'll ever see of rain is a dirty suspension of grime running off our windows, or down our clothes. Can you imagine what this rain will be like?"

"It might be 'hot.' "

"You know it isn't." He resisted the pull of her hand as she tried to free it. "Jan, we've been through a lot together. Remember the wild cats?"

She nodded. "I still don't see how domestic cats could change like that. But don't you see the difference? You know I'm not a coward. I just don't like the silence. I keep listening harder and harder for something, anything. It's as if I know that something is out there, but I haven't been able to listen hard enough to catch it yet, and I have to keep straining . . ."

He had tried and failed to understand how it was with them, the ones who found it eerie and alien. He said, "Jan,

we have only one more week here, then back to make our reports and wait for reassignment. It could be months, or years before we're alone like this again. Pretend we're on vacation. Pretend it's a vacation zone, will you."

She made a derisive sound. Her hand in his yielded and relaxed though, and she said, "You're playing dirty. You pushed that button on purpose, didn't you?"

He laughed with her. He had done it deliberately. They had met in upper New York State Vacation Zone Number Eighty-two. He remembered the long lines of people, antlike on the concrete mountain paths, bunched at the overlooks, spread twenty-five feet apart everywhere else. They had met at one of the view spots—Lookout Nineteen.

Arm in arm they left the ship and ran to the little tent in the blinding rain. After changing from his wet things Lorin stood in the tent opening, watching the storm. "This will reinforce the cyclic theory. Back to the forest primeval. Doyle is bound to recommend this zone for exploitation. You can tell he's eager to get back and report this find. An army of men will come and mine and timber and raise animals for meat. Let's come back with them, Jan. There are things we could do. . . ."

"What? I'm a bacteriologist, and you're a biologist. Can you locate ores, or handle cattle, or build a slaughterhouse? It will be mostly automated anyway. There won't be any research done beyond what we do now in the preliminary probe. Lorin, do close the flap now. It's getting cold in here."

He knew it wasn't, but he pulled the flap partially closed, and continued to look out toward the black trees blowing in the wind. Racing sheets of rain obscured everything, thinned to allow a view of the forest, and then came back redoubled in strength.

"We could learn to do something that would be useful

here," he said softly. Behind him he could hear Jan making the bed. The aroma of coffee filled the tent: she had been keeping herself busy, trying not to see out, trying to shut out the storm noises, and the feeling of aloneness. For a moment Lorin almost wished that he had not pressed her to stay out with him, wished that he had come back alone. The moment passed and he let the flap close the rest of the way and went to sit by her and sip coffee with her.

"Jan, try to see what I mean. We could have a good life here. You could have children who would have room to run and play in the forests, swim in the river . . ." She was staring at him wide-eyed, her face very pale. "You would get used to the quiet . . ." She shook her head.

"I would go mad," she said finally. "Always listening for something that isn't there. Later, after they get the town built, maybe after they get the town built, maybe then we could come back. . . ."

"How many other places like this have they already found? Five, ten? We don't even know. Are we allowed to go to them?" His voice became bitter. "No one goes to them except the workers who get paid a bonus for 'extraordinary conditions' in the environment. No other people go. Too costly. It will always be like that, Jan. Always. The only way we can come back is as workers who really hate the place. We'd have to pretend. . . ."

"They'll find a way around the energy exchange," she said, but without belief.

"Never. There has to be an equal mass-energy exchange or the ship doesn't make it. Period."

"You're not being reasonable," Jan said, with a show of temper. "They wouldn't let you abandon your profession now. You are doing valuable work. Anyone can come and do the rest after we locate the zones and check them out. Besides, we won't go back to our old apartment. This trip

qualifies us for one of the garden apartments, and a raise. What's got into you, Lorin? You never talked like this before."

"I never saw a zone like this before. I didn't know there could be one like this. I thought all that talk was only talk. Why else give the men that kind of bonus for working in a place like this? Bonus! They should be charged for the privilege. Garden apartments! Two windows instead of one."

"Lorin, not now, please. I'm too tired to argue with you. Even if you don't have work to do every day, I do. That's your trouble, no work of your own." She crawled into the bed and pulled the cover up to her chin. "Are you coming?"

"In a minute. Just a minute."

The rain and wind were abating. The storm was over. He went again to the flap and was struck by an icy blast of air when he opened it. He adjusted the pressure inside the tent, making an invisible wall between him and the cold air outside. A fine freezing mist was falling; he put his hand out and felt the needle-like sting. Suddenly he wished they hadn't found this time zone at all. Earlier he had said there was a cyclic pattern, but not now, not since the Bok-Gressler-Harney Temporal Mass-Energy Exchange Theory had been proven empirically. The theory stated in mathematical terms that a body could move forward in time, giving the formula for the energy demanded for such a displacement. It was like being at the end of a rubber band, Lorin thought, standing with his hand out in the freezing mist. They were at the end of it and with every passing minute it was stretching farther, growing tauter. At the end of a preset interval it would snap back into place, and they'd be back there. Doyle could change the duration of their stay; he could shorten it as much as he chose, but he could not lengthen the interval in the future by even one second.

That was the first drawback. The second was that the mass had to be exactly the same for both directions. If there was any difference in mass when the snap came, the ship vanished. Finis. No one knew where it went. Some said a dimensional transference took place, but no accepted theory had been advanced yet.

The cost was beyond comprehension, but not so great that trips couldn't be made in the endless search for raw materials that sustained the world, and food to keep the people on the right side of starvation. Doyle's team had trained together for three years before their first probe, and there had now been seven probes for them, each one costing upward of five hundred million dollars. With an estimated four billion years in Earth's future to explore, an infinite reserve seemed available to mankind. Even as he had talked to Jan about returning to work in this time zone, Lorin had known that he was talking nonsense. His training made him valuable only where he was now. Economics dictated that he would never see this world again once he had left it. He pulled his hand inside the tent and pressed it to his cheek. His fingers tingled and started to hurt. Slowly he got into bed beside Jan.

The next morning the trees were sheathed in silver. Emerging from the tent, Lorin caught his breath and stared at them. They were like intricately wrought silver columns reflecting the milky sunlight. At the breakfast meeting when Doyle checked their assignments, he asked to be allowed to take soil samples from deep in the woods. He would bring out cores for testing. Permission was granted and he slung his pack over his shoulder as soon as he could leave the meeting and tramped through the mossy groundcover that was brittle with ice. Inside the woods, the trees were convex, obsidian wall sections topped with etched glass branches that gleamed and sparkled and became prisms where the sun shone through them. The tangle of

vines and shrubs was a fantastic exhibition of twisted glasswâre bent into impossible designs, with impossible joinings. As Lorin worked collecting his soil samples, the ice broke and fell; the ice from the shrubs and vines hit with soft tinkles of melody; the upper branches of the trees dropped their sheaths with crashes of thunder that reverberated throughout the forest.

And there was another sound, a soft plop, plop on all sides of him. The needles of the giant evergreen trees developed in clusters of fives, and at the base of each fan a nut had grown and ripened. The needle clusters had been pointed slightly upward before the freeze; now they drooped and the nuts rolled loose and fell to the ground.

Lorin picked up one of the nuts and found it surprisingly heavy. It was a rich, golden tan, about as big as a golf ball, and the covering was suede-like, soft, slightly rough, indented to form five sections. He peeled one of the sections back, exposing snow-white meat. He finished peeling it, saving the skin for testing, and saw that the meat was in five wedges, not divided, but clearly marked. Probably as it dried and shrank, there would be oil, and the sections would be separated. He cut a thin slice off, smelled it, and finally bit into it. The meat was crisp and tender, slightly salty, completely satisfying. He ate it and gathered more of them.

He didn't return for lunch, but worked through until it began to grow dark under the dense trees. All about him the tinkle of dropping ice, the less frequent explosions of thunderous sheets crashing to ground, and the ceaseless plop, plop of nuts falling was like an orchestra heard in rehearsal. When he went back, his step was light, and his face peaceful. He approached the ship in darkness and outside the door he paused for one last look at the deeper shadow of the woods behind him. He could hear Doyle's

voice from the other side of the ship's doorway; the door was open.

"No need to delay any longer. Further testing and probing would merely confirm what we all know now. . . ." There was the less forceful voice of Tryoll, his words indecipherable. Doyle said, "Tomorrow night, at the latest. Just long enough to finish the tests that have been started. . . ."

Lorin felt rooted for a long time. One more day only. Slowly he entered the ship where Doyle met him. He made his weight exchange carefully, and watched as Doyle checked it and checked and okayed the specimens he took inside. Lorin took the discarded material to the side of the ship and left it there with the rest: a growing pile of trash, boxes of junk that couldn't be used any longer for any purpose, some of it poisonous, radioactive, indestructible. He felt a surge of anger at the pile of refuse, and wished they could at least bury it. But that was no answer. Buried, it would still be poisonous, obscenely out of place on this pristine world.

Jan refused to stay outside with him again. "I keep waking up and listening," she said. "In here, at least, there are the sounds of machinery, and other people. Something. I don't like it out there, Lorin. I simply can't get used to it. I am frightened, cut off . . ." She shrugged helplessly and he didn't urge her. He decided to sleep in the tent alone. The others looked at him uneasily; no one understood his behavior. They would all be glad when they were away from this silent, dead world, back making their reports, sleeping in their beds again, getting ready for another probe. Lorin waved and walked to the tent.

The weather had turned quite cold following the storm, and snow was expected that night. He made coffee and drank it, waiting for the snow to begin. When it came he

stood watching it for an hour, then pulled on his outer clothing and went outside. The silence of the world was deepened by the snow; it was a black and white silent scene, like a pastoral charcoal drawing come to life. The snow fell straight down, it changed the landscape, made the forests more alien, hid the tent from view almost instantly, and softened the outlines of the ship, making it appear dreamlike and hazy.

He walked along the edge of the woods, lifting his face from time to time to catch the falling snow on his cheeks, feel it stinging his eyes. From time to time he looked back at the ship, growing dimmer and dimmer, until finally it was gone. He took a deep breath, but there was an ache deep within him at the thought of Jan sleeping apart from him. He walked for an hour before he turned back, going into the woods for the return trip. There was little snow under the trees; it had been captured by the roof of green that was fifty, one hundred feet thick in spots. There was only an occasional plop of a falling nut now; that phase was over. The quiet of the forest was deeper than he had known before, a sleeping forest under a snow featherbed. When he listened for the river he could hear the rushing water splashing over rocks off to his left. He guided himself by the sound of the river, drifting out of range now and then, only to veer to his left until it was there again.

The pure, cold river, the meat of the nuts, oil for burning, for candles, mushrooms, roots, the strange waist-high grasses with cornlike ears on them. It was a bountiful time on Earth, more so than he had known.

When he finally got back to his tent, he felt his exhaustion as a weight pulling him down on the bed still fully clothed. He fell asleep instantly, and his sleep was deep and restful.

Before breakfast he called Jan to the tent and showed

her the nuts he had found, and when he finished telling her of his day's work, he knew that Doyle must have had time to make his announcement about departure.

"Honey, get some sample bags together, will you?" he said to Jan. "I'll go check the day's assignments for us."

She nodded and started to check the contents of his bag. Lorin met Doyle at the ship door.

"Where's Jan? I want her to hear this, too," Doyle said.

"I'll fill her in. She's busy right now checking our stuff for today. I found a swamp yesterday that is exuding heat and fumes. I think she should get samples from it. If you don't have other plans for us."

"That's okay," Doyle said uninterestedly. "But get back before dark. We're going back immediately after dinner." He turned away without waiting for an answer. Lorin took a tray with coffee and biscuits for Jan and went back to the tent. She looked surprised at the service, and he said quickly, "Big day for us, honey. Doyle wants samples from a swamp I stumbled over yesterday. We're to eat and start right away. It's a long walk."

She stiffened and he added, "I had to argue with him to let me go with you, and he isn't happy about it. He might still change his mind and send me out with Tryoll again, so we'd better hurry."

Jan reached for the biscuits and coffee. They finished quickly and he led her straight into the woods, not giving her a chance to stop and talk with any of the others, and not until they were a mile from camp did he start to relax. He whistled then and presently she joined him, whistling harmony.

There was no trace of the snow remaining, and the ground under the trees was dry and springy. A pungent odor filled the air. Lorin detoured from his planned route and pointed out the reason for the smell. Where the snows had fallen through the treetops and melted, thousands of

mushrooms had sprung up overnight. Looking at them spread like a carpet Lorin was reminded of a painting he had seen once of a courtyard of white cobblestones. The shiny white caps touched one another, were packed into an area twenty-five feet by forty. They skirted them. There was a look of wonder on Jan's face.

"They are all edible," she said. "That's the same kind that we found down nearer the river. Do you know how much they cost back home?"

"Everything here is edible, and free," Lorin said happily. "Not a poisonous plant, or spore, or virus, or bacterium. It's a lovely world now, Jan."

She squeezed his hand in reply, and he noticed that some of the stiffness had left her, and that she no longer was listening quite so hard. After a while she complained of tiredness and asked how much farther it was.

"Let's have some lunch and rest," Lorin said. They had been walking for over four hours. He lowered his pack and took out a plastic cover that he spread out for her to sit on. She rested with her back against one of the trees while he prepared their food: he boiled water over a tiny fire of nut skins, and to the pan of boiling water he added mushrooms and sliced needle nuts, and a handful of the green moss. Jan watched without speaking. When he handed her a cup of the soup she stared at it for several seconds, then said, "Didn't you bring any of our dri-freeze food? Why this?"

"For fun," Lorin said. "Try it." He lifted his cup and sipped the broth and found it even better than he had expected. After a moment Jan tasted hers. They smiled at each other and finished the pot of soup without speaking again. For dessert Lorin peeled raw needle nuts and cut the sections apart. "All things to all men," he said solemnly. "Fried in their own oil, they are better than potatoes; ground, they make a dandy flour . . ."

Jan looked troubled, and he stopped talking and took her hand. "You are having fun, aren't you, honey? It isn't so bad now, is it?"

She shrugged and glanced about her at the trees and the deepening gloom that filled the spaces between them. "I don't like it; I don't feel safe here, but as long as I don't think about where we are, just remember that we are here together, then I'm all right. If you went away even for two minutes I might start screaming."

"I won't go away even for one minute," he said. He turned her around and pointed to the tree that had been her backrest. "Look at the pattern it makes, honey. Like great scales overlapping, climbing up the tree in a spiral, getting smaller and smaller as they get near the top." He rubbed his hand over the smooth glossy tree, and when Jan moved slightly away without touching it, he didn't force the issue. There would be time. She began to roll up the plastic cover, not looking at him. "We'd better be getting on. Is it much farther?"

"Not much now," he said. He repacked and they walked again. After another hour Jan began glancing at her watch from time to time, and a worried pucker appeared on her forehead.

"Lorin, do you remember exactly where the place is? Are you sure?"

"I think so," he said. "It can't be much farther now. Tired?"

"No, of course not, but we have to get back before dark. . . . Maybe we should start back now. I don't think we'll have time before it gets too dark in here."

"Half an hour more, then if we don't find the swamp, we'll go back. I was sure I could go straight to it again."

After the half hour was up Jan insisted they turn back. An hour later they both knew they couldn't get out of the woods before night fell.

"Lorin, we can't stay out here overnight. I won't. I can't!"

"Honey, it's all right. There's nothing here at night that wasn't here in the daylight. I'll be with you. I even have a tent we can pitch."

Jan whirled about and stared at him unbelievingly. "You did it on purpose! You deliberately brought me out here too far to get back before dark! What will Doyle say? And the Directors when he reports it?"

"We got lost, that's all. Who can say anything about that? We got lost." Lorin caught her to him and pressed his face against her hair for a moment. He said softly, "I had to come out for one night, Jan. I had to bring you with me. I couldn't help myself." She didn't relax in his arms, however, and he kissed her forehead, then got busy with the tent. He made a fire before the tent, and there was the light inside it. He started to cook their meal and presently Jan came out to help him; they sat before the crackling fire and ate, and Jan kept her gaze on the flames and didn't look beyond the light at all. Later he made love to her, and after she was asleep, he left her side and stood in the dark forest for a long time, simply feeling happy.

The next day Lorin increased their distance from the ship, knowing instinctively which direction he wanted, not able to tell how he knew from hour to hour when he couldn't see shadows or the sun's position. But he knew. And slowly Jan grew to understand what he was doing.

When she balked, Lorin put his pack down and caught her arms. "You can't help yourself, Jan. Don't you see that? I love you too much to leave you behind, and I can't go back again. Not now."

She said, "We have three more days here. Then we have to go back, Lorin. You know that?"

"I know."

She nodded; looking at his face, studying his eyes, his

mouth, she said, "All right. I'm with you. I wouldn't have come if you'd told me what you planned, but I am here, and I won't spoil it for you."

Arm in arm they walked again, whistling, singing, stopping to gaze in awe at a waterfall they found, laughing at each other's clumsiness in crossing the brook that formed the falls. They found a cave and stepped inside it, and Lorin said thoughtfully, "It would make a good home when the tent wears out, or if it gets too small."

Jan stiffened again at his words, and her tension stayed with her for the next hour, fading gradually as the cave was left behind. Lorin didn't refer to it again, but he made a mental map, locating the cave on it for future reference.

On the third day Jan knew he wasn't going to take her back at all. She sat down on a boulder and kicked the deep mat of needles and nuts. "I won't go any farther. You could kill them all by this, and you know it. If we turn back right now, and don't waste any time, we can make it before the snap takes them back." She kicked a nut viciously. "You would murder them all without a thought?"

"I left a complete list with weights on it for Doyle to substitute," Lorin said. "He's no fool. He'll be careful when he knows he has to make substitutions. They'll be all right."

"And if they die, won't that be even better for you? Then no one would ever discover this time zone. You know they never double check if they lose a ship. They assume that it was a bad time and let it go at that. Is that what you hope for?"

He hadn't thought of it consciously, but with her words, he knew that the thought had been there. He jerked the pack up and slung it over his shoulder. "All right, so that's what I hope for. You know who will get to come to a zone like this? Those who hate it. Like Doyle, and you. They'll

come here and sweat out the minutes until they can leave again, living only for the bonus that's waiting for them, afraid all the time, wishing the zone would burn up, or sink into the ocean, dumping filth here, taking what's good and clean, leaving their filth behind. Can you imagine what this place right here will look like in ten years? When they finish with it, it'll be as bad as the fire-bombed ruins we found on the third probe. I don't care if Doyle and the others live or die. If they're careful they'll get back. But are they alive, will they ever be again? Alive in hell?"

He started to walk. She had to follow; she had no choice but to follow, and he would make her forget the other world, the other time that was like a fading nightmare.

A searing pain hit the back of his head, and he clutched it, staggering, thinking she had thrown something. The pain deepened and he fell, and abruptly there was only blackness.

He heard, from a great distance, "He's okay. He'll wake up in a moment. Negative."

He waited without moving, trying to remember, and there was a blank. Hands were fumbling about the back of his head and he opened his eyes warily. A nurse smiled at him. "I'm just removing the electrode wires. Relax a few minutes, and then you can get up."

"The test is over?"

"That's right." She finished, and wheeled a portable psych machine away to the corner of the room. She returned and placed coolly professional fingers on his wrist for a moment. "You can sit up now, if you want."

"How did I do?"

"Dr. Doyle will be in in a moment. He's talking to your wife now, I think."

Lorin sat up and the pain in his head made him blink. He touched the back of his scalp gingerly. The nurse laughed.

"The electrodes are still there. Just below the skin. We don't take them out, so if you ever need a good psychoanalysis, you're all set. Compliments of the house." She laughed to show that she joked, and after a bad moment he grinned back at her. Although he couldn't find the thin platinum wires with his fingertips, he would be wired the rest of his life, ready to be plugged into a psych machine and played like a record. He stood up carefully, but there was no dizziness, and the headache was fading. He looked at the clock over the door. He had been there four hours.

Dr. Doyle came in and shook his hand enthusiastically. "You go home and get some rest now, Lorin. We'll call you in a day or two, after we analyze the results. If you don't hear by Monday, report back to your regular job and wait. We never know what kind of bugs we're going to find that will delay us." He shook Lorin's hand again and was gone before Lorin had a chance to ask him a single question.

The nurse ushered him from the room to another room where more nurses were busy at desks. He went to a desk with an information sign over it and asked for his wife.

"I really couldn't say," the nurse said, without looking up.

"But we both took the tests. She should be through now too. . . ."

"Not my department. You'd better go on home and wait for her." The nurse opened a ledger and started to run her finger down columns of figures.

Lorin tried to get back inside the test room, but the door was locked now. None of the nurses knew anything about the tests, and finally he went to the door marked "Exit." It opened only halfway and he squeezed through into an anteroom that was a bedlam of confusion and noise. He tried to open the door again, but it wouldn't open at all from this side. Someone caught his arm: "My husband,

tall, heavy, bald, did you see him? Is he in there? He went in two weeks ago. . . ." Lorin shook his head. "Is Dr. Doyle in there?" someone else yelled. Someone else was holding a snapshot before his eyes; he thought it was of a woman. The press of people was so thick that he couldn't go straight to the street door, but had to squeeze through openings, to be forced backward, to inch forward again painfully. He saw an opening and stepped into it, relieved at the lessening of the pressure of bodies. Then he saw why there was the open space. A psycho in the telltale yellow coverall. Revolted, he turned back to the crowd. The psycho followed him. It was a woman. She screamed at him, "Stop! Tell me what happens in there! What do they do? What did they do to me?"

The crowd gave ground before her and he knew that the look of disgust that was on everyone else's face was also on his. He managed to get people between himself and the yellow-clad woman. The noise was deafening. Every time the door to the inside offices opened, there was a surge toward it, and the cacophony increased. His headache returned, stronger than before.

He finally got to the outside door, but hesitated again. He took a deep breath; the fetid air in the room was better than the air out in the street would be. He went outside and was caught up immediately in the swell of people on the sidewalk. Three hours later he arrived at his own building, exhausted and panting. The elevators that went to his level were out of order, so he rode to the fiftieth floor and walked up the next thirteen flights of stairs, stumbling over the gray children who played there. Jan was not in the one-room apartment.

He waited for her all afternoon, listening to the neighbors above and below and on both sides of his small room. Children screamed and shrieked in play through the halls and on the stairs. Women shrilled and men cursed. Radios

played out of synch, on different stations; airplanes overhead and traffic below competed with rising decibels; sirens, the blare of advertising trucks, the screech of the elevator again in service. He pressed his hands over his ears; his headache was blinding. Why didn't she come home? The lights came on: neons, street lights, traffic lights; haze descended and haloed the lights. He fell asleep toward dawn.

That day he returned to the test center and waited along with all the others in the anterooms. Jan didn't come through the doors from the inner rooms. On the third day he returned to work.

He was stopped at the door of the biology lab by his supervisor, who handed him an envelope and hurried away without speaking. Lorin opened it with shaking fingers, his heart thumping wildly. He was certain it was his test confirmation, and orders to report back to the test center. . . . He stared at the curt message: *Report for analysis 9 A.M. Mon. Thurs. Fri., Rm. 1902 Psych Bldg.*

He didn't enter the lab. He knew his bench would be occupied by someone else. He went to the psych center and was issued his yellow coverall, and shown his iron frame cot. The other men in the ward didn't stir as he entered, no one looked up at him. He felt his cheeks burn with shame and he sat on the edge of his cot and waited for 9 A.M. Thursday to come. He knew why Jan hadn't returned, would never come back to him. He ground his hands into his eyes and tried to remember the test, what he had done wrong, how he had revealed insanity. When a sonic boom shook the building, he covered his ears and pushed hard against them, trying to think. He wished he could go for a walk, but the thought of walking in the center of a circle that moved with him everywhere he went, of seeing the disgust and loathing on the faces of those he approached . . . He sat on the edge of the cot and

waited, and tried to remember, and when night came he lay down wearily and stared at the ceiling, trying to remember what he had done wrong, and he listened to the clamor of the city that never was still: traffic; voices singing, shouting, cursing, screaming; sirens; jets; foghorns; elevators; sound trucks; televisions; phonographs; buses; elevated trains . . . Nearby a jackhammer started, and an alarm went off. Lorin stuffed his fist into his mouth to keep from screaming, and lay staring at the ceiling trying to remember.

Entire and Perfect Chrysolite

by R. A. Lafferty

Having achieved perfection, we feel a slight unease. From our height we feel impelled to look down. We make our own place and there is nothing below us; but in our imagination there are depths and animals below us. To look down breeds cultishness.

There are the cults of the further lands and the further people. The Irish and Americans and Africans are respectable philosophical and industrial parties, but the cultishness is something beyond. Any addition to the world would mar the perfect world which is the perfect thought of the Maker. Were there an Africa indeed, were there an Ireland, were there an America or an Atlantis, were there Indies, then we would be other than we are. The tripartite unity that is the ecumene would be broken; the habitable world-island, the single eye in the head that is the world-globe would be voided.

There are those who say that our rational and perfect world should steep itself in this great unconscious geography of the under-mind, in the outré fauna and the incredible continents of the tortured imagination and of black legends. They pretend that this would give us depth.

We do not want depth. We want height. Let us seal off the under things of the under-mind, and exalt ourselves! And our unease will pass.

—Audifax O'Hanlon, *Exaltation Philosophy*

The True Believer was sailing offshore in an easterly direction in the latitude of fifteen degrees north and the longitude of twenty-four degrees east. To the north of the coasting ship was the beautiful Cinnamon Coast of Libya with its wonderful beaches and remarkable hotels tawny in the distance. To the east and south and west were the white-topped waves that went on for ever and ever. The *True Believer* sailed along the southernmost edge of the ecumene, the habitable and inhabited world.

