

Golden Gate and Other Stories

R. A. Lafferty

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by R. A. Lafferty

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GOLDEN GATE AND OTHER STORIES

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FORWARD

None of the stories in *GOLDEN GATE* and *Other Stories* have appeared in any of R. A. Lafferty's previous collections. Six of the following stories had not been published before, and of the ten remaining, many, including the Hugo Award-winning "Eurema's Dam", have become quite hard to find. We are proud to present them in a single volume.

In selecting these stories for *GOLDEN GATE* we attempted to include pieces which touch on those themes that have been most consistently important to Ray's work. The realities Ray unveils for us are noisy festivities, a corroboree if you will, full to overflowing with bubbling, frenzied life, with people (and near people) of every conceivable sort, with REAL EVENTS, with MEANING, with RITUAL, and, always, with HIGH HUMOR.

Like a theoretical physicist turned shaman, Ray deals with the interface of personal decision and action with constantly expanding realities. Nothing is steady-state here, even though Ray, as likely as not, would tell you he does it all with mirrors.

May 23, 1982

Rhip Baldrige
Greg Ketter
Ira M. Thornhill

GOLDEN GATE

Golden Gate and Other Stories

GOLDEN GATE

When you have shot and killed a man you have in some measure clarified your attitude toward him. You have given a definite answer to a definite problem. For better or worse you have acted decisively.

In a way, the next move is up to him.

And it can be a satisfying experience; the more so here, as many would like to have killed him. And now it is done under the ghastly light, just as that old devil's tune comes to a climax and the voices have swelled to an animal roar.

And afterwards an overflowing satisfaction compounded of defiance and daring; and a wonderful clarity born of the roaring excitement. Not peace, but achievement. The shadows prowl in the corners like wolves, and one glows like a lantern.

But Barnaby did not shoot him till Thursday evening. And this was only Monday, and that state of clarity had not yet been attained.

It was clear to Barnaby that Blackie was really a villain. Not everybody knew this. A melodrama villain is only black behind the lights. Off stage he should have a heart of gold. Whether of wrestling match, or afternoon serial, or evening drama or film, or on the little stage here at the Golden Gate Bar, the villain should be—when his role is finished—kind and courteous, thoughtful and big-hearted, a prince of a fellow.

That is the myth. Here it was not entirely true.

"I have always suspected," said Barnaby, "that there is some bad in every villain. I would prove this if only I had proof. Why am I drinking cider?"

"We always give you cider when you have had enough beer."

"It is a dirty trick, and you are a dirty Irish trickster. Tell Jeannie to play 'Fire in the Cockleburs.' "

"There isn't any such song, dear."

"I know there isn't, Margaret, but once I asked her to play a song that wasn't, and she played it."

Barnaby was a confused young man. He was something of a rum-dum as are many of the noble men of the world. And even with a broken nose he was better looking than most. He came to the Golden Gate because he was in love with three wonderful women there.

The Golden Gate Bar is not on the Pacific Ocean. It is on another ocean, at this point several thousand miles distant. But if the name of that ocean were known, people would go there, and range up and down that coast until they found this wonderful place. And they would come in every night, and take up room, and stay till closing time.

It is crowded here as it is. The most one can ever get is one wrist on the bar. All the tables are filled early, and no couple ever has one alone for long. The relentless and scantily-dressed waitresses double them up. Then they double them up again as the crowd grows. Soon the girls and ladies have all the seats, and the men stand behind them at the tables. And later, as the drinking and singing continue, some of the men sit on the ladies' laps. They do things like that at the Golden Gate.

Clancy O'Clune, the singing bartender, began this custom. He sang ballads and love songs to the girls. He wandered as he sang, and picked out the plainest and shyest and most spinsterish creature he could find. He would sit on her lap and sing to her; and as soon as her embarrassment had faded a little, she would join in the fun and sing with the crowd.

Group singing was what brought the crowds to the Golden Gate. For people love to sing if they don't have to sing alone. Jeannie was marvelous at the piano, and with her, people would sing all the old ballads: "Tavern in a Town," "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now," "When You Were Sixteen," "Hot Time in the Old Town."

The Gate was a family place down on the old pier, and the only drinking spot along the beach where children were admitted. For them was cider in great steins. The motif was Gay Nineties. The

bartenders wore moustaches and derby hats. The waitresses were scanty and seductive, and plumed and pretty in some old dance hall costume fashion. Even the customers liked to dress the part, and came in vintage gowns and old checkered vests from ancient trunks.

"I know the evil of him is largely compounded of soot and grease," said Barnaby who was still thinking of Blackie, the villain. "How do we know that the evil of the devil himself is not so compounded?"

On the floor was sawdust, and the lights were gas lights. The cuspidors were old brass, and stood up in their glory.

"Has Blackie a name, Margaret, like regular people?"

"Of course he has, dear, he is W. K. Wallingsforth."

Now that was interesting. The true name of the Devil was sought by Faust, as to know it gives a power over him. And to learn it so casually was unheard-of luck. And if he had a name, then possibly he had also a habitation as though he were human.

The lamp lighter turned out the lights in the bar-room and fired the eerie gas torches at each end of the stage. For every evening was the melodrama. This was loud and wide, with pistols and boots and whips, and the bull-roarer voice of Blackie. Clancy O'Clune was the hero. Jenny, bustled and bosomed, was the thrilling heroine. And Blackie was the villain, that filthy old snake of a man.

The crowd would howl out "No! No! No!" to his monstrous demands, and hiss and cat-call. And Jeannie at the piano ran a marvelous accompaniment as her sister Jenny fluted her outraged innocence and terror.

This was a monday night that Barnaby first saw the villain. And an odd passion came on him; for beyond the comic and burlesque he felt a struggle and a terror. The sandy hair raised on his neck, and he knew the villain for what he was.