August Shackleton was drinking Roman Bomb out of a potbellied bottle and yelping happily as he handled the "wheel" of the *True Believer.*

"It's a kids' thing to do," he yipped, "but there were never such beautiful waters to do it in. We try to call in outer spirits. We try to call up inner spirits and lands. It's a children's antic. Why do we do it, Boyle, other than for the fun of it?"

"Should there be another reason, Shackleton? Well there is, but we go about it awkwardly and without knowing what we're doing. The thing about humans (which nobody apparently wishes to notice) is that we're a species which has never had an adult culture. We feel that lack more and more as we become truly adult in other ways. It grows tedious to stretch out a childhood forever. The easy enjoyments, the easy rationality, the easy governments and sciences are really childish things. We master them while we are yet children, and we look beyond. There isn't anything beyond the childishness, Shackleton. We must find a deeper view somehow. We are looking for that something deeper here."

"What? By going on a lark that is childish even to children, Boyle? I was ashamed before my sons when I confessed on what sort of diversion I was going. First there were the séances that we indulged in. If we raised any

spirits there, they were certainly childish ones. And now we're on this voyage on the *True Believer*. We're looking for the geographical home of certain collective unconscious images! Why shouldn't the children hoot at us? Ah well, let us not be too ashamed. It's colorful and stimulating fun, but it isn't adult."

The other four members of the party, Sebastian Linter and the three wives, Justina Shackleton, Luna Boyle, and Mintgreen Linter, were swimming in the blue ocean. The *True Believer* was coasting very slowly and the four swimmers were clipped to outrigger towlines.

"There's something wrong with the water!" Justina Shackleton suddenly called up to her husband. "There's weeds in it, and there shouldn't be. There's reeds in it, and swamp grasses. There's mud. And there's green slime!"

"You're out of your lovely head, lovely," Shackleton called back. "It's all clear blue water off a sand coast. I can see fish twenty meters down. It's clear."

"I tell you it's full of green slime!" Justina called back. "It's so thick and heavy that it almost tears me away from the line. And the insects are so fierce that I have to stay submerged."

But they were off the Cinnamon Coast of Libya. They could smell the warm sand and the watered gardens ashore. There was no mud, there was no slime, there were no insects off the Cinnamon Coast ever. It was all clear and bright as living moving glass.

Sebastian Linter had been swimming on the seaward side of the ship. Now he came up ropes to the open deck of the ship, and he was bleeding.

"It *is* thick, Shackleton," he panted. "It's full of snags and it's dangerous. And that fanged hog could have killed me. Get the rest of them out of the water!"

"Linter, you can see for yourself that it is clear everywhere. Clear, and of sufficient depth, and serene."

"Sure, I see that it is, Shackleton. Only it isn't. What we are looking for has already begun. The illusion has already happened to all senses except sight. Stuff it, Shackleton! Get them out of the water! The snakes or the crocs will get them; the animals threshing around in the mud will get them; and if they try to climb up onto the shore, the beasts there will break them up and tear them to pieces."

"Linter, we're two thousand meters offshore and everything is clear. But you are disturbed. So am I. The ship just grounded, and it's fifty meters deep here. All right, everyone! I order everybody except my wife to come out of the water! I request that she come out. I am unable to order her to do anything."

The other two women, Luna Boyle and Mintgreen Linter, came out of the water. And Justina Shackleton did not.

"In a while, August, in a while I come," Justina called up to the ship. "I'm in the middle of a puzzle here and I want to study it some more. August, can a hallucination snap you in two? He sure is making the motions."

"I don't know, lovely," August Shackleton called back to her doubtfully.

Luna Boyle and Mintgreen Linter had come out of the ocean up the ropes. Luna was covered with green slime and was bleeding variously. Mintgreen was covered with weeds and mud, and her feet and hands were torn. And she hobbled with pain.

"Is your foot broken, dearling?" Sebastian Linter asked her with almost concern. "But of course it is all illusion."

"I have the illusion that my foot is broken," Mintgreen sniffled, "and I have the illusion that I am in very great pain. Bleeding blubberfish, I wish it were real! It couldn't really hurt this much."

"Oh elephant hokey!" Boyle stormed. "These illusions

are nonsense. There can't be such an ambient creeping around us. We're not experiencing anything."

"Yes, we are, Boyle," Shackleton said nervously. "And your expression is an odd one at this moment. For the elephant was historical in the India that is, was fantastic in the further India that is fantastic, and is still more fanciful in its African contingency. In a moment we will try to conjure up the African elephant which is twice the mass of the historical Indian elephant. The ship is dragging badly now and might even break up if this continues, but the faro shows no physical contact. All right, the five of us on deck will put our heads together for this. You lend us a head too, Justina!"

"Take it, take my head. I'm about to let that jawful snapper have my body anyhow. August, this stuff is real! Don't tell me I imagine that smell."

"We will all try to imagine that smell, and other things," August Shackleton stated as he uncorked another bottle of Roman Bomb. In the visible world there was still the Cinnamon Coast of Libya, and the blue oceans going on forever. But in another visible world, completely unrelated to the first and occupying absolutely different space (but both occupying total space), were the green swamps of Africa, the sedgy shores going sometimes back into rain forests and sometimes into savannas, the moon mountains rising behind them, the air sometimes heavy with mist and sometimes clear with scalding light, the fifty levels of noises, the hundred levels of colors.

"The ambient is forming nicely even before we start," Shackleton purred. Some of them drank Roman Bomb and some of them Green Canary as they readied themselves for the psychic adventure.

"We begin the conjure," Shackleton said, "and the conjure begins with words. Our little group has been

involved with several sorts of investigations, foolish ones perhaps, to discover whether there are (or more importantly, to be sure that there are not) physical areas and creatures beyond those of the closed ecumene. We have gone on knobknockers, we have held séances. The séances in particular were grotesque, and I believe we were all uneasy and guilty about them. Our Faith forbids us to evoke spirits. But where does it forbid us to evoke geographies?"

"Ease up a little on the evoking!" Justina shrilled up to them. "The snapper just took me off at the left ankle. I pray he doesn't like my taste."

"It has been a mystery for centuries," said August (somewhat disturbed by his wife's vulgar outburst from the ocean), "that out of the folk unconscious there should well ideas of continents that are not in the world, continents with a highly imaginary flora and fauna, continents with highly imaginary people. It is a further mystery that these psychic continents and islands should be given bearings, and that apparently sane persons have claimed to visit them. The deepest mystery of all is Africa. Africa, in Roman days, was a subdivision of Mauritania, which was a subdivision of Libya, one of the three parts of the world. And yet the entire coast of Libya has been mapped correctly for three thousand years, and there is no Africa beyond, either appended or separate. We prove the nonsense of it by sailing in clear ocean through the middle of that pretended continent."

"We prove the nonsense further by getting our ship mired in a swamp in the middle of that imaginary continent and seeing that continent begin to form about it," said Boyle. And his Green Canary tasted funny to him. There was a squalling pungency in the air and something hair-raisingly foreign in the taste of the drink.

"This is all like something out of Carlo Forte," Linter laughed unsteadily.

"The continental ambient forms about us," said Shackleton. "Now we will evoke the creatures. First let us conjure the great animals, the rhinoceros, the lion, the leopard, the elephant, which all have Asian counterparts; but these of the contingent Africa are to be half again or twice the size, and incomparably fierce."

"We conjure them, we conjure them," they all chanted, and the conjured creatures appeared mistily.

"We conjure the hippopotamus, the water behemoth, with its great comical bulk, its muzzle like a scoop-shovel, and its eyes standing up like big balls—"

"Stop it, August!" Justina Shackleton shrieked from the water. "I don't know whether hippo is playful or not, but he's going to crush me in a minute."

"Come out of the water, Justina!" August ordered sternly

"I will not. There isn't any ship left to come out to. You're all sitting on a big slippery broken tree out over the water, and the snappers and boas are coming very near your legs and necks."

"Yes, I suppose so, one way of looking at it," August said. "Now everybody conjure the animals that are compounded out of grisly humor, the giraffe with a neck alone that is longer than a horse, and the zebra which is a horse in a clown suit."

"We conjure them, we conjure them," they all chanted. "The zebra isn't as funny as I thought it would be," Boyle complained. "Nothing is as funny as I thought it would be."

"Conjure the great snake that is a thousand times heavier than other snakes, that can swallow a wild ass," Shackleton gave them the lead.

"We conjure it, we conjure it," they all chanted.

"August, it's over your head, reaching down out of the giant mimosa tree," Justina screamed warning from the swamp. "There's ten meters of it reaching down for you."

"Conjure the crocodile," Shackleton intoned. "Not the little crocodile of the River of Egypt, but the big crocodile of deeper Africa that is able to swallow a cow."

"We conjure it, we imagine it, we evoke it, and the swamps and estuaries in which it lives," they all chanted.

"Easy on that one," Justina shrilled. "He's been taking me by little pieces. Now he's taking me by big pieces."

"Conjure the ostrich," Shackleton intoned, "the bird that is a thousand times as heavy as other birds, that stands a meter taller than man, that kicks like a mule, the bird that is too heavy to fly. I wonder what delirium first invented such a wildlife as Africa's anyhow?"

"We conjure it, we conjure it," they chanted.

"Conjure the great walking monkey that is three times as heavy as a man," August intoned. "Conjure a somewhat smaller one, two thirds the size of man, that grins and gibbers and understands speech, that could speak if he wished."

"We conjure them, we conjure them."

"Conjure the third of the large monkeys that is dog-faced and purple of arse."

"We conjure it, we conjure it, but it belongs in a comic strip."

"Conjure the gentle monster the okapi that is made out of pieces of the antelope and camel and contingent giraffe and which likewise wears a striped clown suit."

"We conjure it, we conjure it."

"Conjure the multitudinous antelopes, koodoo, nyala, hartebeest, oryx, bongo, klipspringer, gemsbok, all so out of keeping with a warm country, all such grotesque takeoffs of the little alpine antelope."

"We conjure them, we conjure them."

"Conjure the buffalo that is greater than all other buffalo or cattle, that has horns as wide as a shield. Conjure the quagga, I forget its pretended appearance, but it cannot be ordinary."

"We conjure them, we conjure them."

"We come to the top of it all! Conjure the most anthropomorphic group in the entire unconscious: men indeed, who are black as midnight in a hazel grove, who are long of ankle and metatarsus and lower limb so they can run and leap uncommonly, who have crumpled hair and are massive of feature. Conjure another variety that are only half as tall as men. Conjure a third sort that are short of stature and prodigious of hips."

"We conjure them, we conjure them," they all chanted. "They are the caricatures from the beginning."

"But can all these animals appear at one time?" Boyle protested. "Even on a contingent continent dredged out of the folk unconscious there would be varieties of climates and land-forms. All would not be together."

"This is rhapsody, this is panorama, this is Africa," said Luna Boye.

And they were all totally in the middle of Africa, on a slippery bole of a broken tree that teetered over a green swamp. And the animals were around them in the rain forests and the savannas, on the shore, and in the green swamp. And a man black as midnight was there, his face broken with emotion.

Justina Shackleton screamed horribly as the crocodile sliced her in two. She still screamed from inside the gulping beast as one might scream underwater.

The Ecumene, the world island, has the shape of an egg 110° from East to West and 45° from North to South. It is scored into three parts, Europa, Asia, and Libya. It is

scored by the incursing sea, Europa from Asia by the Pontus and the Hyrcanum Seas, Asia from Libya by the Persian Sea, and Libya from Europa by the Tyrrhenian and Ionian Seas (the Mediterranean Complex). The most westerly place in the world is Coruna in Iberia or Spain, the most northerly is Kharkovsk in Scythia or Russia, the most easterly is Sining in Han or China, and the most southerly is the Cinnamon Coast of Libya.

The first chart of the world, that of Eratosthenes, was thus, and it was perfect. Whether he had it from primitive revelation or from early exploration, it was correct except in minor detail. Though Britain seems to have been charted as an island rather than a peninsula, this may be the error of an early copyist. A Britain unjoined to the Main would shrivel, as a branch hewed from a tree will shrivel and die. There are no viable islands.

All islands fade and drift and disappear. Sometimes they reappear briefly, but there is no life in them. The juice of life flows through the continent only. It is the ONE LAND, THE LIVING AND HOLY LAND, THE ENTIRE AND PERFECT JEWEL.

Thus, Ireland is seen sometimes, or Hy-Brasil, or the American rock-lands; but they are not always seen in the same places, and they do not always have the same appearances. They have not life nor reality.

The secret geographies and histories of the American Society and the Atlantis Society and such are esoteric lodge-group things, symbolic and murky, forms for the initiated; they contain analogs, and not realities.

The ecumene must grow, of course, but it grows inwardly in intensity and meaning; its form cannot change. The form is determined from the beginning, just as the form of a man is determined before he is born. A man does not grow by adding more limbs or heads. That the ecumene

should grow appendages would be as grotesque as a man growing a tail.

—Diogenes Pontifex, *World as Perfection*

August Shackleton guffawed nervously when his wife was sliced in two, and the half of her swallowed by the crocodile; and his hand that held the Roman Bomb trembled. Indeed, there was something unnerving about the whole thing. That cut-off screaming of Justina Shackleton had something shocking and unpleasant about it.

Justina had once gone hysterical at a séance when the ghosts and appearances had been more or less conventional, but August was never sure just how sincere her hysteria was. Another time she had disappeared for several days after a séance, from a locked room, and had come back with a roguish story about being in spiritland. She was a high-strung clown with a sense of the outrageous, and this present business of being chomped in two was typical of her creations.

And suddenly they were all explosively creative, each one's subjective patterns intermingling with those of the others to produce howling chaos. What had been the ship the *True Believer*, what had been the slippery overhanging bole, had now come dangerously down into the swamp. They all wanted a closer look.

There was screaming and trumpeting, there was color and surge and threshing mass. The crocodile bellowed as a bull might, not at all as Shackleton believed that a croc should sound. But someone there had the idea that a crocodile should bellow like that, and that someone had imposed his ideate on the others. Unhorselike creatures whinnied, and vivid animals sobbed and gurgled.

"Go back up, go back up!" the black man was bleating.

"You will all be killed here." His face was a true Mummers Night black-man mask; one of the party was imagining strongly in that stereotyped form. But the incongruous thing about the black man was that he was gibbering at them in French, in bad French as though it were his weak second language. Which one of them was linguist enough to invent such a black French on the edge of the moment? Luna Boyle, of course, but why had she put grotesque French into the mouth of a black man in contingent Africa?

"Go back up, go back up," the black man cried. He had an old rifle from the last century and he was shooting the crocodile with it.

"Hey, he's shooting Justina too," Mintgreen giggled too gaily. "Half of her is in the dragon thing. Oh, she will have some stories about this! She has the best imagination of all of us."

"Let's get her out and together again," Linter suggested. They were all shouting too loudly and too nervously. "She's missing the best part of it."

"Here, here, black man," Shackleton called. "Can you get the half of my wife out of that thing and put her together again!"

"Oh white people, white people, this is real and this is death," the black man moaned in agony. "This is a closed wild area. You should not be here at all. However you have come here, whatever is the real form of that balk or tree on which you stand so dangerously, be gone from here if you can do it. You do not know how to live in this. White people, be gone! It is your lives!"

"One can command a fantasy," said August Shackleton. "Black man fantasy, I command you to get the half of my wife out of that dying creature and put her together again."

"Oh white people on dope, I cannot do this," the black

man moaned. "She is dead, and you joke and drink Green Bird and Bomb and hoot like demented children in a dream."

"We *are* in a dream, and you are *of* the dream," Shackleton said easily. "And we may experiment with our dream creatures. That is our purpose here. Here, catch a bottle of Roman Bomb!" and he threw it to the black man who caught it. "Drink it. I am interested in seeing whether a dream figure can make incursion on physical substance."

"Oh white people on dope," the black man moaned. "The watering place is no place for you to be. You excite the animals and then they kill. When they are excited it is danger to me also who usually move among them easily. I have had to kill the crocodile who is my friend. I do not want to kill others. I do not want more of you to be killed."

The black man was booted and jacketed quite in the manner of a hunting store outfitting, this possibly by the careful imagining of Boyle who loved hunting rig. The black Mummers Night mask was contorted in agony and apprehension, but the black man did drink the Roman Bomb nervously the while he begged them to be gone from that place.

"You will notice that the skull form is quite human and the bearing completely erect," Linter said. "You will notice also that he is less hairy than we are and is thick of lip, while the great ape to the left is more hairy and thin of lip. I had imagined them to be the same creature differently interpreted."

"No, you imagine them to be as they appear," Shackleton said. "It is your imagining of these two creatures that we are all watching."

"But notice the configuration of the tempora and the mandible," Linter protested. "Not what I expected."

"You are the only one of us who knows about tempora

and mandible shape," said Shackleton. "I tell you that it is your own imagery. He is structured by you, given the conventional Mummers Night black mask by all of us, clothed by Boyle, and speeched by Luna Boyle. His production is our joint effort. Watch it, everyone! It becomes dangerous now, even explosive! Man, I'm getting as hysterical as my wife! The dream is so vivid that it has its hooks in me. Ah, it's a great investigative experience, but I doubt if I'll want to return to this particular experience again. Green perdition! But it does become dangerous! Watch out, everyone!"

Ah, it *had* become wild: a hooting and screaming and bawling wild Africa bedlam, a green and tawny dazzle of fast-moving color, pungent animal stench of fear and murder, acrid smell of human fear.

A lion defiled the watering place, striking down a horned buck in the muddy shallows and going muzzle-deep into the hot-colored gore. A hippo erupted out of the water, a behemoth from the depths. Giraffes erected like crazily articulated derricks and galloped ungainly through the boscage.

"Enough of this!" Mintgreen Linter, frightened, took the lead out of it, incanting: "That the noon-time nightmare pass! The crocodile-dragon and the behemoth."

"We abjure them, we abjure them," they all chanted in various voices.

"That the black man and the black ape pass, and all black things of the black-green land."

"We abjure them, we abjure them," they chanted. But the black man was already down under the feet and horns of a buffalo creature, dead, and his last rifle shot still echoing; he had tried to prevent the buffalo from upsetting the teetering bole and dumping all the white people into the murder swamp. The great ape was also gone, terrified, back to his high-grass savanna. Many of the other creatures

had disappeared or become faint, and there was again the tang of salt water and of distant hot-sand beaches in the air.

"That the lion be gone who roars by day," Luna Boyle took up the incantation, "and the leopard who is Pan-Ther, the all-animal of grisly mythology. That the crushing snakes be gone, and the giant ostrich, and the horse in the clown suit."

"We abjure them all, we abjure them all," everyone chanted.

"That the *True Believer* form again beneath our feet in the structure we can see and know," August Shackleton incanted.

"We conjure it up, we conjure it up," they chanted, and the *True Believer* rose again barely above the threshold of the senses.

"That the illicit continents fade, and all the baleful islands of our writhing under-minds!" Boyle blurted in some trepidation.

"We abjure them, we abjure them," they all chanted contritely. And the illicit Africa had now become quite fragile, while the Cinnamon Coast of South Libya began to form as behind green glass.

"Let us finish it! It lingers unhealthily!" Shackleton spoke loudly with resolve. "Let us drop our reservations! That we dabble no more in this particular illicitness! That we go no more hungering after strange geographies that are not of proper world! That we seal off the unsettling things inside us!"

"We seal them off, we seal them off," they chanted.

And it was finished.

They were on the *True Believer* sailing in an easterly direction off the Cinnamon Coast of Libya. To the north was that lovely coast with its wonderful beaches and remarkable hotels; to the south and east and west were

the white-topped waves that went on for ever and ever.

It was over with, but the incantation had shaken them all with the sheer psychic power of it.

"Justina isn't with us," Luna Boyle said nervously. "She isn't on the *True Believer* anywhere. Do you think something has happened to her? Will she come back?"

"Of course she'll come back," August Shackleton purred. "She was truant from a séance for two days once. Oh, she'll have some good ones when she does come back, and I'll rather enjoy the vacation from her. I love her, but a man married to an outré wife needs a rest from it sometimes."

"But look, look!" Luna Boyle cried. "Oh, she's impossible! She always did carry an antic too far. That's in bad taste."

The severed lower half of Justina Shackleton floated in the clear blue water beside the *True Believer.* It was bloodied and gruesome and was being attacked by slashing fishes.

"Oh, stop it, Justina!" August Shackleton called angrily. "What a woman! Ah, I see it now! We turn to land."

It was the opening to the Yacht Basin, the channel through the beach shallows to the fine harbor behind. They tacked, they turned, they nosed in toward the Cinnamon Coast of Libya.

The world was intact again, one whole and perfect jewel, lying wonderful to the north of them. And south was only great ocean and great equator and empty places of the under-mind. The *True Believer* came to port passage with the perfect bright noon-time on all things.

Sunburst

by Roderick Thorp

She prodded him awake violently. Still heavy with sleep, he rolled onto his back and blinked her into focus. "What is it, Cyn? What's the matter?"

"Something terrible's happening. Get up." She had his robe over her arm. "I don't know what it is, Johnny. Come on, *please.*" She gave him the robe. "I turned on the kitchen radio when I got up—there's nothing but news. The same on television. The kids wanted to watch their cartoon shows, but there aren't any—"

"News? News? Make sense, Cyn." Johnny Loughlin stepped into his slippers. "What news are you talking about? Has the war started?"

"No, thank God. It's all kind of news—no; all the news is bad, but it's coming from all over. All bad things—"

Johnny Loughlin felt the energy sag out of him. For her sake, he did not flop down on the bed. It was Saturday, and while she could go back to bed after the kids got off to school, he had only the weekends—rare ones—to catch up on his health. He lit a cigarette. For some reason his hand was shaking. "Cyn, give me an example of this bad news."

"Senator Clinton was beaten up, Johnny. He was in California last night to give a speech. They have films of him being punched and kicked."

"For God's sake." He nodded. "All right."

She led the way out of the room. They knew Senator Clinton. They had campaigned for him and he had been a guest—once—in this house. "You'd think the cameramen would have stopped it," Cynthia said, speaking her husband's thoughts. "But what happened to him is only part of it, I swear. There's a demonstration down at Grand Central Station, people lying on the tracks and nobody with the courage to move them."

"What are they demonstrating for?"

"Not integration. It's a labor dispute. Grand Central is filled with people waiting to take excursion trains, too."

Downstairs, the living room was still dark. The two children, dressed in play clothes, were sitting in front of the television set, which was showing newsreels of a fire. "What is that?" Johnny Loughlin asked.

"A tenement fire in Chicago," Cynthia answered. "It started after midnight and it's still going. Fifty people are dead and the radio had that two boys set it for a joke. Oh, there's more, Johnny, I promise you."

"Good morning, Daddy," Jodi said. Now Johnny, Jr., realized that he was there.

"Good morning, kids. I'm sorry that your programs aren't on."

They said something, he didn't hear it. "I'll get you a cup of coffee," Cynthia said.

The television screen flashed to the news announcer. He seemed to be caught by surprise. Quickly he tried to find something on his desk to read. But slowly his image began to fade, and before he blanked out completely he could be seen looking beyond the camera to a man in the studio. "What the hell do you call that. You told me you were cutting right to the damned commercial!"

"Which of the five leading pain remedies—"

Cynthia reentered the room. "I heard that. They couldn't seem to get straightened out at the radio station,

either." As she came closer with the coffee, Johnny Loughlin looked carefully into her eyes.

"Did you take your pill this morning?"

"No. I ran out."

"How did that happen?"

"Don't yell at me, Johnny. It just happened."

"I didn't yell. Call the drugstore and give them the prescription number."

"In a minute. The bottle is upstairs." She sat down on the sofa beside Jodi.

He would probably have to run the errand himself. It was unimportant. She could go for days without taking the pills. The television went to a station break and a local commercial. Johnny Loughlin wanted to show his wife that he wasn't angry about the pills. In the past when she had forgotten to take them his own emotional behavior had done her more damage than the lack of medication. When he had realized that, he had been able to change his attitude. "What else has happened, Cyn?"

"There's been trouble in China. What kind, nobody knows. Thousands of people have been trying to get into Hong Kong all night—all day, over there. The story is confused because they're out of control even when they get into Hong Kong. The refugees, I mean. There was one of those telephone hookups and the reporter said that the Hong Kong police have had those water cannon trucks out for hours. Apparently the Communists have had to call out their army. The refugees *have* told of riots and massacres—"

The television station switched to the news announcer while he was in midsentence. ". . . Negroes have seized a radio station in Johannesburg. 'Help us. Help us, free people of the world,' in the manner of the Hungarian freedom fighters of nineteen fifty-six. No other details are available at the moment. To repeat, monitoring receivers

throughout the world have picked up broadcasts from Johannesburg, South Africa. Unsubstantiated reports say that the natives have begun a large-scale, though uncoordinated, revolt. As soon as further bulletins come in, we'll pass them on to you."

Now the director went to a two-shot. Beside the announcer sat one of the network's better-known commentators. They said good morning and the announcer explained that the commentator had been called from his home in the suburbs. "Do you think there's an explanation for all this, Frank?"

The commentator looked as if he had not had his breakfast. "Oh, it's difficult to say, Jim," he said unctuously. "We have a pattern of violence that seems to be sweeping around the world—"

Johnny Loughlin rose. "I'm going to get dressed, Cyn. It would be a good idea to get the kids out and playing."

She stared at him.

"All right, Jodi," he said. "Johnny. Outside. I don't want you watching television on a Saturday."

"Stay close to the house," their mother said to them.

"I think you're overdoing it," he said when the door closed.

"Well, I don't! Something's happening. You know it, I know it. I'm worried, honey."

He went upstairs. It was possible to reason with her, but he didn't feel up to it.

When he returned to the living room the announcer was telling the commentator, "I think that the most fantastic theory offered is that something has happened to the sun. As the earth revolves and exposes itself, something is aroused in people in varying degrees."

"It doesn't stand up, Jim," the commentator replied. "First, we have what happened to Senator Clinton in California last *night*. We have the trouble in China, which

must have begun some hours back—that is, to have reached the proportions the reports we've been getting indicate—"

From the kitchen came Cynthia's voice as she shouted through the window, "Stop it, you children! Stop it, do you hear me?"

Then, from outside, perhaps from the road fifty feet from the house, a boy's voice, older than Jodi's or little Johnny's: "Oh, be quiet, you crazy old witch!"

Johnny Loughlin was on his feet at once, heading for the kitchen. Cynthia stood rigidly at the window over the sink, her fair skin blanched. Outside, two boys ran away from the fence, where Johnny, Jr.'s, tricycle lay overturned.

"Did you hear that?" Cynthia cried. "Where did they get that. They call me *crazy*!"

"Easy, Cynthia, I—"

"Don't 'easy, Cynthia' me! Where did they get that?"

"Probably from their parents. You've never made a secret of what *you* want to call your 'nervous condition'—"

"Don't get on me, Johnny! Aren't you going to do anything about those boys?"

"What am I going to do, drag them to their parents?"

She ran out of the room. He didn't go after her, angry first with her, then with himself. He *had* jumped on her, if only because he had felt impatient with everything. He took up preparing his breakfast where she had left off.

While he ate, he heard another squabble in the yard, this time between his own children, and it made him wonder if there were not something really different about this day. Everyone, including himself, was at his limit. Johnny Loughlin took his coffee into the living room where the television set still played, waiting for company.

"—Just been handed a bulletin. Tempers apparently have flared in Grand Central Station, where a pitched battle has begun on the upper level platforms. Police are still trying

to get through the crowds in the main concourse. So far there has been no panic, but there seems to be a grave danger of it. Thousands of people have been jammed inside the station for hours. There is no way to determine the extent of the fighting on the platforms, and we'll just have to wait for further word."

The camera zoomed back to include the commentator, who read, "Two-way communication has been established with the rebels in Johannesburg. There have been major uprisings in that city and in Durban. An army garrison was overrun in Durban just before dawn and the rebels, armed with artillery and at least five tanks, are advancing on an airfield seven miles northwest of the city. So far there has been no use of air power by the government, a move that has all observers baffled." He took another paper from the desk. "Here's more on Hong Kong. First, there's an unconfirmed report of an army revolt inside China. Refugees report that, in some areas, the army is fighting itself. Now second, a major fire has broken out in a crowded slum district of Hong Kong. Five square blocks of ramshackle structures are in flames. The fire started in a café."

"Johnny! Johnny, come upstairs, quick!"

He was on his feet before she finished speaking. There was something in his stomach, a solid warning. His nerves were fully attuned now; he dared not ignore them.

She was at the window of their bedroom. "Come here, quick! Look at that!" She jabbed her finger at an upstairs window across the road. There, in full view, sat Mary Ellen Phillips, tending a bloody nose. "I saw him hit her," Cynthia said. "I heard them yelling all the way over here. She hit him first and then he punched her."

"What were they yelling about?"

"Some woman and him. Do you know anything about that?"

"I know him. It's not true. Look, I'm going down to the

village. I'll send the kids in. I want you to keep them in the house."

"What are you going to the village for?"

"Your medicine, the newspapers. I'm going to snoop around and see if anything else has happened around here."

"Hurry back. Call me if something happens, Johnny. Don't leave me worrying." She held him tightly for a moment. She was trembling.

"You take it easy, too, sweetheart," he said.

He had no other reason for going into the village than her medicine. He knew that he was acting irrationally. She did not need her medicine and, in any case, he could telephone for it. He had wanted to get out of the house, do something—almost anything.

The village was empty, more like a Sunday than a Saturday. Johnny Loughlin parked in front of the drugstore and, after another unbelieving look around, went inside.

"Where's the boss?" he asked the clerk.

"He went home. Are you going to wait for these pills? Come on in the back. Nobody's come in for more than twenty minutes. I've been reading the paper." Behind the counter, he went to the binders of prescriptions. "You know the boss? He's one of those intuitively smart men. When we opened up, he said that he had a feeling about today. Usually he's right, but a thing like this—who could believe him?"

"A thing like what?"

"No customers. On a Saturday. I'll never understand it." As he talked, Johnny Loughlin looked at the dateline on the newspaper. It was yesterday's. The clerk had not heard the radio. "Murray said that he didn't even want to come in this morning. That's what he told me. What do you think could make him *know* a thing like that?"

"I don't know." Just listening to him made Johnny Loughlin nervous. He got up and walked out to the front of the store and looked out the window. There was still no one on the street. The air seemed too still—the trees were not moving. Johnny Loughlin caught himself rocking on the balls of his feet, clenching his teeth.

"Ready," the clerk announced. "That's eight dollars."

"I know, I know. Listen, can I buy these over-the-counter?"

"Oh, no, not without a prescription," the clerk said. "These are dangerous tablets."

"Still, they'd cost only half as much without a prescription."

"Oh, you'd be surprised what we pay for these."

"Yes, I'm sure I would," Johnny Loughlin said.

At last the clerk got the drift, and his face masked over. Johnny Loughlin pocketed the vial and turned for the door. He went through as the telephone began to ring.

He had backed the car out of the parking space when the clerk came running to the sidewalk. "Hey! Telephone for you!"

Johnny Loughlin nodded. He was not going to say thank you. The clerk had not called him by name. He preceded the clerk to the back of the store. "Hello?"

"Johnny? Are you coming home?"

"I was. Is anything wrong, Cyn?"

"Senator Clinton is dead. They don't know why yet. He seemed to be resting and then he just closed his eyes. I started to cry. I couldn't help it. I scared the children."

"All right, all right."

"There was shooting in Grand Central, too. It's terrible, Johnny, I mean it."

"Well, make sure that the kids know you're all right."

"You can't tie up that telephone for your own use," the clerk said.

"Who was that?" Cynthia asked.

He didn't answer her. He turned to the clerk. "Am I going to have trouble with you?"

"That depends on you," the clerk said frightenedly. Johnny Loughlin turned away from him again.

"I'll be right home, Cyn. Turn off the television set. I'll see you in ten minutes."

"No longer, Johnny, please."

He hung up, glanced back once at the clerk, and walked out of the store. In the car, he hesitated, then drove down to the other end of the village. He parked outside the post office, still not knowing why. There was no one in sight. All he could hear was the soft churning of the car motor. The knot tightened in his stomach. He was afraid, very afraid, without knowing why. Almost in a panic, he turned on the radio.

". . . crowd is smashing windows and overturning cars as it moves down Forty-Third Street. It seems to be growing in size, picking up people as it moves along. The police and fire departments have determined to set up barricades at Sixth Avenue. To repeat the earlier reports, gunfire in Grand Central Station created a panic that sent thousands of already angry people stampeding into the streets. A series of seemingly unrelated incidents in and about the station forged the crowd into a mob. Hundreds have been injured . . ."

Johnny Loughlin pushed the button to change the station. He had to get *home,* but he couldn't get going.

"Rebels in South Africa have gained control of the Durban airfield and have put at least five prop-driven fighter planes into the air. Indiscriminate strafing runs have been made over all quarters of the city. A gas tank has exploded and fires have . . ."

He punched another button. His hand was shaking furiously.

". . . It's as if tempers around the world have all snapped at once. People woke up this morning deciding they had had enough of the Cold War, oppression, arrogance and abuse. For nearly twenty years people have lived under an unbearable pressure. It's amazing that this hasn't happened before. Astronomers tell us that a star will generate tremendous pressure inside itself without visible effect, but then suddenly, without warning, it will burst . . "

With that, Johnny Loughlin turned the radio off. His teeth were clenched so tightly together that his jaws ached. He put the car into reverse and backed it out to face toward home. From the other end of the square another car came at him. Instinctively Johnny Loughlin wheeled far to the right. Almost at once the other car flew past, throttle open wide, making better than seventy miles an hour. Johnny Loughlin did not watch. He had had only a glimpse of the driver's face, twisted with desperation.

Now there was a squeal of tires as the car went into the turn outside of town. Johnny Loughlin lit a cigarette. He felt ill. The other car would have plowed into him— possibly. As he drove slowly out of [illegible]e he felt his stomach continuing to ache. Again on impulse, he turned the radio on. All news, all bulletins. There were bulletins from Berlin now. It was only a matter of time. He felt a crushing presentiment of grief at the prospect of the war. Only a small corner of his mind was still reasoning, still saying that it all *could* pass, that what he felt would overcome everyone else. Yet the rest of him was still caught up in it, giddy at the chance to settle old scores. He did not even know where he would begin. It was as if a part of him was in every mob, running wild everywhere in the world. While he drove, he could see it, feel it, hear it, bursting in a shower of splintered glass.

Three blocks from his home he saw a car on fire, where it had smashed into a fence. People were throwing sand at it.

It was different on his own street. He could hear the shouting from around the corner. As he turned in he saw them running toward the center of the block, the people he knew. He stopped the car and got out and ran with them.

"Johnny! Is that you, Johnny?"

It was Marty Phillips, who had punched his wife less than . . efore. Now *he* was calm. He shoved through the crowd and grabbed Johnny Loughlin by the arms. "Johnny, listen to me! Stay away from your house! Listen to me!"

"What are you talking about?" Somebody grabbed him from behind; he tried to wrench free. Now he heard: a woman's screams.

"Easy, fella! Take it easy!"

"She's coming out!" someone cried from inside his own house.

The crowd backed up. The arms bound him tighter. A woman near him began to scream hysterically.

Cynthia ran out onto the front steps and stopped. Her housecoat, her hands, even her face, were covered with blood. In her hand was a pair of sewing shears. She shouted again, at no one, not even a word, as if she were lost in a forest and had really quit shouting.

A man appeared behind her, afraid to grab her. There was no color in him. Johnny Loughlin stopped struggling. In the momentary quiet the man's voice carried on the soft morning air.

"They're dead. She's killed them both."

There was a surge of strength from somewhere in Johnny Loughlin's body, then it passed. He went slack, falling, while the voices close by rose in a groan, almost a howl, of anguish, acceptance and defeat.

The Creation of Bennie Good

by James Sallis

"Do you like my foot," putting it on the table. There, between the chipped saucer and candle; you have noticed how carefully I avoid the marmalade, the box of salty butter. "Will you accept it as a token of my affection? For you? It is, as they say, a good foot." Earlier, I have deftly undone the laces with my toes, grasped the sock between piano-key toes and foot and slowly drawn it off, like peeling a willow wand. "The arch is long and graceful, with the springy delicacy of a light man. The toes curl in as though to embrace the foot; the nails are flecked with color. And pink is the color of this foot." Pink, with the bright red crescent at the top of the curve: pimple on one side, in the curve, and dimpled on the other. "I am offering this, should you want it, my dear. It is all I have."

Her attention is arrested by my foot. This is true of most. At parties my friends will group together talking, and glancing occasionally with great expectation toward the corner chair where I sit calm, unmoved, unmoving. As the evening advances, their glances are more frequent and begin to form a rhythm; then finally, beginning as a low moan among the women, gradually swelling up through the groups until it becomes a steady, hard, syncopated shout, and bursting at last out of the crowds, the call comes: *Foot! Foot!* Then slowly I lift it to the level of their eyes and one of them, a woman, the chosen, comes

forward out of the group wearing shyness like a belt and starts softly to undo the pale pink shoe, dropping it to the floor, where it lies on its side in the carpet pile. You have seen the way a snake is skinned—first the skin is slit away from the mouth, then rolled gently down along the body: this is how my sock is removed—then thrown to them. A few are unable to stand the pressure and must be sent away. Others on the edge near me remove their own shoes and socks and sit staring sadly at the pale uncovered feet. I tell her all this.

"It's all I have, it's yours." But this one, this Sally, is more moved than the rest. Already the tight black circles around her eyes are smearing, becoming less distinct; eyelids covered in green sequins are flashing like tiny chandeliers. Her little hands are perched on the rim of the cup and soon one will creep out across the ceramic dishes to shyly, lightly touch my foot. She is overwhelmed at the size of the occasion, the depth of my offer.

Perhaps I will make conversation; I've found this sometimes helps, especially in the initial slight embarrassment. I will discuss various projects.

Such as . . .

Last year I had a large number of foam-rubber genitalia prepared for me by an advertising firm. These were bright pink and varied in size from two feet to six in length, and from a few inches to several yards in circumference. The order was placed on a Monday after a weekend of planning and sketching; on Thursday the genitalia were ready; and on Friday I set out for Niagara Falls with them packed away in my trunk. When I opened the trunk later, at the hotel, the genitalia expanded—virtually exploded—out into my room, filling it. Some had got tangled together, like fingers in doughnuts. That evening I fought my way through the foam to go out and walk among the people, talking to many and asking questions. And the next

morning, when the sun was gleaming on the water, I walked with my trunk to the top of the Falls and floated my collection of vast foam genitals down toward all the people below: they bobbed and raged on the water.

Or I will have a simulacrum head made of intelligent clay—in my image precisely, though perhaps a touch more worldly, without the elusive pale delicacy of my own features. With great patience I will teach this head to say Yes, and I will keep it in a wooden box, a box of dogwood, on my left shoulder. Whenever I am asked a question requiring response, I will reach up across my chest and open the door to this box. The head will open its eyes, say Yes—and I will shut the door.

I will train crickets to function as metronomes and place one with every violinist in the world, thus restoring natural order to contemporary music.

By lies and deceit I have caused the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to become jealous of one another; already they are creeping across America toward a confrontation. Frantically I have this morning cabled the Dead Sea, entreating it to intervene. Which it will.

And she listens. Even as lorries load cans in the alley and roll away, scraping long grooves in the bricks on each side, as the photographers shyly cover their lenses with their hands, as the waiters come and go, replacing dishes, bringing fresh flowers in vase after vase, the clack-clack of them in their rubber shoes. She listens.

And I tell her again, does she understand: "I am a ruined man. This is all I have left. And this, I offer you." We sit for several minutes listening to corks pop off bottle after bottle around us, like children pulling fingers out of puffed cheeks. They have worked a long time for this; we are at last together. When I look at them, they raise their glasses toward us in celebration. Quickly, more bottles are brought in. A serving cart full of jangling green and clear,

that hums and glides too slowly in front of the trotting waiter. More corks, soda, bubbles cascade into glasses, cubes of ice pop up like fishheads and the bubbles resemble their eyes. Me straight in the chair with a high head talking. Admiring how she maneuvers the delicate machinery of eggcup and spoon.

When I am finished she calls softly for the table to be cleared. With a wave of her hand, and light winks in the rings. The band stops and all is quiet as the waiters come and depart with full arms. I am finished. The lights go up, a few people stand for a better view.

She sits straight. So straight like a Cézanne cypress, and hardly anyone breathes now as, smiling, she moves back in her chair and adjusts the top of her body. We hear the gentle, crisp sound of her skirts . . .

Finally I lift my head out of my wet hands. There is little energy left, in me.

And now there are cheers, calls of approval, relief. She is smiling. Staring straight into my eyes and nothing moves. The green folds of her skirt are pulled back, arranged around her waist and legs like a monster lettuce, and there on the veined-marble table, square in the center by my own, she has put her foot. Her tiny foot is offered, there.

And on it, the most exquisite black shoe.

The End

by Ursula K. LeGuin

On the shore of the sea he stood looking out over the long foam-lines far where vague the Islands lifted or were guessed. There, he said to the sea, there lies my kingdom. The sea said to him what the sea says to everybody. As evening moved from behind his back across the water the foam-lines paled and the wind fell, and very far in the west shone a star perhaps, perhaps a light, or his desire for a light.

He climbed the streets of his town again in late dusk. The shops and huts of his neighbors were looking empty now, cleared out, cleaned up, packed away in preparation for the end. Most of the people were up at the Weeping in Heights-Hall or down with the Ragers in the fields. But Lif had not been able to clear out and clean up; his wares and belongings were too heavy to throw away, too hard to break, too dull to burn. Only centuries could waste them. Wherever they were piled or dropped or thrown they formed what might have been, or seemed to be, or yet might be, a city. So he had not tried to get rid of his things. His yard was still stacked and piled with bricks, thousands and thousands of bricks of his own making. The kiln stood cold but ready, the barrels of clay and dry mortar and lime, the hods and barrows and trowels of his trade, everything was there. One of the fellows from Scriveners Lane had asked sneering, Going to build a brick

wall and hide behind it when that old end comes, man?

—Another neighbor on his way up to the Heights-Hall gazed a while at those stacks and heaps and loads and mounds of well-shaped, well-baked bricks all a soft reddish gold in the gold of the afternoon sun, and sighed at last with the weight of them on his heart: Things, things! Free yourself of things, Lif, from the weight that drags you down! Come with us, above the ending world!

Lif had picked up a brick from the heap and put it in place on the stack and smiled in embarrassment. When they were all past he had gone neither up to the Hall nor out to help wreck the fields and kill the animals, but down to the beach, the end of the ending world, beyond which lay only water. Now back in his brickyard hut with the smell of salt in his clothes and his face hot with the seawind, he still felt neither the Ragers' laughing and wrecking despair nor the soaring and weeping despair of the communicants of the Heights; he felt empty; he felt hungry. He was a heavy little man and the seawind at the world's edge had blown at him all evening without moving him at all.

Hey, Lif! said the widow from Weavers Lane, which crossed his street a few houses down—I saw you coming up the street, and never another soul going by since sunset, and getting dark, and quieter than . . . She did not say what the town was quieter than, but went on, Have you had your supper? I was about to take my roast out of the oven, and the little one and I will never eat up all that meat before the end comes, no doubt, and I hate to see good meat go to waste.

Well thank you very much, says Lif, putting on his coat again; and they went down Masons Lane to Weavers Lane through the dark and the wind sweeping up steep streets from the sea. In the widow's lamplit house Lif played with her baby, the last born in the town, a little fat boy just

learning how to stand up. Lif stood him up and he laughed and fell over, while the widow set out bread and hot meat on the table of heavy woven cane. They sat to eat, even the baby, who worked with four teeth at a hard hunch of bread. –How is it you're not up on the Hill or in the fields? asked Lif, and the widow replied as if the answer sufficed to her mind, Oh, I have the baby.

Lif looked around the little house which her husband, who had been one of Lif's bricklayers, had built. –This is good, he said. I haven't tasted meat since last year sometime.

I know, I know! No houses being built any more.

Not a one, he said. Not a wall nor a henhouse, not even repairs. But your weaving, that's still wanted?

Yes; not the men, to be sure, but some of the women, they want new clothes right up to the end. This meat I bought from the Ragers that slaughtered all my lord's flocks, and I paid with the money I got for a piece of fine linen I wove for my lord's daughter's gown that she wants to wear at the end! –The widow gave a little derisive, sympathetic, feminine snort, and went on: But now there's no flax, and scarcely any wool. No more to spin, no more to weave. The fields burnt and the flocks dead.

Yes, said Lif, eating the good roast meat. Bad times, he said, the worst times.

And now, the widow went on, where's bread to come from, with the fields burnt? And water, now they're poisoning the wells? I sound like the Weepers up there, don't I. Help yourself, Lif. Spring lamb's the finest meat in the world, my man always said, till autumn came and then he'd say roast pork's the finest meat in the world. Come on now, give yourself a proper slice. . . .

That night in his hut in the brickyard Lif dreamed. Usually he slept as still as the bricks themselves, but this night he drifted and floated in dream all night to the

Islands, and when he woke they were no longer a wish or a guess: like a star as daylight darkens they had become certain, he knew them. But what, in his dream, had borne him over the water? He had not flown, he had not walked, he had not gone underwater like the fish; yet he had come across the gray-green plains and wind-moved hillocks of the sea to the Islands, he had heard voices call, and seen the lights of towns.

He set his mind to think how a man could ride on water. He thought of how grass floats on streams, and saw how one might make a sort of mat of woven cane and lie on it pushing with one's hands: but the great canebrakes were still smoldering down by the stream, and the piles of withies at the basketmaker's had all been burnt. On the Islands in his dream he had seen canes or grasses half a hundred feet high, with brown stems thicker than his arms could reach around, and a world of green leaves spread sunward from the thousand outreaching twigs. On those stems a man might ride over the sea. But no such plants grew in his country nor ever had; though in the Heights-Hall was a knife-handle made of a dull brown stuff, said to come from a plant that grew in some other land, and was called wood. But he could not ride across the bellowing sea on a knife-handle.

Greased hides might float; but the tanners had been idle now for weeks, there were no hides for sale. He might as well stop looking about for any help. He carried his barrow and his largest hod down to the beach that white windy morning and laid them in the still water of a lagoon. Indeed they floated, deep in the water, but when he leaned even the weight of one hand on them they tipped, filled, sank. They were too light, he thought.

He went back up the cliff and through the streets, loaded the barrow with useless well-made bricks, and wheeled a hard load down. As so few children had been born these

last years there was no young curiosity about to ask him what he was doing, though a Rager or two, groggy from last night's wreckfest, glanced sidelong at him from a dark doorway through the brightness of the air. All that day he brought down bricks and the makings of mortar, and the next day, though he had not had the dream again, he began to lay his bricks there on the blustering beach of March with rain and sand handy in great quantities to set his cement. He built a little brick dome, oval with pointed ends like a fish, all of a single course of bricks laid spiral very cunningly. If a cupful or a barrowful of air would float, would not a brick domeful? And it would be strong. But when the mortar was set, and straining his broad back he overturned the dome and pushed it into the cream of the breakers, it dug deeper and deeper into the wet sand as if burrowing down like a clam or a sandflea. The waves filled it, and refilled it when he tipped it empty, and at last a green-shouldered breaker caught it with its white dragging backpull, rolled it over, smashed it back into its elemental bricks and sank them in the restless sodden sand. There stood Lif wet to the neck and wiping salt spray out of his eyes. Nothing lay westward on the sea but wave-wrack and rainclouds. But they were there. He knew them, with their great grasses ten times a man's height, their wild golden fields raked by the sea-wind, their white towns, their white-crowned hills above the sea; and the voices of shepherds called on the hills.

I'm a builder, not a floater, said Lif after he had considered his stupidity from all sides. And he came doggedly out of the water and up the cliffside path and through the rainy streets to get another barrowload of bricks.

Free for the first time in a week of his fool dream of floating, he noticed now that Leather Street seemed deserted. The tannery was rubbishy and vacant. The

craftsmen's shops lay like a row of little black gaping mouths, and the sleeping-room windows above them were blind. At the end of the lane an old cobbler was burning, with a terrible stench, a small heap of new shoes never worn. Beside him a donkey waited, saddled, flicking its ears at the stinking smoke.

Lif went on and loaded his barrow with bricks. This time as he wheeled it down, straining back against the tug of the barrow on the steep streets, swinging all the strength of his shoulders to balance its course on the winding cliff-path down to the beach, a couple of townsmen followed him. Two or three more from Scriveners Lane followed after them, and several more from the streets round the market-place, so that by the time he straightened up, the seafoam fizzing on his bare black feet and the sweat cold on his face, there was a little crowd strung out along the deep single track of his barrow over the sand. They had the lounging listless air of Ragers. Lif paid them no heed, though he was aware that the widow of Weavers Lane was up on the cliffs watching with a scared face.

He ran the barrow out into the sea till the water was up to his chest, and tipped the bricks out, and came running in with a great breaker, his banging barrow full of foam.

Already some of the Ragers were drifting away down the beach. A tall fellow from the Scriveners Lane lot lounged by him and said with a little grin, Why don't you throw 'em from the top of the cliff, man?

They'd only hit the sand, said Lif.

And you want to drown 'em. Well, good. You know there was some of us thought you was building something down here! They was going to make cement out of you. Keep those bricks wet and cool, man.

Grinning, the Scrivener drifted off, and Lif started up the cliff for another load.

Come for supper, Lif, said the widow at the cliff's top

with a worried voice, holding her baby close to keep it from the wind.

I will, he said. I'll bring a loaf of bread, I laid in a couple before the bakers left. —He smiled, but she did not. As they climbed the streets together she asked, Are you dumping your bricks in the sea, Lif?

He laughed wholeheartedly and answered yes.

She had a look then that might have been relief and might have been sadness; but at supper in her lamplit house she was quiet and easy as ever, and they ate their cheese and stale bread with good cheer.

Next day he went on carrying bricks down load after load, and if the Ragers watched him they thought him busy on their own kind of work. The slope of the beach out to deep water was gradual, so that he could keep building without ever working above water. He had started at low tide so that his work would never be laid bare. At high tide it was hard, dumping the bricks and trying to lay them in rough courses with the whole sea boiling in his face and thundering over his head, but he kept at it. Toward evening he brought down long iron rods and braced what he had built, for a crosscurrent tended to undermine his causeway about eight feet from its beginning. He made sure that even the tips of the rods were underwater at low tide, so that no Rager might suspect an affirmation was being made. A couple of elderly men coming down from a Weeping in the Heights-Hall passed him clanging and battering his empty barrow up the stone streets in dusk, and gravely smiled upon him. It is well to be free of Things, said one softly, and the other nodded.

Next day, though still he had not dreamed of the Islands again, Lif went on building his causeway. The sand began to shelve off more steeply as he went farther. His method now was to stand on the last bit he had built and tip the carefully loaded barrow from there, and then tip himself

off and work, floundering and gasping and coming up and pushing down, to get the bricks leveled and fitted between the preset rods; then up again, across the gray sand and up the cliff and bang-clatter through the quiet streets for another load.

Some time that week the widow said meeting him in his brickyard, Let me throw 'em over the cliff for you, it'll save you one leg of the trip.

It's heavy work loading the barrow, he said.

Oh well, said she.

All right, so long as you want to. But bricks are heavy bastards. Don't try to carry many. I'll give you the small barrow. And the little rat here can sit on the load and get a ride.

So she helped him on and off through days of silvery weather, fog in the morning, clear sea and sky all afternoon, and the weeds in crannies of the cliff flowering; there was nothing else left to flower. The causeway ran out many yards from shore now, and Lif had had to learn a skill which no one else had ever learned that he knew of, except the fish. He could float and move himself about on the water or under it, in the very sea, without touching foot or hand to solid earth.

He had never heard that a man could do this thing; but he did not think much about it, being so busy with his bricks, in and out of air and in and out of water all day long, with the foam, the bubbles of water-circled air or air-circled water, all about him, and the fog, and the April rain, a confusion of the elements. Sometimes he was happy down in the murky green unbreathable world, wrestling strangely willful and weightless bricks among the staring shoals, and only the need of air drove him gasping up into the spray-laden wind.

He built all day long, scrambling up on the sand to collect the bricks that his faithful helper dumped over the

cliff's edge for him, load them in his barrow and run them out the causeway that went straight out a foot or two under sealevel at low tide and four or five feet under at high, then dump them at the end, dive in, and build; then back ashore for another load. He came up into town only at evening, worn out, salt-bleared and salt-itching, hungry as a shark, to share what food turned up with the widow and her little boy. Lately, though spring was getting on with soft, long, warm evenings, the town seemed very dark and still.

One night when he was not too tired to notice this he spoke of it, and the widow said, Oh, they're all gone now, I think.

All? —A pause. —Where did they go?

She shrugged. She raised her dark eyes to his across the table and gazed through lamplit silence at him for a time. Where? she said. Where does your sea-road lead, Lif?

He stayed still awhile. To the Islands, he answered at last, and then laughed and met her look.

She did not laugh. She only said, Are they there? Is it true, then, there are Islands? —Then she looked over at her sleeping baby, and out the open doorway into the darkness of late spring that lay warm in the streets where no one walked and the rooms where no one lived. At last she looked back at Lif, and said to him, Lif, you know, there aren't many bricks left. A few hundred. You'll have to make some more. —Then she began to cry softly.

By God! said Lif, thinking of his underwater road across the sea that went for a hundred and twenty feet, and the sea that went on ten thousand miles from the end of it—I'll swim there! Now then, don't cry, dear heart. Would I leave you and the little rat here by yourselves? After all the bricks you've nearly hit my head with, and all the queer weeds and shellfish you've found us to eat lately, after your table and fireside and your bed and your laughter

would I leave you when you cry? Now be still, don't cry. Let me think of a way we can get to the Islands, all of us together.

But he knew there was no way. Not for a brickmaker. He had done what he could do. What he could do went one hundred and twenty feet from shore.

Do you think, he asked after a long time, during which she had cleared the table and rinsed the plates in wellwater that was coming clear again now that the Ragers had been gone many days– Do you think that maybe . . . this . . . He found it hard to say but she stood quiet, waiting, and he had to say it: That this *is* the end?

Stillness. In the one lamplit room and all the dark rooms and streets and the burnt fields and wasted lands, stillness. In the black Hall above them on the hill's height, stillness. A silent air, a silent sky, silence in all places unbroken, unreplying. Except for the far sound of the sea, and very soft though nearer, the breathing of a sleeping child.

No, the woman said. She sat down across from him and put her hands upon the table, fine hands as dark as earth, the palms like ivory. No, she said, the end will be the end. This is still just the waiting for it.

Then why are we still here–just us?

Oh well, she said, you had your things–your bricks–and I had the baby. . . .

Tomorrow we must go, he said after a time. She nodded.

Before sunrise they were up. There was nothing at all left to eat, and so when she had put a few clothes for the baby in a bag and had on her warm leather mantle, and he had stuck his knife and trowel in his belt and put on a warm cloak that had been her husband's, they left the little house, going out into the cold wan light in the deserted streets.

They went downhill, he leading, she following with the sleepy child in a fold of her cloak. He turned neither to the

road that led north up the coast nor to the southern road, but went on past the marketplace and out on the cliff and down the rocky path to the beach. All the way she followed and neither of them spoke. At the edge of the sea he turned.

I'll keep you up in the water as long as we can manage, he said.

She nodded, and said softly, Well, use the road you built, as far as it goes.

He took her free hand and led her into the water. It was cold. It was bitter cold, and the cold light from the east behind them shone on the foam-lines hissing on the sand. When they stepped on the beginning of the causeway the bricks were firm under their feet, and the child had gone back to sleep on her shoulder in a fold of her cloak.

As they went on, the buffeting of the waves got stronger. The tide was coming in. The outer breakers wet their clothes, chilled their flesh, drenched their hair and faces. They reached the end of his long work. There lay the beach a little way behind them, the sand dark silver under the cliff over which stood the silent, paling sky. Around them was wild water and foam. Ahead of them was the unresting water, the gulf, the great abyss, the gap.

A breaker hit them on its way in to shore and they staggered; the baby waked by the sea's hard slap cried, a little wail in the long, cold, hissing mutter of the sea always saying the same thing.

Oh I can't! cried the mother, but the man took her hand more firmly and said aloud, Come on!

Lifting his head to take the last step from what he had done toward no shore, he saw the shape riding the western water, the leaping light, the white flicker like a swallow's breast catching the break of day. It seemed as if voices rang over the sea's voice. What is it? he said, but her head was bowed to her baby, trying to soothe the little wail that

was all she heard in the vast babbling of the sea. He stood still and saw the whiteness of the sail, the little dancing light above the waves, dancing on toward them and toward the greater light that grew behind them.

Wait, the call came from the form that rode the gray waves and danced on the foam, Wait!– The voices rang very sweet, and as the sail leaned white above him he saw the faces and the reaching arms, and heard them say to him, Come, come on the ship, come with us to the Islands.

Hold on, he said softly to the woman, and took the last step.

A Cold Dark Night with Snow

by Kate Wilhelm

She knew when the car passed her that she had seen it and the four men in it before, had seen it and paid no attention, for now, trying hard, thinking hard, she couldn't remember when it had passed, only that it had. The car passed her and slowed down, and in the back window two faces turned, toward each other at first, choreographed precisely, nose to nose, then nose to window, eyes on her. She slowed to fifty, forty. One of the men looking at her said something, the other laughed. The car ahead had passed her doing sixty-five, and now it was keeping two cars' lengths in front of her. She could outdistance it. She was sure. If they let her get around them. Hers was a new Buick, less than a year old, and the other one, she didn't know what it was, only that it looked older, and was dirty, very used-looking. She should write down the license number. Groping in her purse she saw a third car appear in her rear-view mirror. It was coming fast. Witnesses. She pushed the accelerator hard and whipped out into the other lane to pass; the car with the four men in it picked up speed also. Seventy, seventy-five, a truck was coming, a dazzling red speck in the brilliant sunlight. She jammed the gas pedal to the floor and pulled ahead of the older car, swung back in, and began to pull away from it. The driver gave up and the car began to diminish in her rear-view mirror, then was passed by the new one that was drawing

up to her steadily. She didn't want to have to drive so fast but she wanted the new car between her and the other one until she got to the next town or city, or telephone, in a pinch. She held seventy cautiously, slowing on curves and where the road vanished in a dip ahead of her, and presently the driver behind her became impatient and touched his horn, then pulled . . .

Maiya walks across the living room and sinks gracefully onto the couch. Her movements are fluid, her appearance almost boneless, a curve of lines without angles . . . No.

Maiya sits upright, tense, ready, anxious to help in any way. She is aware of the importance of the interview, and she is impatient with them when they query her about her fatigue . . . No.

Maiya walked into the kitchen and checked the coffee and finger sandwiches, wrapped in plastic cooling in the refrigerator. She looked at the tray and wondered: Should I offer them gin and tonic instead?

Should she offer anything? She bit her lip, then had to go to the bathroom to inspect her face and apply more of the pale, pale pink lipstick. She lowered her eyelids and tilted her head and put a trace of a smile on her lips only, her eyes remaining sad and knowing.

Maiya lets them talk around her, cool, distant, remote even, and when she answers one of the many questions, it is in a low voice that is tightly controlled. She gives no hint of the tumult she is feeling . . . No.

She remembered that she hadn't decided about the gin and tonic, and she took the bottle from the shelf and considered it. It was a hot day, but of course the apartment was pleasantly air-conditioned. They might be hot when they arrived. In air-conditioned cars? From air-conditioned offices? She paced the apartment. Kitchen. Hall. Living room. Bedroom. Bath. Closet. Kitchen. Full circle. She put the gin away and counted the cups on the

tray. Eight. All of her good cups. Too many. Four of them and her, possibly five of them. Probably five, but one at least would refuse coffee, gin too, if she decided on impulse to offer it. She might; she should be ready for the possibility that she would do just that, but that would mean having a second tray ready, and that would look gauche.

"It is gauche not to have wine with dinner, that's why the rosé," she said furiously to Hank.

"Honey, who're you trying to kid? Jack and Susan will have beer before we eat, maybe they'll want beer with dinner."

She should have bought some beer. Even executives liked beer in hot weather. She yanked the plug from the coffeepot. She wouldn't offer them anything.

Maiya admits them to the small, well-kept apartment and murmurs her appreciation. . . .

She should have told them not to come, that they couldn't come now or ever. She hadn't dared. She looked out the window at the street seven stories below, white concrete glaring in the sunlight, green plants in pink planters, neat palm trees throwing shadows on neat lawns. The shadows were like whirligigs. Child on tricycle, in and out of the stick shadows, in and out, dark, light, dark, light, in and out. Her dress was white, a glare when she came from the shadow into the sun, an eye-hurting flash of white. She throbbed against Maiya's eyes, in and out, in and out.

Although she drove with fierce concentration, now and then the other car began to grow in her mirror and she would realize with a feeling of terror that she had let up on the gas, that she had slowed down to her customary sixty-five, and she would again do seventy or more and sigh when the other car began to fade out of sight. It swelled, then shrank, filled the mirror with its image,

dwindled to a dot . . . The roads were so straight, so untraveled. Desert, plains, sunlight, white concrete ribbon, an occasional car or truck from the other direction. And the car behind her that threatened constantly to catch up, to pass her, only to slow down so that the faces could turn to regard her through the rear window. But what could they do? It was daylight, on a public road that had no turnoffs anywhere, that just went on and on to vanish into the sky white with sun straight ahead.

The very small dab of a girl had got to the corner and turned carefully and was now pedaling back down the sidewalk, in and out of the shadows. Maiya pulled the drapes shut and immediately the room was softened, looked more spacious and felt cooler. Living room: couch, two Danish modern chairs, television-stereo console, two wooden chairs, ash-colored cocktail table, end tables, bare floor except for the conversation rug, crescent shaped, flame colored (she had made it from a rug kit), two table lamps, white china bases, white shades, orange drapes, ivory walls, black throws on the couch and chairs. Spotless, shining. Wax and furniture polish fragrant. Kitchen: gleaming black and white floor, chrome table legs, white cover, polished coffeepot, toaster, mixer, orange and black crockery. She poured a cup of the cooling coffee and returned to the living room with it. She didn't have to let them in. She sat down on the black couch and sipped cooling coffee and wished she had been able to say no.

Maiya leans back wearily, her slender white neck barely able to support her head, her hands thin, but quiet on her lap, patience and suffering evident on her pale face, etched in violet under her eyes.

"My dear," Dr. Whitman says gently, "we know you've been through a lot. We'll try to be brief. Can you tell us what happened now?"

"I don't know," she says in a low voice, shutting her eyes

against the nightmare that is out there. "An accident. Hank was working so hard, studying . . ."

Books. She hurried to the bedroom and dragged the carton of books from the closet where she had put it and took the top six books without noticing what they were. She put them on tables in the living room, picked one up and put it on the couch, opened, face down. The room looked cluttered suddenly. She picked up the three magazines that were on the cocktail table and took them to the bedroom and left them on top of the carton. The *House Beautiful* opened when she put it down and she stared at the double spread: a pool seen through a window wall, a fire in a fireplace that filled a second wall, low couches, plants that reached the high ceiling, lots of brass . . .

"Goddammit, will you get it through your head. We can't afford a bigger apartment now. We can't afford this apartment. I am a file clerk! Not a junior executive! How much room do we need?"

"You've been going to school for years now, learning engineering. You aren't going to be a file clerk all your life. It makes a difference where you live, how people think about you. If we invite Mr. and Mrs. Morrison . . ."

"We aren't going to invite Mr. and Mrs. Morrison. They wouldn't come if we did. Look, doll, don't push too hard. Okay?"

"But you will go back to school when the term starts, won't you?"

"I don't think so, honey. I want time out. I want to think and rest and think some more."

"You see," Maiya says softly, looking into Dr. Whitman's face, "he was very ambitious, and very brilliant." She looks beyond him to Mr. Morrison and Mr. Jeffries, the security man. "He could understand everything," she says, and closes her eyes again. But not before she sees the quick glance that the two men exchange.

No! No! NO!

Fool, she whispered fiercely. Stop it. You don't know anything!

Maiya took her cup back to the kitchen, washed and dried it and hung it on the turntable rack for eight cups and saucers. She stared at the cups and gave the rack a turn, sending them out and around. Black and orange, black and orange.

The other car was gaining very slowly. Why couldn't she lose it? A foolish thought. Where could she lose it? Straight road, white concrete ribbon with false water slicks and heat swirls rising, plains and desert, everything aglare and painful against her eyes, no turnoffs for twenty-five miles or more. She forgot how far it was to the next town. She wished she could study the road map. Say twenty-five miles, less than half an hour away. The car could pull around then and slow down and they could ogle her if they chose, it wouldn't matter. But if it was fifty miles, she would have to stop for gas first. There would be a solitary station along the road; a wide-board shack with two pumps outside, ancient cans of oil behind sand-pitted windows, sign to Ladies Room, Gents Room, and the sun burning down on it all. She would stop for gas and they would go by, and presently she would leave the crummy station, not rushing because they were ahead of her now. One-room station, with Ladies and Gents and nothing else, not even a snack bar, nothing. She could tell the man there:

"They're following me, pulling around and slowing down when they can, and . . ." And what? They were probably physicists going back to White Sands after a fishing trip. Or a group of doctors homeward bound from an A.M.A. meeting. Even doctors could look sinister through a back car window, smiling at their own jokes about broken legs, or deliveries, or kidney removals.

"Hank, what's this?" She held out a plastic tube of pink capsules.

"Oh, that. The superintendent sent me over to see Doc Whitman today. He gave me those, help me sleep temporarily."

"Sleeping pills? You didn't tell me you were still having trouble."

"Nothing serious. They're mild. He kidded me about them, said it's what they give to children who're due for tonsillectomies, that mild."

"Ever since the transfer. Since you started in Dr. Ullster's department. Don't you like it there?"

"Honey, knock it off, huh? Come on, let's go swimming."

"You used to tell me about the work, what was going on there, what you were doing. You never say any more."

"I told you, it's classified. I took the oath."

"But me?"

"You too, honey. Now let's go."

Ullster was a mathematician, a theoretical mathematical physicist, to be precise. The newspaper said so when his move into the company was announced. Hermann Ullster. No more was said. There was a big shakeup; men were transferred to work in his department from other sections. Computer time was rearranged drastically. Ullster had seven programmers under him.

Coming home from the pool, Hank said, "They might insist that we move inside the complex soon."

Her heart pounded and she was afraid to look at him, afraid he would see the excitement on her face. She waited a moment then said, "Is it official?"

"Not yet. Hadley was surprised when he learned that I'm still on the outside and working in Ullster's section. He'll take it up with them next week."

His tight voice, gaze fixed on the road ahead of them,

hands hard on the wheel, furious with them at the complex, furious with himself, for being told he would have to move, ordered to come inside the complex. She knew. But the complex!

Luxuriant apartments, some single houses, some duplexes, its own stores, restaurants, bowling lanes, swimming pools, putting greens . . .

She shopped in Goldwater's for a dress to mark the occasion, a simple sleeveless linen, pale yellow. Fifty-nine ninety-five. She took it home and hid it.

Maiya, lovely in her pale lemon-colored dress that was superb with her rich tan and honey-toned hair, self-possessed and cool, stands in the doorway and looks them over appraisingly as they enter the apartment and find seats. One, Morrison, president of the research corporation, doesn't sit down. He studies her as carefully as she examines them. He nods. He motions to the group of men and two of them leave quietly, three others remaining.

"What's your price?" Morrison asks.

"One percent in the company," Maiya says easily. She moves to the table and gets a cigarette and waits for him to light it for her. He does and she blows a perfect smoke ring. "Plus fifty thousand cash within ten days."

Maiya thought of Morrison whom she had seen at one time from a distance. Corpulent, a giant, with a head as big as a basketball and shining bald. He would fill the living room all by himself; she would be like a single wreath of pale smoke beside such a man. With one sweep of his hand he could disperse her, make her vanish forever, and he wouldn't even notice that she had been there and was gone.

"Honey, I think this is what I want to do. I'll have to start low, but that's all right. I'll have my degree in two years, and meanwhile I'll be part of it. They're doing research and making plans for the uses of the ocean floor

and for the planets when the time comes. Food, fuel, medicines, who knows what they'll come up with from research like this?"

Hank, twenty-three, ex-GI, ex-many things, nothing. Starting salary $98.75 per week. Up to $135.45 after a year and a half. The apartment was $160.00 per month. Quitting school with only half a year to go. Stopping the flow of communication that he had maintained with Maiya since they had been married four years ago.

Maiya on the couch, waiting for the visitors, twenty-four, thinking about fifty thousand dollars. Not-thinking about Hank again and again, resolutely not-thinking about Hank. Fifty thousand dollars. He had lived in the Village on nothing, he said. Air, words, ideas? Handouts? What was fifty thousand dollars to him? Not-thinking of Hank. She could go to New York or Miami, and . . . And what? Having the money was what she thought of, not what she would do with it, where she would go with it. Having it, and not-thinking of Hank.

Hank, looking out the window during the night. "There's a crazy moon. Look at it, honey. Big as a house out there." Moonlight on the desert, blue light that almost let you see, like a half-remembered image from a fairy tale where you didn't have to think about the reality or unreality of a castle floating on water. Hank, naked at the window, unreal in the same pale light, playing his guitar, singing softly: ". . . and what have you built, when you've built a bomb? You've built hurt and pain and suffering anon . . ."

"Hank, stop it! Come on to bed."

Sometimes she didn't know him, couldn't think why she had married him, where they were going or why.

Not-thinking of Hank in bed with her. Especially not-thinking of Hank in bed with her.

Maiya weeps bitterly and can't answer their questions, can't speak. Dr. Whitman motions them angrily from the

room and sits by her side and pats her shoulder awkwardly. "I know, my dear. Hank told me what a wonderful life you had together. You will have to be brave now. It isn't going to be easy for you." No!

Maiya jerked when somewhere a clock struck four. It was almost time. She returned to the kitchen and stood with her hand on the plug to the coffeepot. Hank's papers. What if they wanted his papers? She ran to the bedroom and yanked open the top bureau drawer and snatched notebooks and loose papers up in both hands. Where could she put them? She started for the bed, then stopped. But where? Bedroom, living room, kitchen, bath . . . She ran to the bathroom and started to tear up the papers into tiny fragments. Limericks, bits of verse, songs, letters. All very, very dirty. She flushed them down the toilet.

A film of perspiration had broken out on her forehead and she blotted it with Kleenex moistened with skin freshener. What would they have thought of her?

Why were they coming?

What did they want from her?

She thought of the concrete road again and walked back to the living room and sat down once more. It was so bright! On her way from the university where they'd had a housekeeping unit, to Mesa, Arizona, where Hank had his new job. Miles and miles of plains, desert, white bright sky, and the car with four men in it that kept edging closer and closer so that she couldn't relax, couldn't let down her guard a moment. Everything connected to everything else. A skein of wool with millions of threads, so that it didn't matter which one you followed, you ended back in the middle. Hank had said that, not Maiya. She shook her head violently. Not-thinking of Hank. The car followed closer going up the mountain roads. She couldn't help it, she had to slow down. If only she knew exactly what it was she was running from. Maybe they weren't even threatening

her, just happened to be going in the same direction, at about the same speed.

"Honey, all my life I've wanted to make things, you know? Model cars when I was a kid, then string wires into bottles and make lamps, put tubes together and come up with a radio or a hi-fi. Like that. I like to take things and put them together and come up with something new and useful, and even pretty." He got out of the army in California and walked across the country to New York where they met and were married three weeks later. "No kids for awhile, okay with you?"

She had nodded, relieved. No kids now, maybe never. She teased him about it, though: You're the guy that wants to make things, but not kids.

Nothing that would hurt, he'd said. She knew she had looked blank, and he had pushed her over backward in the bed and was on top of her with a scissors-lock . . . Not-thinking of Hank and her in bed together. God, not that . . .

Hairpin curves, thirty miles an hour, the other car half a city block away. Almost see their expressions now, one in the back seat leaning over the front seat, his chin on his arms, looking ahead, looking at her.

Maiya is so young, so vulnerable. "I tried," she says desperately. "I wanted him to stay on and go back to school. I wanted him to make something of himself. When he told me what he planned, I was terrified. He was sick. He needed help. You have to understand that."

Morrison, looming over her, blotting out the light, his voice everywhere in the room, says, "He was a traitor, an agent. And you were his accomplice."

"NO!" she cries, and her innocence is so apparent that even Morrison is moved into retreating. He mutters to Jeffries, the security man, "She's okay. Chalk it up as an accident, give her the usual pension. Let's go."

He was sick. Feverish, restless, pacing, in bed and up, again and again.

"Hank, what is the matter? What happened?"

"Nothing. Go back to sleep."

"How can I?" She pulled her robe on, chilled in the air-conditioned room. "At least tell me what happened."

Hank, muttering like a drunk, or a sleepwalker, some of the words coming through, not enough: ". . . doesn't matter what you try to do, all ends up in the middle, all connected, wound around each other . . ."

She caught his arm and pulled him to a stop. "What happened?"

"Ullster is working on developing a mathematical approach to mental disease, and at the same time, on a mathematical approach to an electronic mind wave that would turn a man into a walking corpse in an instant." Hank put his hand over hers on his bare arm. His hand was hot and dry. "We're minting coins out there at the complex," he said. "And each and every one of them has two heads." His hand tightened on hers. "And I don't know which mouth I'm feeding," he said harshly.

"I don't know what you're talking about. You've been smoking pot or something."

He flung her hand away and went to the window. "I know you don't know. Would it matter if you did? Would it matter?" He almost cried when he said that.

She stood in the doorway staring at his silhouette against the pale light of the full moon on the desert. Then she turned and went back to bed. Much later she heard his soft voice and his guitar, but she didn't get up.

She looked about suddenly. For a moment she thought she had heard it again, only the elevator down the hall. She remembered the funny words he had made up that night: "Oh, they'll tell you the story of a little file clerk; They'll say that one day he went all berserk, That he raided the

files and made a high pyre. That he lay down on top to take his rest there . . ."

They caught up with her halfway down the mountain. When she got out of her car and faced them, she said, "What do you want? I'm out of gas, there wasn't any place I could stop. Will you take me to the next town, to the complex where my husband works?"

One of them doubled over, laughing. "No place to stop! You drove like hell through town after town, past crossroad after crossroad. Honey, you didn't want to stop."

Maiya heard the steps in the hallway and she stood up. They were on time.

Maiya admits them graciously, wordlessly, and as they enter they murmur words of condolence. . . .

The buzzer rasped at her. She fumbled with the lock, then got the door open.

"Mrs. Brewster, I'm Dr. Whitman. How do you do." He stepped aside and the two other men entered. "Mr. Fields, our company attorney, and Jack Arcana, of course, you know already."

She nodded and made a motion to close the door.

Mr. Fields said, "Mrs. Brewster, we've come to talk to you about the terrible accident at the complex, to explain what your rights are, and primarily to offer, to urge you to accept our help at this difficult time."

Jack Arcana cleared his throat. "Maiya," he said, "if there's anything we, Susan and I can do, you know . . ."

She looked at him and shook her head. She said dully, "Mary. My name is Mary." Then she sat down and waited for them to tell her what to do.

Fame

by Jean Cox

1

Lights. Some scattered about the dark ground. Others flaring like cressets on high poles. Others floodlighting a tall cylindrical object, metallically gleaming against the night sky. Shouts. The throaty purr of trucks. Pieces of equipment strewn here and there. Gantries. Snaking cables and hoses. Sounds of quickly moving feet. Shapes silhouetting themselves against lighted windows and doors. But in the midst of all this confusion, a concerted movement: a crowd making its way across the open ground, one man at its center. He walks slowly, gesturing. Those in front of him walk backward, spattering him with light. Those at his side hold white squares of paper, pencils alert or moving.

They all pause before a long low building. He glances upward at the metallically gleaming object. His glance is confident and familiar, but it holds a little longer than the glances of those around him, who have looked up also in imitation—and his throat moves, as if he had swallowed to remove some constriction there. Then, decisively pushing open the door, he enters the building. Here too the buzz of incessant activity: telephones, typewriters, teletypewriters —chattering, clattering. There is an abrupt rise in the pitch of these sounds as he comes in, the equivalent of an exclamation, "Here he is, folks!" In fact, a sensitive ear might have caught that very phrase spoken into a dozen microphones. Might have caught also a name, "Cargill,"

repeated more than once, "Major Ralph Cargill," and scattered phrases, "most incredible voyage ever . . . time difference . . . to another star and back," which it might have pieced together into whole sentences: "One hundred years . . . plodding by on Earth on heavy feet . . . will flash by for him in the twinkling of ten years' time. Our grandchildren . . . their children . . . will greet his triumphant return." But it could not have caught what was being said directly and in a lower tone into Major Cargill's left ear by a man in a dark business suit. Cargill nods, but looks around the room with a questing eye. He spots a face, out of the way in a far corner, and beckons. The owner of the face comes over and he and Cargill and the man who had spoken to Cargill go out of a door at the side of the room, followed by a hundred curious eyes. But not by the possessors of those eyes.

It is quieter in this room, which has only one man in it. The man who had dropped the hint says, "This is Eastman, the make-up man. I need hardly remind you . . ."

"I will be ready. Mr. Eastman will see to that, I'm sure." The hint-dropper consults his watch, and hurries out. "Now, Shel," says Cargill, "if you will just stand over here where I can see you . . ."

The man he has brought into the room with him does as he is bid. This man is thin, bespectacled, with sandy ill-combed hair. He is pleasant without being good-looking. He can't be very observant, his eye is so dull, and he is certainly not very lively. He is not well-dressed, either; and it seems that he is old-fashioned enough to wear a hat, because he carries one in his hand. The name in the hatband is plainly visible. Limbert.

Cargill seats himself in a chair beside the cluttered table and permits the makeup man to dab at his face uninterruptedly for some minutes before he speaks.

"Has Harper's sent back your novel yet?"

A slight flush (which the makeup man might have tried in vain to imitate) touches the cheek of Limbert. "No. Not yet."

"Well, of course," says Cargill, watching and catching himself up short, "they might not. They might decide to take it." Then, laughing, though somewhat seriously too, as if this were a moment for honesty: "They might want to be different from all those others."

Limbert smiles; and Cargill, still watching him and still amused and friendly, continues: "We've known each other for a long time, haven't we?"

"Since we were five."

"Right!" As if it had been a weighted examination question and Limbert had come out rather well on it. "Then you're the obvious person to write about me, isn't that so? In fact, with what you already know about me—and who knows me better than you do, Shel?—you might whip up something really fascinating."

His friend betrays a certain hesitancy. "Yes, I do want to write about you. In my way But my way, you know, is so very uncongenial to the large public kind of thing you seem to have in mind, which is so out of keeping with what I do and with what seems natural for me to do, that—well, in short, it would look as if I were desperately trying to realize some cash on my friendship with you. It would look quite a bit like, a—"

"Exploitation? Oh, hell, lots of people are doing that, anyway, and who has a better right than you? Listen, now," getting up from the chair and seeming to brush aside the makeup man, who is imperfectly satisfied, "I've already made arrangements with Ed Woods at *Life* for you to do that long article we spoke about. Here," extracting a manila envelope from his breast pocket and handing it: "These are a few pages I've written about myself. As told to, et cetera. It'll help you over the rough spots, if you

can't think of anything to say. No—I don't want any excuses, because I *know* you can handle it. And," smartly tapping the envelope in Limbert's hand with his forefinger, "don't let the big boys take it away from you, okay?"

An observant person could not fail to see, perhaps merely from the postures of the two men as they stand facing each other, that they like each other; but that is about all he would find in common. Cargill, handsome and well-knit in his Air Force uniform, is very unlike Limbert: he has the build of an athlete, the face of a matinee idol, the presence and address of a popular politician. But there is a momentary touch of resemblance between them in that there is something like pity in the face of each as he looks at the other. This is to be their last meeting and parting. It is as if each were dying. Limbert will survive Cargill in a sense, but when the other returns to Earth a century from now, he might, if he wishes, walk out and visit Limbert's grave, if such an obscure grave is still identifiable. But it is Cargill's face which displays the greater sadness. It may be that, in addition to the feeling natural to the moment, he has in reserve a further store of pity for his threadbare friend, an unpublished would-be writer, a failure at twenty-seven, a fellow who could never have made it on his own. But now he won't have to; *he* is seeing to that.

"Believe me, Shel, really," placing a hand on the nondescript shoulder, "it'll be the making of you."

Cargill leaves the hand there awhile. Perhaps he is conscious that Limbert will have that ghostly guiding helping hand on his shoulder for a very long time to come. The publicizing of his friendship with Major Ralph Cargill will certainly stand him in good stead. It will bring him into contact with something exciting and alive; it will connect him in the public's mind with something large and important.

So much for that. Cargill goes out now to face the world; that is, the television cameras. He is very popular. He would be called a hero except that the word has been so emptied of meaning that the newspapers, to give adequate expression to the general admiration, are forced to call him "a hero's hero." He is no ordinary astronaut, crewcut, gum chewing, taped and strapped into a capsule, wires trailing from his scalp—the "human factor" in a complicated mechanical-administrative process. Rather, he is himself the pilot, the navigator and the scientist, and that on a flight largely of his own initiating and partly of his own planning. He has fought for it against public ridicule and scientific dissent, and has won. This has made him into a dramatic figure and he is further dignified by the importance of the flight, the scientific value of which is now beyond dispute. It is to provide, among other things, the first extended trial of the newly discovered means of reducing to human scale the experienced-time of such long-distance travel. Further still—and this too casts upon him its flattering light—the purity of the venture is in no way compromised by politics nor, despite his title, by military advantage. It is undertaken only for the achievement, for the love of knowledge and of glory.

He speaks. It is his farewell to the world, simple and moving. Three hundred million persons watch.

2

Cargill made an ominous discovery the second week out. He was lonely. But he put it aside, as a busy man does a dull ache which is not importuning enough to be attended to at the moment. Besides which, he had expected to be lonely. "His lonely vigil," "the vast and drear watches of the night," "the odyssey of a solitary spirit"—such were

the newspaper and magazine phrases, implying a quiet and resolute endurance, that had stuck in his memory. But as the weeks and months passed, the ache grew until it throbbed through his whole consciousness, grew until he found that he never lost it for more than a few minutes at a time.

Loneliness and boredom. The two were one. He had never realized before how social a person he was. Though perfectly amiable and possessing (he couldn't help but know) an enviable public presence and social command, he had thought of himself as being as independent and self-sufficient as a person reasonably free from conceit could be. The one fault which had been found with him in the midst of the recent adulation was that, with all his good humor, there was a muted but unmistakable reserve —it had been noted, for instance, that he had never been known to laugh in public—and a cool touch of dignity. But these, it was usually added, were admirable qualities in a man undertaking "an odyssey of the solitary spirit" who was to stand "the vast and drear watches of the night."

The loneliness was torture. He finally had to admit that very phrase to his consciousness, although it was several weeks more before he could bring himself to put it down in his journal. But he couldn't turn back. The humiliation would be unendurable. Especially to him, who had tasted the sweets of fame and whose future fame, if he persevered, was certain.

He had his work, of course: his scientific observations and studies (his training, still continuing, was in mathematics and astro-physics) and his journals (the raw materials of more than one future book). And he did his work with a kind of desperate scrupulousness.

And he had entertainment. There were books and magazines on microfilm; music, plays and movies on tapes. But never before—he often exclaimed to himself: sometimes

aloud, a habit he was falling into—never before had he realized the banality of most popular entertainment. Even of such superior entertainment as this, which had, after all, been carefully selected by a committee to conform to his tastes.

More and more, that vacuity on the other side of the curved steel came to seem expressive of his own life.

The one-quarter mark. Twenty-five years had passed on Earth. Two and a half years of his life had "flashed by." His boredom and loneliness reached a kind of crisis. If he should turn back *now* . . . He loitered at the controls for days, hovering over them; but he couldn't bring himself to touch them.

He listened to the sound of his footsteps walking up and down, up and down the narrow corridor.

He lay on his bunk, remembering the faces and bodies of girls. That deprivation was torturous too. *I will still be young, I will still be young.* The thought ran through his mind like a tag of a song. *I will still be young / When I get back.* He would be only in his late thirties and would have before him years of the enjoyment of women. And he would have them too, he knew that, because of that most potent of aphrodisiacs, Fame.

The halfway mark. He swung past and around the great Alpha Centauri cluster. In the excitement and activity of those weeks, he forgot his sufferings. He filled half a large journal with notes. He discovered two dark planets near Proxima Centauri and gave them names, names which they would bear always—Michelson and Morley—and a third one, which he named Bessel, in the vicinity of the double suns. These discoveries alone would have gained for him a lasting distinction. But he made other observations too, acquisitions worth adding to the coffers of science, such as his discovery of those inexplicable traveling "blips," apparently faster than his ship, but also, apparently and fortu-

nately for him, harmless. And at last he was on the downward slope toward home. His sufferings changed pitch. Now that it no longer lay in his power to shorten the flight, he no longer lived in an agony of indecision. Rather, he lived a fretting agony of impatience, lapsing at times into exhausted resignation.

A feature of his loneliness, which had nagged at him for some time, increased during this period. He would catch a glimpse of a figure from the corner of his eye and start, violently. Or he would awaken in the darkness to find that he was listening, and had been listening for some minutes. He began to have a fearful sympathetic understanding of the madness of solitary prisoners and castaways. Careful, he told himself. Careful, or he would people the ship.

But one thought kept him sane: his future fame. He clung to it. It was his stay, his only prop, in the insupportable night: the sure foreknowledge of his fame when he returned. There was an old joke, "Why should I do anything for posterity? What has posterity done for me?" Well, he was one benefactor who was going to see what posterity could do for him. He was going in person to collect the debt. All he would ask of posterity would be universal respect and recognition—which would surely bring in their train position, money and women. In short, all he would ask was that it should "heap up his moments with life, triple his pulses with fame."

These were some of his thoughts as he dropped toward Earth and listened to the sound of his footsteps going up and down, up and down the narrow corridor.

3

And now the ground is under his feet. His descent has been dizzying, but he staggers out at last upon the solid

ground, to find himself greeted in the morning sunlight by a delegation representing (or so he gathers, along with his scattered wits) the Public and Culture. The Public is disappointingly scanty. It consists of a half-dozen rather ordinary-looking men in highly stylized suits; but Culture, though even less numerous, is embodied more beautifully. He wonders at her beauty, staring a little. Perhaps there is no art—no make-up is visible—but merely heightened feeling. Mary Godwin, she says her name is, and she shows the expected excited interest in him. Of course, they all are most kind, most cordial and most attentive to him. He had expected that, but after his long isolation, his starved longing for human society in his cramped cell, he is thrilled by it, pierced, and his volubility gushes forth. They speak to him and no doubt ask him questions and try to answer some of his, but he finds it quite impossible to stint the flow of his own words and can hardly take in what they say. They have no trouble taking in what he says, though. Their intelligence, their receptivity, is so great that it swallows up everything, every description, observation and report of discovery, without effort and without amazement. But he understands, as they conduct him across the field, Miss Godwin at his side, that they are inviting him to address the public (ah! *there* is his public: things are to be done ceremoniously) from the stage of the Academy. The Academy? Of Arts and Sciences (with a bow to Miss Godwin). Of course. He had wondered why Science wasn't among his greeters. It would seem that the two cultures are now one.

They show him to a car, in which they glide into the city. He is calmer now and more alert, composing mental notes. His first, on looking out upon the wide prospect, is that the world has become not older, but newer. And his second, looking around with a wistful pang at his fresh-faced companions, is that the people have become not

older, but younger. They take him to a luxurious suite to rest and refresh himself before meeting the general public.

His showering and shaving, his changing his clothes for those of the present fashion, are like adventures, they are so fraught with novelty. The representatives of the Public depart as he performs these private rites, but leaving Mary behind, as she is to escort him to the Academy, with which she seems to have some intimate connection. "Some intimate connection?" Was that a throb of jealousy? Drying his face with a towel, he pleasantly contemplates this dark-eyed, dark-haired beauty. She is accessible; this is certainly the appropriate time and place; and yet he abstains. His refraining from any hasty physical grappling is not only a sign to himself and to her of his easy confidence but preserves a little longer that fragile and somewhat tentative charm that plays about the moment and their conversation together.

She makes several laughing remarks to the effect that she is well familiar with Cargill, that she is acquainted with Cargill's dark and stormy moods, that Cargill would be much improved by lots of fresh air and purer sunlight —before he quite makes out that she is talking about a place. What place? One of the two planets of Proxima Centauri. Why, yes—hadn't he understood? There have been some other such flights, several hundred to the Alpha Centauri cluster alone, because of advances in space travel. Almost everyday affairs, you know.

The ground opens silently at his feet. There is a black void one step before him—a piece of that same dark emptiness into which he has dropped so many years of his life. His accomplishment, then, is nothing, just one of a number of routine transactions, gone stale and familiar. Or worse than nothing: for his heroic effort is now qualified by irony and pity. They will feel pity for him! They will be kind to him! The cordial and attentive faces of this

morning flash before him suddenly as images of sly mockery. But, no—he desperately grasps at something: there is no mistaking the expression on the girl's face. He knows that look. There can be no counterfeiting *that.* She has turned toward him that spontaneous, steady, observant gaze of admiration, that look, as unironic as an appetite, which a woman directs toward a man who connects her somehow with a larger life, a life of spirit and imagination. Before the magnificent fact of her countenance his inward tremor pales into a delusion. Somehow he is still what he wanted to be. His heroism is undivided and unqualified. The awful hole at his feet closes as silently and invisibly as it had opened.

She never knew it had been there; and he, his conversation becoming lighter and more effortlessly charming by the moment, doesn't tell her. They go on to the Presentation together. They enter what appears to be a large auditorium from the rear and pass into what he recognizes as the wings of a stage. And then he hears it. The audience. Breathing, stirring, talking . . . but not, it takes him a puzzled moment to realize, coughing. A man has moved forward to greet them, a pleasant and powerful man whom Mary introduces as Browning, and who is to introduce him to his public. As Browning and he shake hands, Cargill glances out onto the stage—and smiles. For sitting on the stage are the old familiar wooden chairs, two of them, facing the audience with their old familiar patient expectant air.

His introducer, smiling, touches him on the shoulder and leads the way onto the stage. As Cargill comes out from the wings there is a sudden storm of thunderous applause. The audience rises at him. He is stunned by the size and splendor of the gathering. It is not so much a crowd as a great concourse, a galaxy, of distinguished and distinguishable individuals, brilliantly dressed, gaily alive. He feels a

curious movement in his scalp, as if the top of his head were coming off. He walks to the chairs, bows and seats himself on one of them as the beaming Browning steps to the podium. The applause is warm and prolonged—twice or thrice Browning tries to speak, without success—and it dies reluctantly.

"We are gathered here," Browning begins—the acoustics are perfect; Cargill might have heard a whisper in the gallery—"we are gathered here to speak with a man who comes to us from the past, a man who was born almost one hundred and forty years ago. But he is more than a survivor. He is our vinculum with the past. We honor the bravery and dedication which have made it possible for him to appear before us as a personal representative and a witness. Many of us have eagerly awaited his return for decades, because we are sure that he has much to tell us. We are sure that he can tell us much that would otherwise have been lost." There is the slightest stirring in the gathering, to which the speaker responds. "Yes, the broad outlines of the man we so much admire we already know. The genius, the daring, the shaping spirit exploring and appropriating the world—these large things, I say, we already know. But where our hearts are, every fact, no matter how small, is of importance; every fact speaks to us. And Major Ralph Cargill—for who knows the facts better than he?—is here to tell us of them."

Cargill, comfortably at home in his prominent position, listens to this flattering rhetoric without missing a nuance of the audience.

"There are spirits," continues the orator, "which have enlarged the boundaries of the physical world by their aggressive daring. Our guest is one of those. And there are others, those few and precious others, who have enlarged the world by enlarging our lives, who have claimed for the imaginative life what had previously seemed inaccessible to

it, or not worthy of its attention, as not offering the suitable objects and occasions for feeling—the everyday, the routine, the necessary.

Cargill glances at the speaker, as if he has not quite followed the line of thought here.

"And Ralph Cargill means so much to us today because of his past connection with such a spirit. For he, as we all know, was the closest personal friend of the greatest novelist of the late twentieth century. Yes, he has seen Limbert plain."

The speaker, on saying this, indicates the guest with a gracious and genial gesture; but glancing reflexively in the same direction, freezes—with his arm still outstretched. For the honored guest's face is contorted and from his open mouth there come uncouth sounds, seemingly torn from him and at first unrecognizable.

The audience subsides into silence. There is an utter cessation of noise. More than three thousand persons watch as on the stage Major Ralph Cargill, the hero of space, the pioneer of Alpha Centauri, his body taut and rigid, his head thrown back, astonishes their ears with a loud and roaring laughter.

Debut

by Carol Emshwiller

There are always the helping hands of my sisters and everywhere the rustle of soft silk and the tinkle of iced drinks, so being blind is no hardship. All is dark and calm and cool with the flutter of fans. Hands touch me, guide me. My sisters talk in soft voices and sometimes they sing. Their hands are thin and dry. Their long fingernails seldom scratch, only now and then when they can't help it.

Sometimes I say, "I wish I could see," yet never really wanting to, for I have all I could wish for now. I don't need to see with their hands always about me and their fans fanning me. "Better not to see," they answer. "The world is a black place. The days are sharp with thorns. Better not to see the world," and they sing me a slow song.

Mara says the world is blacker even than anything I see now, but I don't believe it. Also I don't see black always, but red sometimes and sometimes purple stripes, sometimes white pricks of light.

Mara and Netta take me to the banks of the stream to listen to the water. "It's nice to hear water over stones," they say, and, "sound is better than sight." Mara combs my hair and Netta washes my feet. I lie on my side with my knees drawn up and play with my blunted daggers, thick as fingers on the string of my belt. I put my hands down sometimes to rub my knees or across to feel how my breasts have grown. I think: There's a change coming. I'm

nervous. I'm not sure, today, if I like my hair combed or not or my feet washed. Perhaps I do. Perhaps I don't. (One of these days the daggers won't be so blunt. I wonder if, under their thick shells, there might not be needle points, with poison perhaps, to kill or put asleep. I hope so, but what a strange hope and what a strange thought that comes from nowhere unless from the sound of the pines which also have needles.) This time I won't tell Mara my thoughts, but shall I tell her to stop combing? I don't believe I can ask it gently. I don't feel gentle. I turn onto my other side. By mistake I kick Netta.

"Dear Princess," Mara says, "listen to the music of the stream. It sings just for you." She combs my hair faster and puts her hand on my forehead. Now I know that I don't like the combing. "Stop," I shout. "Don't you ever get enough hair combing? This is the last of it . . . ever." I bang down one fat dagger and it does break open. I hear it shatter and I feel with my finger that it's now a needle shape just as I guessed and almost as long as my hand. I don't yet know if it's poison.

My sisters are quiet and I don't feel their touch. I wonder have they gone off quietly on their bare tiptoes and left me, poor blind thing, alone in the forest? But I don't call out or make any move. I sit with my head up and listen. There's the sound of leaves and of water flowing. I've never been without the rustle of my sisters' sounds or their touch before. Their hands that hold my cup of milk and feed me my bread and honey, my strawberries, my plums, would they now, silently, suddenly, desert me? But have I ever spoken so harshly to them before?

Then some other sister comes. I hear her humming from somewhere across the stream, and then I hear Mara, still quiet near me, say to the one coming, "Thus the Princess," and I turn my face toward her sound. The other comes. It's Mona. "Ah," she says, "I'll go on ahead and tell the

Queen." What she says frightens me, but the tone of her voice makes me angry. If she's talking about the Queen, I think, why doesn't she sound grander, or if not grander then more servile. But I was never angry at Mona's voice before. She is one, with Lula and others too, who comes to sing me to sleep.

Now that I know my sisters haven't left me alone, I get to my knees by myself and put my arms above my head and feel how strong I seem today. I stretch and then gather my hair behind my shoulders. I loop it in my necklace like my sisters do when they go hunting. I think how my sisters say I'm beautiful. How they say the Queen doesn't like beauty or strength like mine and I wonder will the sisters stand by me with the Queen. They've been sweet and loving, all with their hands coming to feed me and wash me and cover me with my silk, but will they stand by me as I come, so blind and helpless, to see the Queen? I'm not sure that they will. The world is black, they say. Mara sometimes would hold me in her arms. "Never see it," she would say. "I hope you never see the black world." "Woman child," she called me. Mara is my closest sister, but even so I'm not sure she'll stand by me. Perhaps, after all, the world is as black as what I can see now, perhaps with purple stripes and frightening pricks of light.

I feel the sisters' hands help me to my feet. This time they don't ask me if I'd like to swim before going back. This irritates me, for at least they could ask even though I would say no. Haven't they any respect for my feelings? Can't they let me refuse for myself? Do they, perhaps, think me so stupid, so ignorant, that I might say yes? I don't think I want them on my side before the Queen if that's how they feel about me. I, helpless as I am, will stand up to the Queen alone. But why am I so angry?

Though I'm blind, I know our house well. I've walked along its wide verandas and, when I was younger, played

on its steps. I know its many open doors, its porches. I know its stone, its wood, its cushions, curtains, tassels, tapestries. I've heard sounds echo through high-ceilinged rooms. I've put my arms around fat pillars and could not touch my fingertips at the other side, and always I've heard the steps of sisters, upstairs and down, night and day, their rustlings and tinklings, their songs, their humming and sometimes the sound of their spears.

Yet, though the house is big, the doors and porches wide, my own world is always close about me. Sometimes I seem to walk in a ball of dark hardly wider than my fingertips can reach. The world comes to me as I feel it and mostly from the hands of my sisters.

I don't think I was born blind. I have dim memories of once having seen. I remember it best in dreams. Faces come to me, all of them pale, all with long hair. I think I know what lace looks like, and white and pink coverlets, beds that hang from the ceiling on thin golden cords. In my dreams I can see tall, narrow windows with misty light coming in. I see lamps on the walls with fringe hiding their brilliance, but only in the dreams have these things any meaning for me now.

The sisters lead me into the house and into a back room I don't remember having been in before. From here I can smell bread baking and rabbit or perhaps pig cooking, but I know none will be for me. I'm not hungry, but still it makes me angry that none will be for me. I sit stiffly as the sisters take off the soft, light clothes I wear and give me softer, lighter ones. They give me shoes and I'm not used to shoes but they tie them on tightly with knots so I can't take them off. They have thick, soft soles as though I walked on moss or one of our rugs, but the strings around my ankles make me furious. Before they've finished dressing me, I begin to tremble and I touch my shattered dagger and the other blunt one. I feel very strong.

They take me down long halls and then up the central stairway to the top to see the Queen. The Queen calls me "my dear." "My dear," she says and her voice is very old and ugly. "My sweet, my dear," she says, "you've come to me at last, my prettiest one." Does she think I came for compliments? Has she no dignity at all? She's too old. I can tell by her voice. I turn my head toward her. She isn't far from me. I take my one true dagger and leap toward her and, just as I feared, my sisters don't stand by me. Their hands hold me back just when they should be helping. One has her arm across my throat, choking me. Mara, I suppose.

"See, my sweet one, see!" screams the Queen and someone rips my mask from my face and I do see, I see the brilliant world at last. My sisters let me go but now I can't kill the Queen because I don't know anymore where she is. No one moves and gradually I come to understand that there's a mirror along the back wall. I even remember that mirror though I had forgotten it, and I know it's a mirror, and I see now that the Queen sits, or rather reclines before me twice, once in her reflection, and she's not quite as old as her voice seems. And I stand here, and there behind the Queen too, and I know this one in shoes and green scarves with her hair tied up behind is I. And all along I see my sisters, pale ladies, gentle warriors, some leaning toward their spears. Now I'm among strangers, for I don't even know which one is Mara. Now I see how the world is. I still tremble, but from sight.

The Queen is smiling. "Take her," she says and they take me, not bothering now if their fingernails dig and scratch. They take me down the long stairways, across the halls and out the wide doors, away across the meadow and then the stream, away into the forest until we come to a hill. We climb this hill and at the top one sister says, "Sit down." She brings out mead and a little bread. "You must stay

here now," she says. "You must wait." They all turn to leave, but one, no different from the others, turns back. "I'm Mara," she says, "and you must stay and wait," and then she goes.

I sit and look. I think they've left me to die. I've seen how the Queen hates me, but still to be able to look is a wonderful thing. I look and recognize and even remember the squirrel, the bird and the beetle.

Soon the sun gets low and the birds sing louder. It's cool. A rabbit comes out to feed not far from where I sit. Then suddenly something drops from a tree not far from me, silent as a fox, but I see him. I jump to my feet. I've never seen a creature like this but I know what it is. I've not heard the word except in whispers in the hallways. I've hardly believed they could exist. Taller, thicker than I, than any of us. Brother to the goat spirit. It is Man. Now I know what the shoes are for. I turn and run, but away from our house and into the hills.

It grows dark as I run and then the moon comes up and I run on and on, back where the hills are steeper and there are more rocks and fewer trees. In my shoes I don't worry about the sharp stones or the long, steep, slippery climbs, for the shoes stick like flies on the wall and I go up or down like a lizard. I've never run like this in my life. I'm supple as water. Nothing can stop me. My steps are like wind in summer. My eyes fly with me and they see everything.

Then there's the steepest climb of all. He can't be close behind me now, for even I, with my magic shoes, am winded, but I keep on to the top where the trees are twisted and small from the wind. There's a hollow, soft with pine needles. I lie down there to hide and turn to face the moon. I'm not afraid of the forest or the night. It's not as dark as blindness.

I lie panting and when my own breathing quiets I hear

panting still. I look away from the moon and I see the creature, Man, lying as I lie, exhausted. I watch him until his eyes close, then I close my own. I've run a long way. I don't think or even dream anymore now.

In the first light of dawn the brother to the goat's ghost touches me on my breast and wakes me. My anger of yesterday has changed. I tremble. Man's fingers are strong as the golden bed cords. His hands aren't dry and cool like my sister's hands. He tears away a green scarf and I feel there, at my neck, the coarse hairs by his mouth. I shut my eyes and for a moment I think that I'm being eaten, but then I feel again that I'm running like a lizard on the mountainsides, and Man breathes like a lion in my ear.

Afterward he rolls away and looks at the morning sky. Quickly, before it's too late, I smash the other dagger open, grasp the two and stab him twice with each hand. He makes a big bird sound and curls like a caterpillar. Then I rest a little while.

I understand now. Of course the Queen hates me, but she'll care for me, and all those like me, well. And I hate her, but I don't feel irritable any longer. I'm happy and relaxed. I rest, and later I hear my sisters coming for me, singing in the hills. How I love my sisters. Someday they might stand by me before the Queen, so I'll let them comb my hair. I'll drink milk from their cups and I'll eat strawberries out of their hands even though I'm no longer blind.

Now Mara and Netta will be the first to come to me. I'll kiss them and they'll feed me. We'll stay on this hill and in this hollow all night and we'll pray together by moonlight to the goat's ghost for the birth of a girl.

Where No Sun Shines

by Gardner R. Dozois

Robinson had been driving for nearly two days, across Pennsylvania, up through the sooty barrens of New Jersey, pushing both the car and himself with brutal desperation. Exhaustion had stopped him once in a small, rotting coast town, filled with disintegrating clapboard buildings and frightened pale faces peering from behind tight-closed shutters. He had moved slowly through empty streets washed by a tide of crumpled newspapers and dirty candy wrappers, rolling and rustling in the bitter sea wind. On the edge of town he'd found a deserted filling station and gone to sleep there with doors locked and windows rolled up, watching moonlight glint from a rusting gas pump and clutching a tire iron in his hands. He had dreamed of sharks with legs, and once banged his head sharply on the roof as he lunged up out of sleep and away from ripping teeth, pausing and blinking afterward in the hot, sweat-drenched stuffiness of the closed car, listening to the hungry darkness.

In the drab, pale red clarity of morning, a ragged comber of refugees from Atlanta had washed through town and swept him along, metallic driftwood. He had driven all day by the side of the restless sea, oily and cinder-flecked as a tattered gray rug, drifting through one frightened shuttered town after another, watching the peeling billboards and the boarded-up store fronts.

It was late evening now, and he was just beginning to really believe what had happened, accept it with his bowels

as well as his mind, the hard reality jabbing his stomach like a knifeblade. The secondary highway he was following narrowed, banked, and Robinson slowed to take the curve, wincing at the scream of gears as he shifted. The road straightened and he stamped on the accelerator again, feeling the shuddering whine of the car's response. How long will this crate hold up, he thought numbly. How long will my gas last? How many more miles? He stamped uselessly harder on the accelerator, trying to avoid the inevitable next thought, trying to blank out the picture that had floated under his eyelids for days—a picture of a figure sprawled brokenly across a pile of rubble, the loved body blackened and charred, cracked skin sooty black as carbon paper, striped with congealing blood—

He bit his lip until his own blood flowed. Anna, he thought, Jesus, oh sweet Jesus, Anna—Exhaustion was creeping up on him again; a sledgehammer wrapped in felt, isolating him even from the aching reality of his own nerves.

There was a wreck ahead, on his side, and he drifted out into the other lane to avoid it. Coming past Philadelphia the highway had been choked with a honking, aimless mass of cars, but he knew the net of secondary roads better than most of them and had outstripped the herd. Now the roads were mostly empty. Sane people had gone to ground.

He pulled even with the wreck, passed it. It was a light pickup truck, tipped on its side, gutted by fire. A man was lying in the road face down, across the white dividing line. Except for the pale gleam of face and hands, it might have been a discarded bundle of rags. There were bloodstains on the worn asphalt. Robinson let his car slide more to the left to keep from running over the man, started to skid

slightly, corrected it. Beyond the wreck he swerved back into his own lane and speeded up again. The truck and the man slid backward, lingered in his rear-view mirror for a second, washed by his taillights, and were swallowed by darkness.

A few miles down the road, Robinson began to fall asleep at the wheel, blacking out in split-second dozes, nodding and blinking. He cursed, strained his eyes wide open and rolled his window down. Wind screamed through the crack. The air was muggy, sodden with coal smoke and chemical reeks, the miasma of the industrial nightmare that choked upper New Jersey.

Automatically, Robinson reached for the radio, switched it on, and began turning the selector-knob with one hand, groping blindly through the invisible world for something to keep him company. Static rasped at him. Almost all the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh stations were off the air now; they'd been hit hard down there. The last Chicago station had sputtered off the air at dusk, after an outbreak of fighting had been reported outside the studio. For a while, some of the announcers had been referring to "rebel forces," but this had evidently been judged to be bad PR, because they were calling them "rioters" and "scattered anarchists" again.

For a moment he picked up a strong Boston station, broadcasting a placating speech by some official, but it faded in a burst of static and was slowly replaced by a Philadelphia station relaying emergency ham messages. There were no small local stations anymore. Television was probably out too, not that he missed it very much. He hadn't seen a live broadcast or a documentary for months now, and even in Harrisburg, days before the final flareup, they'd stopped showing any newcasts at all and broadcast nothing but taped situation comedies and old 1920's musicals. (The happy figures dancing in tails on top of pianos,

unreal as delirium tremens in the flickering wavering white glow of the television's eye, as tinny music echoed and canned laughter filled the room like the crying of mechanical birds. Outside, there was occasional gunfire. . . .)

Finally he settled for a station that was playing uninterrupted classical music, mostly Mozart and Johann Strauss.

He drove on with automatic skill, listening to a bit of Dvorák that had somehow slipped in between Haydn and "The Blue Danube." Absorbed in the music, his already fuzzy mind lulled by the steady rolling lap of asphalt slipping under his wheels, Robinson almost succeeded in forgetting—

A tiny red star appeared on the horizon.

Robinson gazed absently at it for a while before he noticed it was steadily growing larger, blinked at it for a moment more before he figured out what it was and the bottom dropped out of his stomach.

He cursed, soft and scared. The gears screamed, the car lurched, slowed. He pumped the brakes to cut his speed still more. A spotlight blinked on just under the red star, turned the night white, blinded him. He whispered an obscenity, feeling his stomach flatten and his thighs tighten in fear.

Robinson cut the engine and let the car roll slowly to a stop. The spotlight followed him, keeping its beam focused on his windshield. He squinted against the glare, blinking. His eyes watered, blurred, and the spotlight blossomed into a Star of David, radiating white lances of light. Robinson winced and looked down, trying to blink his eyes back into focus, not daring to raise a hand. The car sighed to a stop.

He sat motionless, hands locked on the wheel, listening to the shrill hissing and metallic clicks as his engine cooled. There was the sound of a car door slamming somewhere, an unintelligible shouted order, a brief reply. Robinson

squinted up sideways, trying to see around the miniature nova that was the spotlight. Feet crunched through gravel. A figure approached the car, becoming a burly, indistinct silhouette in front of the windshield, a blob of dough in roughly human shape. Something glinted, a shaft of starlight twisting in the doughy hands, trying to escape. Robinson felt the pressure of eyes. He bit his lip and sat very still, blinking. . . .

The dough-figure grunted and half-turned back toward the spotlight, its outlines tumbling and bulging. "Okay," it shouted in a dough-voice. A clang, and the spotlight dulled to a quarter of its former intensity, becoming a glazed orange eye. Detail and color washed back into the world, dappled by a dancing overlay of blue-white afterimages. The dough-figure resolved itself into a middle-aged police sergeant, dumpy, unshaven, graying. He held a heavy-gauge shotgun in his hands, and highlights blinked off and on along the barrel, making the blued steel seem to ripple. The muzzle was pointed loosely in the direction of Robinson's throat.

Robinson risked a sly glance around, not moving his head. The red star was the slowly pulsing crashlight on the roof of a big police prowlcar parked across the road. A younger policeman (still rookie enough to care; spit-polished boots; see the light shimmer from the ebony toes) stood by the smoldering spotlight that was mounted near the junction of windshield and hood. He was trying to look grim and implacable, the big regulation revolver awkward in his hand.

Motion on the far side of the road. Robinson swiveled his eyes up, squinted, and then bit the inside of his lip. A mud-caked MARC jeep was parked halfway up the grassy embankment. There were three men in it. As he watched, the tall man in the passenger's seat said something to the driver, swung his legs over the side and slid down the

embankment on his heels in a tiny avalanche of dirt and gravel. The driver slipped his hands inside his field jacket for warmth and propped his elbows against the steering wheel, eyes slitted and bored. The third man, a grimy corporal, was sitting in the back of the jeep, manning a .50 caliber machinegun bolted to the vehicle. The corporal grinned at Robinson down the machinegun barrel, his hands fidgeting on the triggers.

The tall man emerged slowly from the shadow of the road shoulder, walked past the nervous rookie without looking at him and entered the pool of light. As he walked toward Robinson's car, he slowly metamorphosed from a tall shadow into a MARC lieutenant in a glistening weatherproofed parka, hood thrown back. A brown leather patch on his shoulder read *MOVEMENT AND REGIONAL CONTROL* in frayed red capitals. He held a submachine gun slung under one arm.

The police sergeant glanced back as the lieutenant drew even with the hood. The muzzle of the shotgun didn't waver from Robinson's chest. "Looks okay," he said. The lieutenant grunted, passed behind the sergeant, came up to the window on the driver's side. He looked at Robinson for a second, expressionless, then unslung his submachine gun and held it in the crook of his right arm. His other hand reached out slowly and he tapped once on the window.

Robinson rolled the window down. The lieutenant peered in at him, pale blue eyes that were like windows opening on nothing. Robinson glanced once down the small, cramped muzzle of the machinegun, looked back up at the lieutenant's thin, pinched lips, white, no blood in them. Robinson felt the flesh of his stomach crawl, the thick hair on his arms and legs stir and bristle painfully against his clothing. "Let me see your card," the lieutenant

said. His voice was clipped, precise. Slowly, slowly, Robinson slid his hand inside his rumpled sports jacket, carefully withdrew it and handed his identification and travel control visa to the lieutenant. The lieutenant took the papers, stepped back and examined them with one hand, holding the submachine gun trained on Robinson with the other. The pinched mouth of the automatic weapon hung only a few inches away, bobbing slightly, tracing a quarter-inch circle on Robinson's chest.

Robinson worked his dry tongue against his lips and tried unsuccessfully to swallow. He looked from the coolly appraising eyes of the lieutenant to the doughy, tired frown of the sergeant, to the nervously belligerent glances of the rookie, to the indifferent stare of the jeep driver, to the hooded eyes and cruel grin of the corporal behind the .50 caliber. They were all looking at him. He was the center of the universe. The pulsing crashlight threw long, tangled shadows through the woods, the shadows licking out and then quickly snapping back again, like a yo-yo, pulse-flick, flick-pulse. On the northern horizon, a smoldering red glow stained the clouds, flaring and dimming, pulse-flick. That was Newark, burning.

The lieutenant stirred, impatiently trying to flip a tacky page of the travel visa with his free hand. He muttered, planted a boot on the side of Robinson's hood, braced the submachine gun on his knee and used his teeth to help him open the sticky page. Robinson caught the rookie staring at the lieutenant's big battered combat boot with prim disapproval, and started to laugh in spite of the hovering machinegun. He choked it down because it had a ragged hollow sound even inside his throat; it was hysterical laughter, and it filled his chest like crinkly dead leaves, like smoky moths. The lieutenant removed his foot and straightened up again. The boot made a dry sucking sound

as it was pulled free, and left a blurred muddy footprint on the side of the hood. You son of a bitch, Robinson thought, suddenly and irrationally furious.

A nightbird went *screeaaaa* somewhere among the trees. A chilly wind came up, spattering the cars with gravel, a hollow metallic wind full of cinders and deserted train-yards, tasting of burnt umber. The wind flapped the pages of the travel visa, rumpled the fur on the lieutenant's parka hood, plucked futilely at his close-cropped hair. The lieutenant continued to read with deliberation, holding the rippling pages down with his thumb. You son of a bitch, Robinson raged silently, choked with fear and anger. You sadistic bastard. The long silence had become heavy as rock. The crashlight flicked its red shadows across the lieutenant's face, turning his eyes into shallow pools of blood and draining them, turning his cheeks into gaping deathhead sockets, filling them out again. He flipped pages mechanically, expressionless.

He suddenly snapped the visa closed.

Robinson jerked. The lieutenant stared at him for a smothering heartbeat, then handed the visa back. Robinson took it, trying not to snatch. "Why're you traveling," the lieutenant said quietly. The words tumbled clumsily out: business trip—no planes—had to get back—wife—(Better to say wife. Oh, Anna—) The lieutenant listened blankly, then turned and gestured to the rookie.

The rookie rushed forward, hurriedly checked the back seat, the trunk. Robinson heard him breathing and rustling in the back seat, the car swaying slightly as he moved. Robinson looked straight ahead and said nothing. The lieutenant was silent, holding his automatic weapon loosely in both hands. The old police sergeant fidgeted restlessly. "Nothing, sir," the rookie said, climbing out. The lieutenant nodded, and the rookie returned smartly to the

prowlcar. "Sounds okay, sir," the sergeant said, shifting his weight with doughy impatience from one sore foot to another. He looked tired, and there was a network of blue veins on the side of his graying head. The lieutenant considered, then nodded reluctantly. "Uh-huh," he said, slowly, then speeded up, became brisker, turned a tight parody of a smile on Robinson. "Sure. All right, mister, I guess you can go."

Another pair of headlights bobbed over the close horizon behind.

The lieutenant's smile dissolved. "Okay, mister," he said, "you stay put. Don't you do *anything.* Sarge, keep an eye on him." He turned, strode toward the prowlcar. The headlights grew larger, bobbing. Robinson heard the lieutenant mutter something and the spotlight flicked on to full intensity again. This time it was aimed away from him, and he saw the beam stab out through the night, a solid column of light, and catch something, pinning it like a captured moth.

It was a big Volkswagen Microbus. Under the spotlight's eye it looked grainy and unreal, a photograph with too much contrast.

The Microbus slowed, pulled to a stop near the shoulder across the road from Robinson. He could see two people in the front seat, squinting and holding up their hands against the glare. The lieutenant strolled over, investigated them from a few feet away, and then waved his hand. The spotlight clanged down to quarter intensity.

In the diffused orange glow, Robinson could just make out the bus's passengers: a tall, thin man in a black turtleneck and a Nordic young woman with shoulder-length blond hair, wearing an orange shift. The lieutenant circled to the driver's side and tapped on his window. Robinson could see the lieutenant's mouth move, hardly

opening, neat and precise. The thin man handed his papers over stolidly. The lieutenant began to examine them, flipping slowly through the pages.

Robinson shifted impatiently. He could feel the sweat slowly drying on his body, sticky and trickling under his arms, in the hollows of his knees, his crotch. His clothes stuck to his flesh.

The lieutenant gestured for the rookie to come over, paced backward until he was standing near the hood. The rookie trotted across the road, walked toward the rear of the vehicle and started to open the sliding side door. Robinson caught the quick nervous flicker of the thin man's tongue against his teeth. The woman was looking calmly straight ahead. The thin man said something in a low joking tone to the lieutenant. The rookie slid the side door open, started to climb inside–

Something moved in the space between the back seat and the closed tailgate, throwing off a thick army blanket, rolling to its knees, scrambling up. Robinson caught a glimpse of dark skin, eyes startlingly white by contrast, nostrils flared in terror. The rookie staggered backward, mouth gaping, revolver swinging aimlessly. The thin man grimaced–a rictus, neck cording, lips riding back from teeth. He tried to slam the bus into gear.

A lance of fire split the darkness, the submachine gun yammering, bucking in the lieutenant's hands. He swept the weapon steadily back and forth, expressionless. The bus's windshield exploded. The man and woman jerked, bounced, bodies dancing grotesquely. The lieutenant continued to fire. The thin man arched backward, bending, bending, bending impossibly, face locked in rictus, and then slumped forward over the steering wheel. The woman was flung sideways against the car door. It gave and she toppled out backward, long hair floating in a tangled cloud, one hand flung out over her head, fingers wide,

reaching, stretching out for something. She hit the pavement and lay half in, half out of the bus. Her long fingers twitched, closed, opened.

The dark figure at the back of the bus tore frantically at the tailgate, threw it open, scrambled out, tried to jump for the shoulder. From the embankment, the big .50 caliber opened up, blew the back of the bus's roof off. Metal screamed and smoked. The black man was caught as he balanced on the tailgate, one foot lifted. The .50 pounded harshly, blew him almost in half, kicked his limp body six or seven feet down the road. The .50 continued to fire, kicking up geysers of asphalt. The rookie, screaming in inhuman excitement, was firing his revolver at the fallen figure.

The lieutenant waved his arm and everything stopped.

There was no noise or motion.

Echoes rolled slowly away.

Smoke dribbled from the muzzle of the lieutenant's submachine gun.

In the unbelievable silence, you could hear somebody sobbing.

Robinson realized it was himself, ground his teeth together and tensed his stomach muscles to fight the vomit sloshing in his throat. His fingers ached and bled where he had locked them around the steering wheel; he could not get them loose. The wind streamed against his wet flesh.

The lieutenant walked around to the driver's side of the Microbus, opened the door. He grabbed the man by the hair, yanked his head up. The gaunt face was relaxed, unlined, almost ascetically peaceful. The lieutenant let go, and the bloody head dropped.

Slowly the lieutenant walked back around the hood, paused, looked down at the woman for a second. She was sprawled half out of the bus, face up, one arm behind her. Her eyes were still open and staring. Her face was un-

touched; her body was a slowly spreading red horror from throat to crotch. The lieutenant watched her, gently stroking the machinegun barrel, face like polished marble. The bitter wind flapped her dress, bunched it around her waist. The lieutenant shrugged, moved to the rear of the vehicle. He nudged the black man sprawled across the center line, then turned away and walked briskly to the prowlcar. Above, the corporal grinned and began to reload his smoking .50. The jeep driver went back to sleep.

The rookie remained standing by the side of the bus, excitement gone, face ashen and sick, looking at the blue smoke that curled from his revolver, staring at his spit-polished boots, red clotting over ebony. The flashing crashlight turned the dead white faces red, flooding them with a mimic flush of life, draining it away, pulse-flick, flick-pulse.

The old sergeant turned toward Robinson, grimly clutching the shotgun, face drawn and strained, pale dough with hollow-socketed, yellowing eyes, looking suddenly twenty years older. "You'd better get out of here now, son," he said gently. He shifted the shotgun, looked toward the smoldering bus, looked quickly away, looked back. The network of blue veins throbbed. He shook his head slowly, limped away hunch-shouldered, started the prowlcar and backed it off the road.

The lieutenant came up as Robinson was fumbling for the ignition switch. "Get the lead out of your ass," the lieutenant said, and snapped a fresh clip into his submachine gun.

The Asian Shore

by Thomas M. Disch

I

There were voices on the cobbled street, and the sounds of motors. Footsteps, slamming doors, whistles, footsteps. He lived on the ground floor, so there was no way to avoid these evidences of the city's too abundant life. They accumulated in the room like so much dust, like the heaps of unanswered correspondence on the mottled tablecloth.

Every night he would drag a chair into the unfurnished back room—the guest room, as he liked to think of it—and look out over the tiled roofs and across the black waters of the Bosphorus at the lights of Üsküdar. But the sounds penetrated this room too. He would sit there, in the darkness, drinking wine, waiting for her knock on the back door.

Or he might try to read: histories, books of travel, the long dull biography of Ataturk. A kind of sedation. Sometimes he would even begin a letter to his wife:

"Dear Janice,

"No doubt you've been wondering what's become of me these last few months. . . ."

But the trouble was that once that part had been written, the frail courtesies, the perfunctory reportage, he could not bring himself to say what *had* become of him.

Voices . . .

It was just as well that he couldn't speak the language. For a while he had studied it, taxiing three times a week to Robert College in Bebek, but the grammar, based on assumptions wholly alien to any other language he knew, with its wavering boundaries between verbs and nouns, nouns and adjectives, withstood every assault of his incorrigibly Aristotelian mind. He sat at the back of the classroom, behind the rows of American teen-agers, as sullen as convicts, as comically out-of-context as the machineries melting in a Dali landscape—sat there and parroted innocuous dialogues after the teacher, taking both roles in turn, first the trustful, inquisitive JOHN, forever wandering alone and lost in the streets of Istanbul and Ankara, then the helpful, knowing AHMET BEY. Neither of these interlocutors would admit what had become increasingly evident with each faltering word that JOHN spoke—that he would wander these same streets for years, inarticulate, cheated, and despised.

But these lessons, while they lasted, had one great advantage. They provided an illusion of activity, an obelisk upon which the eye might focus amid the desert of each new day, something to move toward and then something to leave behind.

After the first month it had rained a great deal, and this provided him with a good excuse for staying in. He had mopped up the major attractions of the city in one week, and he persisted at sightseeing long afterward, even in doubtful weather, until at last he had checked off every mosque and ruin, every museum and cistern cited in boldface in the pages of his Hachette. He visited the cemetery of Eyup, and he devoted an entire Sunday to the land walls, carefully searching out, though he could not read Greek, the inscriptions of the various Byzantine emperors. But more and more often on these excursions he

would see the woman, or the child, or the woman and the child together, until he came almost to dread the sight of any woman or any child in the city. It was not an unreasonable dread.

And always, at nine o'clock, or ten at the very latest, she would come knocking at the door of the apartment. Or, if the outer door of the building had not been left ajar by the people upstairs, at the window of the front room. She knocked patiently, in little clusters of three or four raps spaced several seconds apart, never very loud. Sometimes, but only if she were in the hall, she would accompany her knocking with a few words in Turkish, usually *Yavuz! Yavuz!* He had asked the clerk at the mail desk of the Consulate what this meant, for he couldn't find it in his dictionary. It was a common Turkish name, a man's name.

His name was John. John Benedict Harris. He was an American.

She seldom stayed out there for more than half an hour any one night, knocking and calling to him, or to this imaginary Yavuz, and he would remain all that while in the chair in the unfurnished room, drinking Kavak and watching the ferries move back and forth on the dark water between Kabataş and Üsküdar, the European and the Asian shore.

He had seen her first outside the fortress of Rumeli Hisar. It was the day, shortly after he'd arrived in the city, that he had come out to register at Robert College. After paying his fees and inspecting the library, he had come down the hill by the wrong path and there it had stood, mammoth and majestically improbable, a gift. He did not know its name, and his Hachette was at the hotel. There was just the raw fact of the fortress, a mass of gray stone, its towers and crenellations, the gray Bosphorus below. He angled for a photograph, but even this far away it was too

big—one could not frame the whole of it in a single shot.

He left the road, taking a path through dry brush that promised to circle the fortress. As he approached, the walls reared higher and higher. Before such walls there could be no question of an assault.

He saw her when she was about fifty feet away. She came toward him on the footpath, carrying a large bundle wrapped in newspaper and bound with twine. Her clothes were the usual motley of washed-out cotton prints that all the poorer women of the city went about in, but she did not, like most other women of her kind, attempt to pull her shawl across her face when she noticed him.

But perhaps it was only that her bundle would have made this conventional gesture of modesty awkward, for after that first glance she did at least lower her eyes to the path. No, it was hard to discover any clear portent in this first encounter.

As they passed each other he stepped off the path, and she did mumble some word in Turkish. Thank you, he supposed. He watched her until she reached the road, wondering whether she would look back, and she didn't.

He followed the walls of the fortress down the steep crumbling hillside to the shore road without finding an entrance. It amused him to think that there might not be one. Between the water and the barbicans there was only a narrow strip of highway.

An absolutely daunting structure.

The entrance, which did exist, was just to the side of the central tower. He paid five lire admission and another two and a half lire to bring in his camera.

Of the three principal towers, visitors were allowed to climb only the one at the center of the eastern wall that ran along the Bosphorus. He was out of condition and mounted the enclosed spiral staircase slowly. The stone steps had evidently been pirated from other buildings.

Every so often he recognized a fragment of a classic entablature or a wholly inappropriate intaglio design—a Greek cross or some crude Byzantine eagle. Each footfall became a symbolic conquest: one could not ascend these stairs without becoming implicated in the fall of Constantinople.

This staircase opened out onto a kind of wooden catwalk clinging to the inner wall of the tower at a height of about sixty feet. The silo-like space was resonant with the coo and flutter of invisible pigeons, and somewhere the wind was playing with a metal door, creaking it open, banging it shut. Here, if he so wished, he might discover portents.

He crept along the wooden platform, both hands grasping the iron rail stapled to the stone wall, feeling just an agreeable amount of terror, sweating nicely. It occurred to him how much this would have pleased Janice, whose enthusiasm for heights had equaled his. He wondered when, if ever, he would see her again, and what she would be like. By now undoubtedly she had begun divorce proceedings. Perhaps she was already no longer his wife.

The platform led to another stone staircase, shorter than the first, which ascended to the creaking metal door. He pushed it open and stepped out amid a flurry of pigeons into the full dazzle of the noon, the wide splendor of the elevation, sunlight above and the bright bow of water beneath—and, beyond the water, the surreal green of the Asian hills, hundred-breasted Cybele. It seemed, all of this, to demand some kind of affirmation, a yell. But he didn't feel up to yelling, or large gestures. He could only admire, at this distance, the illusion of tactility, hills as flesh, an illusion that could be heightened if he laid his hands, still sweaty from his passage along the catwalk, on the rough warm stone of the balustrade.

Looking down the side of the tower at the empty road he saw her again, standing at the very edge of the water.

She was looking up at him. When he noticed her she lifted both hands above her head, as though signaling, and shouted something that, even if he could have heard it properly, he would surely not have understood. He supposed that she was asking to have her picture taken, so he turned the setting ring to the fastest speed to compensate for the glare from the water. She stood directly below the tower, and there seemed no way to frame an interesting composition. He released the shutter. Woman, water, asphalt road: it would be a snapshot, not a photograph, and he didn't believe in taking snapshots.

The woman continued to call up to him, arms raised in that same hieratic gesture. It made no sense. He waved to her and smiled uncertainly. It was something of a nuisance really. He would have preferred to have this scene to himself. One climbed towers, after all, in order to be alone.

Altin, the man who had found his apartment for him, worked as a commission agent for carpet and jewelry shops in the Grand Bazaar. He would strike up conversations with English and American tourists and advise them what to buy, and where, and how much to pay. They spent one day looking and settled on an apartment building near Taksim, the commemorative traffic circle that served the European quarter of the city as a kind of Broadway. The several banks of Istanbul demonstrated their modern character here with neon signs, and in the center of the traffic circle, life-size, Ataturk led a small but representative group of his countrymen toward their bright, Western destiny.

The apartment was thought (by Altin) to partake of this same advanced spirit: it had central heating, a sit-down toilet, a bathtub, and a defunct but prestigious refrigerator. The rent was six hundred lire a month, which came to sixty-six dollars at the official rate but only fifty dollars at

the rate Altin gave. He was anxious to move out of the hotel, so he agreed to a six-month lease.

He hated it from the day he moved in. Except for the shreds of a lousy sofa in the guest room, which he obliged the landlord to remove, he left everything as he found it. Even the blurry pinups from a Turkish girlie magazine remained where they were to cover the cracks in the new plaster. He was determined to make no accommodations: he might have to live in this city; it was not required that he *enjoy* it.

Every day he picked up his mail at the Consulate. He sampled a variety of restaurants. He saw the sights and made notes for his book.

On Thursdays he visited a hamam to sweat out the accumulated poisons of the week and to be kneaded and stomped by a masseur.

He supervised the growth of his young mustache.

He rotted, like a jar of preserves left open and forgotten on the top shelf of a cupboard.

He learned that there was a special Turkish word for the rolls of dirt that are scraped off the skin after a steambath, and another that imitated the sound of boiling water: *fuker, fuker, fuker.* Boiling water signified, to the Turkish mind, the first stages of sexual arousal. It was roughly equivalent to the stateside notion of "electricity."

Occasionally, as he began to construct his own internal map of the unpromising alleyways and ruinous staircase streets of his neighborhood, he fancied that he saw her, that same woman. It was hard to be certain. She would always be some distance away, or he might catch just a glimpse out of the corner of his eye. If it were the same woman there was nothing at this stage to suggest that she was pursuing him. It was, at most, a coincidence.

In any case, he was not certain. Her face had not been unusual, and he did not have the photograph to consult,

for he had spoiled the entire roll of film removing it from the camera.

Sometimes after one of these failed encounters he would feel a slight uneasiness. It amounted to no more than that.

He met the boy in Üsküdar. It was during the first severe cold spell, in mid-November. His first trip across the Bosphorus, and when he stepped off the ferry onto the very soil (or, anyhow, the very asphalt) of this new continent, the largest of all, he could feel the great mass of it beckoning him toward its vast eastward vortex, tugging at him, sucking at his soul.

It had been his first intention, back in New York, to stop two months at most in Istanbul, learn the language; then into Asia. How often he had mesmerized himself with the litany of its marvels: the grand mosques of Kayseri and Sivas, of Beyşehir and Afyonkarahisar; the isolate grandeur of Ararat and then, still moving east, the shores of the Caspian; Meshed, Kabul, the Himalayas. It was all these that reached out to him now, singing, stretching forth their siren arms, inviting him to their whirlpool.

And he? He refused. Though he could feel the charm of the invitation, he refused. Though he might have wished very much to unite with them, he still refused. For he had tied himself to the mast where he was proof against their call. He had his apartment in that city which stood just outside their reach, and he would stay there until it was time to return. In the spring he was going back to the States.

But he did allow the sirens this much—that he would abandon the rational mosque-to-mosque itinerary laid down by his Hachette and entrust the rest of the day to serendipity. While the sun still shone that afternoon they might lead him where they would.

Asphalt gave way to cobbles, and cobbles to packed dirt.

The squalor here was on a much less majestic scale than in Stambul, where even the most decrepit hovels had been squeezed by the pressure of population to heights of three and four stories. In Üsküdar the same wretched buildings sprawled across the hills like beggars whose crutches had been kicked out from under them, supine; through their rags of unpainted wood one could see the scabbed flesh of mud-and-wattle. As he threaded his way from one dirt street to the next and found each of them sustaining this one unvarying tone, without color, without counterpoint, he began to conceive a new Asia, not of mountains and vast plains, but this same slum rolling on perpetually across grassless hills, a continuum of drabness, the sheer dumb extent.

Because he was short and because he would not dress the part of an American, he could go through these streets without calling attention to himself. The mustache, too, probably, helped. Only his conscious, observing eyes (the camera had spoiled a second roll of film and was being repaired) would have betrayed him as a tourist today. Indeed, Altin had assured him (intending, no doubt, a compliment) that as soon as he learned to speak the language he would pass for a Turk.

It grew steadily colder throughout the afternoon. The wind moved a thick veil of mist over the sun and left it there. As the mists thinned and thickened, as the flat disk of sun, sinking westward, would fade and brighten, the vagaries of light whispered conflicting rumors about these houses and their dwellers. But he did not wish to stop and listen. He already knew more concerning these things than he wanted to. He set off at a quicker pace in the supposed direction of the landing stage.

The boy stood crying beside a public fountain, a water faucet projecting from a crude block of concrete, at the intersection of two narrow streets. Five years old, perhaps

six. He was carrying a large plastic bucket of water in each hand, one bright red, the other turquoise. The water had splashed over his thin trousers and bare feet.

At first he supposed he cried only because of the cold. The damp ground must be near to freezing. To walk on it in bare wet feet . . .

Then he saw the slippers. They were what he would have called shower slippers, small die-stamped ovals of blue plastic with a single thong that had to be grasped between the first and second toe.

The boy would stoop over and force the thongs between his stiff, cold-reddened toes, but after only a step or two the slippers would again fall off his numb feet. With each frustrated progress more water would slop over the sides of the buckets. He could not keep the slippers on his feet and he would not walk off without them.

With this understanding came a kind of horror, a horror of his own helplessness. He could not go up to the boy and ask him where he lived, lift him and carry him—he was so small—to his home. Nor could he scold the child's parents for having sent him out on this errand without proper shoes or winter clothes. He could not even take up the buckets and have the child lead him to his home. For each of these possibilities demanded that he be able to *speak* to the boy, and this he could not do.

What *could* he do? Offer money? As well offer him, at such a moment, a pamphlet from the U.S. Information Agency!

There was, in fact, nothing, *nothing* he could do.

The boy had become aware of him. Now that he had a sympathetic audience he let himself cry in earnest. Lowering the two buckets to the ground and pointing at these and at the slippers, he spoke pleadingly to this grown-up stranger, to this rescuer, words in Turkish.

He took a step backward, a second step, and the boy

shouted at him, what message of pain or uncomprehending indignation he would never know. He turned away and ran back along the street that had brought him to this crossway. It was another hour before he found the landing stage. It had begun to snow.

As he took his seat inside the ferry he found himself glancing at the other passengers, as though expecting to find her there among them.

The next day he came down with a cold. The fever rose through the night. He woke several times, and it was always their two faces that he carried with him from the dreams, like souvenirs whose origin and purpose have been forgotten; the woman at Rumeli Hisar, the child in Üsküdar: some part of his mind had already begun to draw the equation between them.

II

It was the thesis of his first book that the quiddity of architecture, its chief claim to an esthetic interest, was its arbitrariness. Once the lintels were lying on the posts, once some kind of roof had been spread across the hollow space, then anything else that might be done was gratuitous. Even the lintel and the post, the roof, the space below, these were gratuitous as well. Stated thus it was a mild enough notion; the difficulty was in training the eye to see the whole world of usual forms—patterns of brick, painted plaster, carved and carpentered wood—not as "buildings" and "streets" but as an infinite series of free and arbitrary choices. There was no place in such a scheme for orders, styles, sophistication, taste. Every artifact of the city was anomalous, unique, but living there in the midst of it all you could not allow yourself too fine a sense of this fact. If you did . . .

It had been his task, these last three or four years, to reeducate his eye and mind to just this condition of innocence. His was the very reverse of the Romantics' aims, for he did not expect to find himself, when this ideal state of "raw" perception was reached (it never would be, of course, for innocence, like justice, is an absolute; it may be approached but never attained), any closer to nature. Nature, as such, did not concern him. What he sought, on the contrary, was a sense of the great artifice of things, of structures, of the immense interminable wall that has been built just to exclude nature.

The attention that his first book had received showed that he had been at least partially successful, but he knew (and who better?) how far short his aim had fallen, how many clauses of the perceptual social contract he had never even thought to question.

So, since it was now a matter of ridding himself of the sense of the familiar, he had had to find some better laboratory for this purpose than New York, somewhere that he could be, more naturally, an alien. This much seemed obvious to him.

It had not seemed so obvious to his wife.

He did not insist. He was willing to be reasonable. He would talk about it. He talked about it whenever they were together—at dinner, at her friends' parties (his friends didn't seem to give parties), in bed—and it came down to this, that Janice objected not so much to the projected trip as to his entire program, the thesis itself.

No doubt her reasons were sound. The sense of the arbitrary did not stop at architecture; it embraced—or it would, if he let it—all phenomena. If there were no fixed laws that governed the furbelows and arabesques out of which a city is composed, there were equally no laws (or only arbitrary laws, which is the same as none at all) to define the relationships woven into the lattice of that city,

relationships between man and man, man and woman, John and Janice.

And indeed this had already occurred to him, though he had not spoken of it to her before. He had often had to stop, in the midst of some quotidian ritual like dining out, and take his bearings. As the thesis developed, as he continued to sift away layer after layer of preconception, he found himself more and more astonished at the size of the demesne that recognized the sovereignty of convention. At times he even thought he could trace in his wife's slightest gesture, or in her aptest phrase, or in a kiss, some hint of the Palladian rulebook from which it had been derived. Perhaps with practice one would be able to document the entire history of her styles—here an echo of the Gothic Revival, there an imitation of Mies.

When his application for a Guggenheim was rejected, he decided he would make the trip by himself, using the bit of money that was still left from the book. Though he saw no necessity for it, he had agreed to Janice's request for a divorce. They parted on the best of terms. She had even seen him to the boat.

The wet snow would fall for a day, two days, forming knee-deep drifts in the open spaces of the city, in paved courtyards, on vacant lots. Cold winds polished the slush of streets and sidewalks to dull-gleaming lumpy ice. The steeper hills became impassable. The snow and the ice would linger a few days and then a sudden thaw would send it all pouring down the cobbled hillside in a single afternoon, brief Alpine cataracts of refuse and brown water. A patch of tolerable weather might follow this flood, and then another blizzard. Altin assured him that this was an unusually fierce winter, unprecedented.

A spiral diminishing.

A tightness.

And each day the light fell more obliquely across the white hills and was more quickly spent.

One night returning from a movie he slipped on the iced cobbles just outside the door of his building, tearing both knees of his trousers beyond any possibility of repair. It was the only winter suit he had brought. Altin gave him the name of a tailor who could make another suit quickly and for less money than he would have had to pay for a readymade. Altin did all the bargaining with the tailor and even selected the fabric, a heavy wool-rayon blend of a sickly and slightly iridescent blue, the muted, imprecise color of the more unhappy breeds of pigeons. He understood nothing of the fine points of tailoring and so he could not decide what it was about this suit—whether the shape of the lapels, the length of the back vent, the width of the pants legs—that made it seem so different from other suits he had worn, so much . . . smaller. And yet it fitted his figure with the exactness one expects of a tailored suit. If he looked smaller now, and thicker, perhaps that was how he *ought* to look and his previous suits had been telling lies about him all these years. The color, too, performed some nuance of metamorphosis: his skin, balanced against this blue-gray sheen, seemed less "tan" than sallow. When he wore it he became, to all appearances, a Turk.

Not that he wanted to look like a Turk. Turks were, by and large, a homely lot. He only wished to avoid the other Americans who abounded here even at this nadir of the off-season. As their numbers decreased, their gregariousness grew more implacable. The smallest sign—a copy of *Newsweek* or the *Herald Tribune*, a word of English, an airmail letter with its telltale canceled stamp—could bring them down at once in the full fury of their good-fellowship. It was convenient to have some kind of camouflage,

just as it was necessary to learn their haunts in order to avoid them: Divan Yolu and Cumhuriyet Cadessi, the American Library and the Consulate, as well as some eight or ten of the principal well-touristed restaurants.

Once the winter had firmly established itself he also put a stop to his sightseeing. Two months of Ottoman mosques and Byzantine rubble had brought his sense of the arbitrary to so fine a pitch that he no longer required the stimulus of the monumental. His own rooms—a rickety table, the flowered drapes, the blurry lurid pinups, the intersecting planes of walls and ceilings—could present as great a plenitude of "problems" as the grand mosques of Suleiman or Sultan Ahmet with all their mihrabs and minbers, their stalactite niches and faienced walls.

Too great a plenitude actually. Day and night the rooms nagged at him. They diverted his attention from anything else he might try to do. He knew them with the enforced intimacy with which a prisoner knows his cell—every defect of construction, every failed grace, the precise incidence of the light at each hour of the day. Had he taken the trouble to rearrange the furniture, to put up his own prints and maps, to clean the windows and scrub the floors, to fashion some kind of bookcase (all his books remained in their two shipping cases), he might have been able to blot out these alien presences by the sheer strength of self-assertion, as one can mask bad odors with incense or the smell of flowers. But this would have been admitting defeat. It would have shown how unequal he was to his own thesis.

As a compromise he began to spend his afternoons in a café a short distance down the street on which he lived. There he would sit, at the table nearest the front window, contemplating the spirals of steam that rose from the small corolla of his tea glass. At the back of the long room, beneath the tarnished brass tea urn, there were always two

old men playing backgammon. The other patrons sat by themselves and gave no indication that their thoughts were in any way different from his. Even when no one was smoking, the air was pungent with the charcoal fires of nargilehs. Conversation of any kind was rare. The nargilehs bubbled, the tiny die rattled in its leather cup, a newspaper rustled, a glass chinked against its saucer.

His red notebook always lay ready to hand on the table, and on the notebook his ballpoint pen. Once he had placed them there, he never touched them again till it was time to leave.

Though less and less in the habit of analyzing sensation and motive, he was aware that the special virtue of this café was as a bastion, the securest he possessed, against the now omnipresent influence of the arbitrary. If he sat here peacefully, observing the requirements of the ritual, a decorum as simple as the rules of backgammon, gradually the elements in the space about him would cohere. Things settled, unproblematically, into their own contours. Taking the flower-shaped glass as its center, this glass that was now only and exactly a glass of tea, his perceptions slowly spread out through the room, like the concentric ripples passing across the surface of an ornamental pond, embracing all its objects at last in a firm, noumenal grasp. Just so. The room was just what a room should be. It contained him.

He did not take notice of the first rapping on the café window, though he was aware, by some small cold contraction of his thoughts, of an infringement of the rules. The second time he looked up.

They were together. The woman and the child.

He had seen them each on several occasions since his trip to Üsküdar three weeks before. The boy once on the

torn-up sidewalk outside the Consulate, and another time sitting on the railing of the Karaköy bridge. Once, riding in a dolmuş to Taksim, he had passed within a scant few feet of the woman and they had exchanged a glance of unambiguous recognition. But he had never seen them together before.

But could he be certain, now, that it *was* those two? He saw a woman and a child, and the woman was rapping with one bony knuckle on the window for someone's attention. For his? If he could have seen her face . . .

He looked at the other occupants of the café. The backgammon players. A fat unshaven man reading a newspaper. A dark-skinned man with spectacles and a flaring mustache. The two old men, on opposite sides of the room, puffing on nargilehs. None of them paid any attention to the woman's rapping.

He stared resolutely at his glass of tea, no longer a paradigm of its own necessity. It had become a foreign object, an artifact picked up out of the rubble of a buried city, a shard.

The woman continued to rap at the window. At last the owner of the café went outside and spoke a few sharp words to her. She left without making a reply.

He sat with his cold tea another fifteen minutes. Then he went out into the street. There was no sign of them. He returned the hundred yards to his apartment as calmly as he could. Once inside he fastened the chain lock. He never went back to the café.

When the woman came that night, knocking at his door, it was not a surprise.

And every night, at nine or, at the very latest, ten o'clock.

Yavuz! Yavuz! Calling to him.

He stared at the black water, the lights of the other shore. He wondered, often, when he would give in, when he would open the door.

But it was surely a mistake. Some accidental *resemblance.* He was not Yavuz.

John Benedict Harris. An American.

If there had ever been one, if there had ever been a Yavuz.

The man who had tacked the pinups on the walls?

Two women, they might have been twins, in heavy eye makeup, garter belts, mounted on the same white horse. Lewdly smiling.

A bouffant hairdo, puffy lips. Drooping breasts with large brown nipples. A couch.

A beachball. Her skin dark. Bikini. Laughing. Sand. The water unnaturally blue.

Snapshots.

Had these ever been *his* fantasies? If not, why could he not bring himself to take them off the walls? He had prints by Piranesi. A blowup of Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. The Tchernikov sketch. He could have covered the walls.

He found himself trying to imagine of this Yavuz . . . what he must be like.

III

Three days after Christmas he received a card from his wife, postmarked from Nevada. Janice, he knew, did not believe in Christmas cards. It showed an immense stretch of white desert—a salt-flat, he supposed—with purple mountains in the distance, and above the purple mountains, a heavily retouched sunset. Pink. There were no figures in this landscape, nor any sign of vegetation. Inside she had written:

"Merry Christmas! Janice."

The same day he received a manila envelope with a copy of *Art News.* A noncommittal note from his friend Raymond was paperclipped to the cover: "Thought you might like to see this. R."

In the back pages of the magazine there was a long and unsympathetic review of his book by F. R. Robertson. Robertson was known as an authority on Hegel's aesthetics. He maintained that *Homo Arbitrans* was nothing but a compendium of truisms and—without seeming to recognize any contradiction in this—a hopelessly muddled reworking of Hegel.

Years ago he had dropped out of a course taught by Robertson after attending the first two lectures. He wondered if Robertson could have remembered this.

The review contained several errors of fact, one misquotation, and failed to mention his central argument, which was not, admittedly, dialectical. He decided he should write a reply and laid the magazine beside his typewriter to remind himself. The same evening he spilled the better part of a bottle of wine on it, so he tore out the review and threw the magazine into the garbage with his wife's card.

The necessity for a movie had compelled him into the streets and kept him in the streets, wandering from marquee to marquee, long after the drizzle of the afternoon had thickened to rain. In New York when this mood came over him he would take in a double bill of science-fiction films or Westerns on Forty-Second Street, but here, though cinemas abounded in the absence of television, only the glossiest Hollywood kitsch was presented with the original soundtrack. B-movies were invariably dubbed in Turkish.

So obsessive was this need that he almost passed the man in the skeleton suit without noticing him. He trudged back

and forth on the sidewalk, a sodden refugee from Halloween, followed by a small Hamelin of excited children. The rain had curled the corners of his poster (it served him now as an umbrella) and caused the inks to run. He could make out:

KIL G
STA LDA

After Ataturk, the skeleton-suited "Kiling" was the principal figure of the new Turkish folklore. Every newsstand was heaped with magazines and comics celebrating his adventures, and here he was himself, or his avatar at least, advertising his latest movie. Yes, and there, down the side street, was the theater where it was playing: KILING ISTANBULDA. Or: *Kiling in Istanbul.* Beneath the colossal letters a skull-masked Kiling threatened to kiss a lovely and obviously reluctant blonde, while on the larger poster across the street he gunned down two well-dressed men. One could not decide, on the evidence of such tableaux as these, whether Kiling was fundamentally good, like Batman, or bad, like Fantomas. So . . .

He bought a ticket. He would find out. It was the name that intrigued him. It was, distinctly, an English name.

He took a seat four rows from the front just as the feature began, immersing himself gratefully into the familiar urban imagery. Reduced to black-and-white and framed by darkness, the customary vistas of Istanbul possessed a heightened reality. New American cars drove through the narrow streets at perilous speeds. An old doctor was strangled by an unseen assailant. Then for a long while nothing of interest happened. A tepid romance developed between the blond singer and the young architect, while a number of gangsters, or diplomats, tried to obtain possession of the doctor's black valise. After a confusing se-

quence in which four of these men were killed in an explosion, the valise fell into the hands of Kiling. But it proved to be empty.

The police chased Kiling over tiled rooftops. But this was a proof only of his agility, not of his guilt: the police can often make mistakes in these matters. Kiling entered, through a window, the bedroom of the blond singer, waking her. Contrary to the advertising posters outside, he made no attempt to kiss her. He addressed her in a hollow bass voice. The editing seemed to suggest that Kiling was actually the young architect whom the singer loved, but as his mask was never removed this too remained in doubt.

He felt a hand on his shoulder.

He was certain it was her and he would not turn around. Had she followed him to the theater? If he rose to leave, would she make a scene? He tried to ignore the pressure of the hand, staring at the screen where the young architect had just received a mysterious telegram. His hands gripped tightly into his thighs. His hands: the hands of John Benedict Harris.

"Mr. Harris, hello!"

A man's voice. He turned around. It was Altin.

"Altin."

Altin smiled. His face flickered. "Yes. Do you think it is anyone?"

"Anyone else?"

"Yes."

"No."

"You are seeing this movie?"

"Yes."

"It is not in English. It is in Turkish."

"I know."

Several people in nearby rows were hissing for them to be quiet. The blond singer had gone down into one of the city's large cisterns. Binbirdirek. He had been there him-

self. The editing created an illusion that it was larger than it actually was.

"We will come up there," Altin whispered.

He nodded.

Altin sat on his right, and Altin's friend took the seat remaining empty on his left. Altin introduced his friend in a whisper. His name was Yavuz. He did not speak English.

Reluctantly he shook hands with Yavuz.

It was difficult, thereafter, to give his full attention to the film. He kept glancing sideways at Yavuz. He was about his own height and age, but then this seemed to be true of half the men in Istanbul. An unexceptional face, eyes that glistened moistly in the half-light reflected from the screen.

Kiling was climbing up the girders of a building being constructed on a high hillside. In the distance the Bosphorus snaked past misted hills.

There was something so unappealing in almost every Turkish face. He had never been able to pin it down: some weakness of bone structure, the narrow cheekbones; the strong vertical lines that ran down from the hollows of the eyes to the corner of the mouth; the mouth itself, narrow, flat, inflexible. Or some subtler disharmony among all these elements?

Yavuz. A common name, the mail clerk had said.

In the last minutes of the movie there was a fight between two figures dressed in skeleton suits, a true and a false Kiling. One of them was thrown to his death from the steel beams of the unfinished building. The villain, surely —but had it been the true or the false Kiling who died? And come to think of it, which of them had frightened the singer in her bedroom, strangled the old doctor, stolen the valise?

"Do you like it?" Altin asked as they crowded toward the exit.

"Yes, I did."

"And do you understand what the people say?"

"Some of it. Enough."

Altin spoke for a while to Yavuz, who then turned to address his new friend from America in rapid Turkish.

He shook his head apologetically. Altin and Yavuz laughed.

"He says to you that you have the same suit."

"Yes, I noticed that as soon as the lights came on."

"Where do you go now, Mr. Harris?"

"What time is it?"

They were outside the theater. The rain had moderated to a drizzle. Altin looked at his watch. "Seven o'clock. And a half."

"I must go home now."

"We will come with you and buy a bottle of wine. Yes?"

He looked uncertainly at Yavuz. Yavuz smiled.

And when she came tonight, knocking at his door and calling for Yavuz?

"Not tonight, Altin."

"No?"

"I am a little sick."

"Yes?"

"Sick. I have a fever. My head aches." He put his hand, mimetically, to his forehead, and as he did this he *could* feel both the fever and the headache. "Some other time perhaps. I'm sorry."

Altin shrugged skeptically.

He shook hands with Altin and then with Yavuz. Clearly, they both felt they had been snubbed.

Returning to his apartment he took an indirect route that avoided the dark side streets. The tone of the movie lingered, like the taste of a liqueur, to enliven the rhythm of cars and crowds, deepen the chiaroscuro of headlights

and shop windows. Once, leaving the Eighth Street Cinema after *Jules et Jim,* he had discovered all the street signs of the Village translated into French; now the same law of magic allowed him to think that he could understand the fragmented conversation of passersby. The meaning of an isolated phrase registered with the self-evident uninterpreted immediacy of "fact," the nature of the words mingling with the nature of things. Just so. Each knot in the net of language slipped, without any need of explication, into place. Every nuance of glance and inflection fitted, like a tailored suit, the contours of that moment, this street, the light, his conscious mind.

Inebriated by this fictive empathy he turned into his own darker street at last and almost walked past the woman—who fitted, like every other element of the scene, so well the corner where she'd taken up her watch—without noticing her.

"You!" he said and stopped.

They stood four feet apart, regarding each other carefully. Perhaps she had been as little prepared for this confrontation as he.

Her thick hair was combed back in stiff waves from a low forehead, falling in massive parentheses to either side of her thin face. Pitted skin, flesh wrinkled in concentration around small pale lips. And tears—yes, tears—just forming in the corners of her staring eyes. With one hand she held a small parcel wrapped in newspaper and string; with the other she clutched the bulky confusion of her skirts. She wore several layers of clothing, rather than a coat, against the cold.

A slight erection stirred and tangled in the flap of his cotton underpants. He blushed. Once, reading a paperback edition of Krafft-Ebing, the same embarrassing thing had happened. That time it had been a description of necrophilia.

God, he thought, *if she notices!*

She whispered to him, lowering her gaze. To him, to Yavuz.

To come home with her . . . Why did he . . . ? Yavuz, Yavuz, Yavuz. . . . she needed . . . and his son . . .

"I don't *understand* you," he insisted. "Your words make no sense to me. I am an American. My name is John Benedict Harris, not Yavuz. You're making a mistake—can't you see that?"

She nodded her head. "Yavuz."

"*Not* Yavuz! *Yok! Yok, yok!*"

And a word that meant "love" but not exactly that. Her hand tightened in the folds of her several skirts, raising them to show the thin, black-stockinged ankles.

"No!"

She moaned.

. . . wife . . . his home . . . Yalova . . . his life.

"Damn you, go away!"

Her hand let go her skirts and darted quickly to his shoulder, digging into the cheap cloth. Her other hand shoved the wrapped parcel at him. He pushed her back but she clung fiercely, shrieking his name: *Yavuz!* He struck her face.

She fell on the wet cobbles. He backed away. The greasy parcel was in his left hand. She pushed herself up to her feet. Tears flowed along the vertical channels from eyes to mouth. A Turkish face. Blood dripped slowly out of one nostril. She began to walk away in the direction of Taksim.

"And don't return, do you understand? Stay away from me!" His voice cracked.

When she was out of sight he looked at the parcel in his hand. He knew he ought not to open it, that the wisest course was to throw it into the nearest garbage can. But even as he warned himself, his fingers had snapped the string.

A large lukewarm doughy mass of borek. And an orange. The saliva sprouted in his mouth at the acrid smell of the cheese.

No!

He had not had dinner that night. He was hungry. He ate it. Even the orange.

During the month of January he made only two entries in his notebook. The first, undated, was a long extract copied from A. H. Lybyer's book on the Janissaries, the great slave-corps of the sultans, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent.* The passage read:

> Perhaps no more daring experiment has been tried on a large scale upon the face of the Earth than that embodied in the Ottoman Ruling Institution. Its nearest ideal analogue is found in the Republic of Plato, its nearest actual parallel in the Mamluk system of Egypt; but it was not restrained within the aristocratic Hellenic limitations of the first, and it subdued and outlived the second. In the United States of America men have risen from the rude work of the backwoods to the Presidential chair, but they have done so by their own effort and not through the gradations of a system carefully organized to push them forward. The Roman Catholic Church can still train a peasant to become a pope, but it has never begun by choosing its candidates almost exclusively from families which profess a hostile religion. The Ottoman system deliberately took slaves and made them ministers of state. It took boys from the sheep-run and the plough-tail and made them courtiers and the husbands of princesses; it took young men whose ancestors had borne the Christian name for centuries and made them rulers in the greatest of Muhammidan states, and soldiers and generals in invincible armies whose chief joy it was to beat down the Cross and elevate the Crescent. It never asked its novices 'Who was your father?' or 'What do you know?' or even 'Can you speak our tongue?' but it studied their faces and their frames and said: '*You* shall be a soldier and if you

show yourself worthy, a general,' or '*You* shall be a scholar and a gentleman and, if the ability lies in you, a governor and a prime minister.' Grandly disregarding the fabric of fundamental customs which is called 'human nature,' and those religious and social prejudices which are thought to be almost as deep as life itself, the Ottoman system took children for ever from parents, discouraged family cares among its members through their most active years, allowed them no certain hold on property, gave them no definite promise that their sons and daughters would profit by their success and sacrifice, raised and lowered them with no regard for ancestry or previous distinction, taught them a strange law, ethics, and religion, and ever kept them conscious of a sword raised above their heads which might put an end at any moment to a brilliant career along a matchless path of human glory.

The second and briefer entry was dated the 23rd of January and read as follows:

"Heavy rains yesterday. I stayed in drinking. She came around at her usual hour. This morning when I put on my brown shoes to go out shopping they were *wet through.* Two hours to dry them out over the heater. Yesterday I wore only my sheepskin slippers—*I did not leave the building once.*"

IV

A human face is a construction, an artifact. The mouth is a little door, and the eyes are windows that look at the street, and all the rest of it, the flesh, the bone beneath, is a wall to which any manner of ornament may be affixed, gewgaws of whatever style or period one takes a fancy to—swags hung below the cheeks and chin, lines chiseled or smoothed away, a recession emphasized, a bit of

vegetation here and there. Each addition or subtraction, however minor in itself, will affect the entire composition. Thus, the hair that he has had trimmed a bit closer to the temples restores hegemony to the vertical elements of a face that is now noticeably *narrower.* Or is this exclusively a matter of proportion and emphasis? For he has lost weight too (one cannot stop eating regularly without some shrinkage), and the loss has been appreciable. A new darkness has given definition to the always incipient pouches below his eyes, a darkness echoed by the new hollowness of his cheeks.

But the chief agent of metamorphosis is the mustache, which has grown full enough now to obscure the modeling of his upper lip. The ends, which had first shown a tendency to droop, have developed, by his nervous habit of twisting them about his fingers, the flaring upward curve of a scimitar (or *pala,* after which in Turkey this style of mustache is named, *pala biyik*). It is this, the baroque mustache, not a face, that he sees when he looks in a mirror.

Then there is the whole question of "expression," its quickness, constancy, the play of intelligence, the characteristic "tone" and the hundreds upon hundreds of possible gradations within the range of that tone, the eyes' habits of irony and candor, the betraying tension or slackness of a lip. Yet it is scarcely necessary to go into this at all, for his face, when he sees it, or when anyone sees it, could not be said to *have* an expression. What was there, after all, for him to express?

The blurring of edges, whole days lost, long hours awake in bed, books scattered about the room like little animal corpses to be nibbled at when he grew hungry, the endless cups of tea, the tasteless cigarettes. Wine, at least, did what it was supposed to do—it took away the sting. Not that he

felt the sting these days with any poignance. But perhaps without the wine he *would* have.

He piled the nonreturnable bottles in the bathtub, exercising in this act (if in no other) the old discrimination, the "compulsive tact" he had made so much of in his book.

The drapes were always drawn. The lights were left burning at all hours, even when he slept, even when he was out, three sixty-watt bulbs in a metal chandelier hanging just out of plumb.

Voices from the street impinged. Vendors in the morning, and the metallic screak of children. At night the radio in the apartment below, drunken arguments. Scatterings of words, like illuminated signs glimpsed driving on a thruway, at high speeds, at night.

Two bottles of wine were not enough if he started early in the afternoon, but three could make him sick.

And though the hours crawled, like wounded insects, so slowly across the floor, the days rushed by in a torrent. The sunlight slipped across the Bosphorus so quickly that there was scarcely time to rise and see it.

Qne morning when he woke there was a balloon on a stick propped in the dusty flower vase atop his dresser. A crude Mickey Mouse was stenciled on the bright red rubber. He left it there, bobbing in the vase, and watched it shrivel day by day, the face turning small and black and wrinkled.

The next time it was ticket stubs, two of them, from the Kabataş-Üsküdar ferry.

Till that moment he had told himself it was a matter only of holding out until the spring. He had prepared himself for a siege, believing that an assault was not possible. Now he realized that he would have actually to go out there and fight.

Though it was mid-February the weather accommodated his belated resolution with a series of bright blue days, a wholly unseasonable warmth that even tricked early blossoms from a few unsuspecting trees. He went through Topkapi once again, giving a respectful, indiscriminate, and puzzled attention to the celadon ware, to golden snuff-boxes, to pearl-embroidered pillows, to the portrait miniatures of the sultans, to the fossil footprint of the Prophet, to Iznik tiles, to the lot. There it was, all spread out before him, heaps and masses of it: beauty. Like a salesclerk tying price tags to items of merchandise, he would attach this favorite word of his, provisionally, to these sundry bibelots, then step back a pace or two to see how well or poorly it "matched." Was *this* beautiful? Was *that*?

Amazingly, none of it was beautiful. The priceless baubles all just sat there on their shelves, behind the thick glass, as unresplendent as the drab furniture back in his own room.

He tried the mosques: Sultan Ahmet, Beyazit, Şehazade, Yeni Camii, Laleli Camii. The old magic, the Vitruvian trinity of "commodity, firmness, and delight," had never failed him so enormously before. Even the shock of scale, the gape-mouthed peasant reverence before thick pillars and high domes, even this deserted him. Go where he would through the city, he could not get out of his room.

Then the land walls, where months before he had felt himself rubbing up against the very garment of the past. He stood at the same spot where he had stood then, at the point where Mehmet the Conqueror had breached the walls. Quincunxes of granite cannonballs decorated the grass; they reminded him of the red balloon.

As a last resort he returned to Eyup. The false spring had reached a tenuous apogee, and the February light flared with deceiving brilliance from the thousand facets of white

stone blanketing the steep hillside. Small flocks of three or four sheep browsed between the graves. The turbaned shafts of marble jutted in every direction but the vertical (which it was given to the cypresses to define) or lay, higgledy-piggledy, one atop another. No walls, no ceilings, scarcely a path through the litter: this was an architecture supremely abstract. It seemed to him to have been piled up here, over the centuries, just to vindicate the thesis of his book.

And it worked. It worked splendidly. His mind and his eye came alive. Ideas and images coalesced. The sharp slanting light of the late afternoon caressed the jumbled marble with a cold careful hand, like a beautician adding the last touches to an elaborate coiffure. Beauty? Here it was. Here it was abundantly!

He returned the next day with his camera, redeemed from the repairshop where it had languished for two months. To be on the safe side he had asked the repairman to load it for him. He composed each picture with mathematic punctilio, fussing over the depth of field, crouching or climbing atop sepulchers for a better angle, checking each shot against the reading on the light meter, deliberately avoiding picturesque solutions and easy effects. Even taking these pains he found that he'd gone through the twenty exposures in under two hours.

He went up to the small café on the top of the hill. Here, his Hachette had noted respectfully, the great Pierre Loti had been wont to come of a summer evening, to drink a glass of tea and look down the sculptured hills and through the pillars of cypress at the Fresh Waters of Europe and the Golden Horn. The café perpetuated the memory of this vanished glory with pictures and mementoes. Loti, in a red fez and savage mustachios, glowered at the contemporary patrons from every wall. During the World War Loti had remained in Istanbul, taking the part of his friend, the

Turkish sultan, against his native France.

He ordered a glass of tea from a waitress who had been got up as a harem girl. Apart from the waitress he had the café to himself. He sat on Pierre Loti's favorite stool. It was delicious. He felt right at home.

He opened his notebook and began to write.

Like an invalid taking his first walk out of doors after a long convalescence, his renascent energies caused him not only the predictable and welcome euphoria of resurrection but also a pronounced intellectual giddiness, as though by the simple act of rising to his feet he had thrust himself up to some really dangerous height. This dizziness became most acute when, in trying to draft a reply to Robertson's review, he was obliged to return to passages in his own book. Often as not what he found there struck him as incomprehensible. There were entire chapters that might as well have been written in ideograms or futhorc for all the sense they made to him now. But occasionally, cued by some remark so irrelevant to any issue at hand as to be squeezed into an embarrassed parenthesis, he would sprint off toward the most unforeseen—and undesirable—conclusions. Or rather, each of these tangents led, asymptotically, to a single conclusion: to wit, that his book, or any book he might yet conceive, was worthless, and worthless not because his thesis was wrong but precisely because it might be right.

There was a realm of judgment and a realm of fact. His book, if only because it was a book, existed within the bounds of the first. There was the trivial fact of its corporeality, but, in this case as in most others, he discounted that. It was a work of criticism, a systematization of judgment, and to the extent that his system was complete its critical apparatus must be able to measure its own scales of mensuration, and judge the justice of its own

decrees. But could it? Was not his "system" as arbitrary a construction as any silly pyramid? What was it, after all? A string of words, of more or less agreeable noises, politely assumed to correspond to certain objects and classes of objects, actions and groups of actions, in the realm of fact. And by what subtle magic was this correspondence to be verified? Why, by just the assertion that it was so!

This, admittedly, lacked clarity. It had come to him thick and fast, and it was colored not a little by cheap red wine. To fix its outlines a bit more firmly in his own mind he tried to "get it down" in his letter to *Art News*:

> Sirs:
>
> I write to you concerning F. R. Robertson's review of my book, though the few words I have to say bear but slightly upon Mr. Robertson's oracles, as slightly perhaps as these bore upon *Homo Arbitrans.*
>
> Only this—that, as Gödel has demonstrated in mathematics, Wittgenstein in philosophy, and Duchamp, Cage, and Ashbery in their respective fields, the final statement of any system is a self-denunciation, a demonstration of how its particular little tricks are done—not by magic (as magicians have always known) but by the readiness of the magician's audience to be deceived, which readiness is the very glue of the social contract.
>
> Every system, including my own and Mr. Robertson's, is a system of more or less interesting lies, and if one begins to call these lies into question, then one ought really to begin with the first. That is to say, with the very questionable proposition on the title page: *Homo Arbitrans* by John Benedict Harris.
>
> Now I ask you, Mr. Robertson, what could be more improbable than that? More tentative? More arbitrary?

He sent the letter off, unsigned.

V

He had been promised his photos by Monday, so Monday morning, before the frost had thawed on the plate glass window, he was at the shop. The same immodest anxious interest to see his pictures of Eyup possessed him as once he had felt to see an essay or a review in print. It was as though these items, the pictures, the printed words, had the power to rescind, for a little while, his banishment to the realm of judgment, as though they said to him: "Yes, look, here we are, right in your hand. We're real, and so you must be too."

The old man behind the counter, a German, looked up mournfully to gargle a mournful *ach.* "Ach, Mr. Harris! Your pictures are not ready yet. Come back soon at twelve o'clock."

He walked through the melting streets that were, this side of the Golden Horn, jokebooks of eclecticism. No mail at the Consulate, which was only to be expected. Half past ten.

A pudding at a pudding shop. Two lire. A cigarette. A few more jokes: a bedraggled caryatid, an Egyptian tomb, a Greek temple that had been changed by some Circean wand into a butcher shop. Eleven.

He looked, at the bookshop, at the same shopworn selection of books that he had looked at so often before. Eleven-thirty. Surely, they would be ready by now.

"You are here, Mr. Harris. Very good."

Smiling in anticipation, he opened the envelope, removed the slim warped stack of prints.

No.

"I'm afraid these aren't mine." He handed them back. He didn't want to feel them in his hand.

"What?"

"Those are the wrong pictures. You've made a mistake."

The old man put on a pair of dirty spectacles and shuffled through the prints. He squinted at the name on the envelope. "You are Mr. Harris."

"Yes, that is the name on the envelope. The envelope's all right, the pictures aren't."

"It is not a mistake."

"These are *somebody else's* snapshots. Some family picnic. You can see that."

"I myself took out the roll of film from your camera. Do you remember, Mr. Harris?"

He laughed uneasily. He hated scenes. He considered just walking out of the shop, forgetting all about the pictures. "Yes, I do remember. But I'm afraid you must have gotten that roll of film confused with another. I *didn't* take these pictures. I took pictures at the cemetery in Eyup. Does that ring a bell?"

Perhaps, he thought, "ring a bell" was not an expression a German would understand.

As a waiter whose honesty has been called into question will go over the bill again with exaggerated attention, the old man frowned and examined each of the pictures in turn. With a triumphant clearing of his throat he laid one of the snapshots face up on the counter. "Who is that, Mr. Harris?"

It was the boy.

"Who! I . . . I don't know his name."

The old German laughed theatrically, lifting his eyes to a witnessing heaven. "It is you, Mr. Harris! It is you!"

He bent over the counter. His fingers still refused to touch the print. The boy was held up in the arms of a man whose head was bent forward as though he were examining the close-cropped scalp for lice. Details were fuzzy, the lens having been mistakenly set at infinity.

Was it his face? The mustache resembled his mustache, the crescents under the eyes, the hair falling forward . . .

But the angle of the head, the lack of focus—there was room for doubt.

"Twenty-four lire please, Mr. Harris."

"Yes. Of course." He took a fifty-lire note from his billfold. The old man dug into a lady's plastic coin purse for change.

"Thank you, Mr. Harris."

"Yes. I'm . . . sorry."

The old man replaced the prints in the envelope, handed them across the counter.

He put the envelope in the pocket of his suit. "It was my mistake."

"Good-bye."

"Yes, good-bye."

He stood on the street, in the sunlight, exposed. Any moment either of them might come up to him, lay a hand on his shoulder, tug at his pants leg. He could not examine the prints here. He returned to the sweetshop and spread them out in four rows on a marble-topped table.

Twenty photographs. A day's outing, as commonplace as it had been impossible.

Of these twenty, three were so overexposed as to be meaningless and should not have been printed at all. Three others showed what appeared to be islands or different sections of a very irregular coastline. They were unimaginatively composed, with great expanses of bleached-out sky and glaring water. Squeezed between these the land registered merely as long dark blotches flecked with tiny gray rectangles of buildings. There was also a view up a steep street of wooden houses and naked wintry gardens.

The remaining thirteen pictures showed various people, and groups of people, looking at the camera. A heavyset woman in black, with black teeth, squinting into the sun—standing next to a pine tree in one picture, sitting uncomfortably on a natural stone formation in the second.

An old man, dark-skinned, bald, with a flaring mustache and several days' stubble of beard. Then these two together—a very blurred print. Three little girls standing in front of a middle-aged woman, who regarded them with a pleased, proprietorial air. The same three girls grouped around the old man, who seemed to take no notice of them whatever. And a group of five men: the spread-legged shadow of the man taking this picture was roughly stenciled across the pebbled foreground.

And the woman. Alone. The wrinkled sallow flesh abraded to a smooth white mask by the harsh midday light.

Then the boy snuggling beside her on a blanket. Nearby small waves lapped at a narrow shingle.

Then these two still together with the old woman and the three little girls. The contiguity of the two women's faces suggested a family resemblance.

The figure that could be identified as himself appeared on only three of the pictures: once holding the boy in his arms; once with his arm around the woman's shoulders, while the boy stood before them scowling; once in a group of thirteen people, all of whom had appeared in one or another of the previous shots. Only the last of these three was in focus. He was one of the least noticeable figures in this group, but the mustached face smiling so rigidly into the camera was undeniably his own.

He had never seen these people, except, of course, for the woman and the boy. Though he had, hundreds of times, seen people just like them in the streets of Istanbul. Nor did he recognize the plots of grass, the stands of pine, the boulders, the shingle beach, though once again they were of such a generic type that he might well have passed such places a dozen times without taking any notice of them. Was the world of fact really as characterless as *this*? That it *was* the world of fact he never for a moment doubted.

And what had *he* to place in the balance against these evidences? A name? A face?

He scanned the walls of the sweetshop for a mirror. There was none. He lifted the spoon, dripping, from his glass of tea to regard the reflection of his face, blurred and inverted, in the concave surface. As he brought the spoon closer, the image grew less distinct, then rotated through 180 degrees to present, upright, the mirror image of his staring, dilated eye.

He stood on the open upper deck as the ferry churned, hooting, from the deck. Like a man stepping out of doors on a blustery day, the ferry rounded the peninsular tip of the old city, leaving the quiet of the Horn for the rough wind-whitened waters of the Sea of Marmara. A cold south wind stiffened the scarlet star-and-crescent on the stern mast.

From this vantage the city showed its noblest silhouette: first the great gray horizontal mass of the Topkapi walls, then the delicate swell of the dome of St. Irena, which had been built (like a friend carefully chosen to demonstrate, by contrast, one's own virtues) just to point up the swaggering impossibility of the neighboring Holy Wisdom, that graceless and abstract issue of the union commemorated on every capital within by the twined monograms of the demon-emperor Justinian and his whore and consort Theodora; then, bringing both the topographic and historic sequence to an end, the proud finality of the Blue Mosque.

The ferry began to roll in the rougher water of the open sea. Clouds moved across the sun at quicker intervals to mass in the north above the dwindling city. It was four-thirty. By five o'clock he would reach Heybeli, the island identified by both Altin and the mail clerk at the Consulate as the setting of the photographs.

The airline ticket to New York was in his pocket. His bags, all but the one he would take on the plane, had been packed and shipped off in a single afternoon and morning of headlong drunken fear. Now he was safe. The certain knowledge that tomorrow he would be thousands of miles away had shored up the crumbling walls of confidence like the promise of a prophet who cannot err, Tiresias in balmy weather. Admittedly this was the shameful safety of a rout so complete that the enemy had almost captured his baggage train—but it was safety for all that, as definite as tomorrow. Indeed, this "tomorrow" was more definite, more present to his mind and senses, than the actual limbo of its preparation, just as, when a boy, he had endured the dreadful tedium of Christmas Eve by projecting himself into the morning that would have to follow and which, when it did finally arrive, was never so real, by half, as his anticipations.

Because he was this safe, he dared today confront the enemy (if the enemy would confront *him*) head on. It risked nothing and there was no telling what it might yield. Though if it were the *frisson* that he was after, then he should have stayed and seen the thing through to its end. No, this last excursion was more a gesture than an act, bravado rather than bravery. The very self-consciousness with which he had set out seemed to insure that nothing really disastrous could happen. Had it not always been their strategy before to catch him unaware?

Finally, of course, he could not explain to himself why he had gone to the ferry, bought his ticket, embarked, except that each successive act seemed to heighten the delectable sense of his own inexorable advance, a sensation at once of almost insupportable tension and of dreamlike lassitude. He could no more have turned back along this path once he had entered on it than at the coda of a

symphony he could have refused to listen. Beauty? Oh yes, intolerably! He had *never* known anything so beautiful as this.

The ferry pulled into the quay of Kinali Ada, the first of the islands. People got on and off. Now the ferry turned directly into the wind, toward Burgaz. Behind them the European coast vanished into the haze.

The ferry had left the Burgaz dock and was rounding the tiny islet of Kasik. He watched with fascination as the dark hills of Kasik, Burgaz, and Kinali slipped slowly into perfect alignment with their positions in the photograph. He could almost hear the click of the shutter.

And the other relationships between these simple sliding planes of sea and land—was there not something nearly as *familiar* in each infinitesimal shift of perspective? When he looked at these islands with his eyes half-closed, attention unfocused, he could almost . . .

But whenever he tried to take this up, however gently, between the needle-tipped compasses of analysis, it crumbled into dust.

It began to snow just as the ferry approached Heybeli. He stood at the end of the pier. The ferry was moving eastward, into the white air, toward Buyuk Ada.

He looked up a steep street of wooden houses and naked wintry gardens. Clusters of snowflakes fell on the wet cobbles and melted. At irregular intervals street lamps glowed yellow in the dusk, but the houses remained dark. Heybeli was a summer resort. Few people lived here in the winter months. He walked halfway up the hill, then turned to the right. Certain details of woodwork, the proportion of a window, a sagging roof caught his attention momentarily, like the flicker of wings in the foliage of a tree twenty, fifty, a hundred yards ahead.

The houses were fewer, spaced farther apart. In the gardens snow covered the leaves of cabbages. The road wound up the hill toward a stone building. It was just possible to make out the flag waving against the gray sky. He turned onto a footpath that skirted the base of the hill. It led into the pines. The thick carpet of fallen needles was more slippery than ice. He rested his cheek against the bark of a tree and heard, again, the camera's click, systole and diastole of his heart.

He heard the water, before he saw it, lapping on the beach. He stopped. He focused. He recognized the rock. He walked toward it. So encompassing was his sense of this scene, so inclusive, that he could feel the footsteps he left behind in the snow, feel the snow slowly covering them again. He stopped.

It was here he had stood with the boy in his arms. The woman had held the camera to her eye with reverent awkwardness. He had bent his head forward to avoid looking directly into the glare of the setting sun. The boy's scalp was covered with the scabs of insect bites.

He was ready to admit that all this had happened, the whole impossible event. He did admit it. He lifted his head proudly and smiled, as though to say: *All right—and then? No matter* what *you do, I'm safe! Because, really, I'm not here at all. I'm already in New York.*

He laid his hands in a gesture of defiance on the outcropping of rock before him. His fingers brushed the resilient thong of the slipper. Covered with snow, the small oval of blue plastic had completely escaped his attention.

He spun around to face the forest, then round again to stare at the slipper lying there. He reached for it, thinking to throw it into the water, then drew his hand back.

He turned back to the forest. A man was standing just

outside the line of the trees, on the path. It was too dark to discern any more of his features than that he had a mustache.

On his left the snowy beach ended in a wall of sandstone. To his right the path swung back into the forest, and behind him the sea dragged the shingle back and forth.

"Yes?"

The man bent his head attentively, but said nothing.

"Well, yes? Say it."

The man walked back into the forest.

The ferry was just pulling in as he stumbled up to the quay. He ran onto it without stopping at the booth to buy a ticket. Inside under the electric light he could see the tear in his trousers, and a cut on the palm of his right hand. He had fallen many times, on the pine needles, over rocks in furrowed fields, on cobbles.

He took a seat by the coal stove. When his breath returned to him, he found that he was shivering violently. A boy came round with a tray of tea. He bought a glass for one lira. He asked the boy, in Turkish, what time it was. It was ten o'clock.

The ferry pulled up to the dock. The sign over the ticket booth said BUYUK ADA. The ferry pulled away from the dock.

The ticket taker came for his ticket. He held out a ten-lira note and said, "Istanbul."

The ticket taker nodded his head, which meant no. "*Yok.*"

"No? How much then? *Kaç para?*"

"*Yok Istanbul–Yalova.*" He took the money offered him and gave him back in exchange eight lire and a ticket to Yalova on the Asian coast.

He had got onto a ferry going in the wrong direction. He was not returning to Istanbul, but to Yalova.

He explained, first in slow precise English, then in a desperate fragmentary Turkish, that he could not go to Yalova, that it was impossible. He produced his airline ticket, pointed at the eight o'clock departure time, but he could not remember the Turkish word for "tomorrow." Even in his desperation he could see the futility of all this: between Buyuk Ada and Yalova there were no more stops, and there would be no ferries returning to Istanbul that night. When he got to Yalova he would have to get off the boat.

A woman and a boy stood at the end of the wooden dock, at the base of a cone of snowy light. The lights were turned off on the middle deck of the ferry. The man who had been standing so long at the railing stepped, stiffly, down to the dock. He walked directly toward the woman and the boy. Scraps of paper eddied about his feet, then, caught up in a strong gust, sailed out at a great height over the dark water.

The man nodded sullenly at the woman, who mumbled a few rapid words of Turkish. Then they set off, as they had so many times before, toward their home, the man leading the way, his wife and son following a few paces behind, taking the road along the shore.

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