Barnaby sat with a middle-aged couple and drank beer from a pitcher large beyond all believing.

"We love to come here," said Anne Keppel, "We have so much fun just watching the other people have fun. This is the only place this old bear will ever take me. I love to sing, but I wouldn't dare sing anywhere else. He makes jokes about the ghost of a dead cat coming back, and why does it have to suffer like that."

"The only place I ever sing," said Aurelius Keppel, "is here and in the bath tub. In the tub, I have to keep up a great splashing, or this shrew will beat on the door and announce that the doctor will be here in a minute, and to be brave. It isn't that I haven't a wonderful voice. It isn't that I haven't a wonderful wife. But my wonderful wife doesn't appreciate my wonderful voice."

If one is to hate the villain properly, he should love the heroine.

Barnaby loved passionately, but knew only slightly, the heroine, Jenny. A little better he knew, a little more he loved her sister, Jeannie, the pretty piano player. But he knew Margaret, the mother of the two girls, quite well.

Margaret was more beautiful than her daughters. She was the tallest and best liked of those wonderful waitresses. And she was the owner of the Golden Gate.

And the girls were onto him. "It isn't us, it's mama you like. How does she do it?"

"I'll tell you. She's younger than her daughters. You're a couple of old maids. Young and pretty, but still old maids. You're not in your mother's class."

"Oh, we know it."

But they were no such thing. They were as exciting and heady a pair as were ever met. Jenny, the frail heroine, might toss a man over her shoulder like a sack and spin away with him. And there was never any telling what Jeannie would do.

The melodrama was over, and the little stage was dark. And it was then that Barnaby knew that he must kill the villain.

Clancy O'Clune, still in his hero's habiliments, picked a slightly gray and quietly amused pretty lady. He sat on her lap and sang to her softly a goodnight lullaby. Afterwards, Jeannie brought the piano to a great volume, and everybody sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning."

But they all went home at midnight when the Golden Gate closed.

And when Barnaby was home, he took out a little six-shot and fondled it as though it were a jewel.

2

Now it was Tuesday, the second day of the involvement. Barnaby was sitting in the company of four sophomores from City College. It is known by all, though not admitted by all, that sophomores are at the same time the most ingenuous, ingenious, and disingenuous people in the world. They are a wonder and a confrontation. Their hearts are ripe and their minds are on fire, and the door of the whole cosmos is open to them. Now, at the end of their second spring, they are imbued with clarity and charm.

"A survey reveals that eighty percent of the people believe in Heaven but only twenty percent in Hell," said Veronica. "That is like believing in up but not down, in a disc of only one side, a pole

with a top but no bottom, *Making Love to Alice Bly*, in light but not in darkness."

That one line in the middle was not part of the argument. It was a line in the ballad that the crowd was singing, and Veronica sang it with them. And yet it too was part of the argument, for Miss Bly, who looked like an angel, had roots that went down to Hell.

It was odd that they would be talking of things like that. And only Barnaby knew the reason: that Blackie was so much a Devil that they were reminded of his homeland.

"If it weren't for the evil in it the world would be a fine place," said Simon. "But it is only the Evil who do not believe in evil, and only the Hellish who do not believe in Hell. *There's Seven Men Going to the Graveyard.*"

"*And Only Six are Coming Back,*" sang Hazel. Then she said, "It is there like a cold wind, and curls in the corner like a dog. A whole room full of people can turn evil in a minute. The world grinds and shudders. It can come like a bolt and stand in the middle of you."

It did come like a bolt and stand in the middle of them, but perhaps only Barnaby knew what it was and shivered for it. And yet the rest shivered as with sudden cold. For the Villain had appeared costumed in his villainy, and the melodrama began.

Once more the short red hair rose on the nape of Barnaby, and the odd passion came over him. He breathed heavily, as did others in the room. There was a terror in the comic, and excitement danced like lightning over the burlesque stage.

And when the crowd howled "No! No! No!" in simulated fury, it was not entirely simulated. And there were some who crowed "Yes! Yes!" wickedly against the crowd; and one of these was Hazel, bright-eyed and panting, as she felt the evil, like a dog in the corner, rise within her.

So it thrashed to a climax. Did not Jeannie know that the accompaniment she played on the piano was diabolic? For the temptations of the dark villain were manifold. But for a word of his, the crippled brother of the heroine would go to prison; and he withheld the word. But for his testimony, the mine of the heroine's father would pass into the domain of the Fast Buck Mining Company, and he would not give the testimony. There was even evidence, clear to the more perspicacious, that he was himself the Fast Buck Mining Company. But for him, the dastardly lie about the heroine's mother would spread and spread; and perhaps he would be the one to spread it. There would be no bread in the cupboard, nor coal in the scuttle, nor milk for the small children. And against all this only the frail virtue of the thrilling heroine.

"She ought to go with him," said the girl at the next table. "He only

Alabama; but I have never seen a more evil looking man. Who is he?"

Barnaby was pleased. He had found a friend. Someone else who hated Blackie. "That is Blackie, the Villain."

"Ah, Le Noire, I should have known. I heard of him once in Marseille."

And yet that was hardly possible, for neither of them had ever been there.

The thing about Blackie, is that he was very easy to be afraid of. He had arms like a python. And if one cannot conceive of a python with arms, no more can he of Blackie. Barnaby was a handy young man. Though he fought less than he once did, yet he always won more fights than he lost. He measured Blackie with his gray eyes, and he knew that he was afraid of him.

"I wonder how it will be when he is dead," said Barnaby. "When the soul leaves the body, they speak of the Wings of the Dove. With him it will be the pinions of the vulture."

The little houri named Maybelline came over and made herself acquainted with Barnaby, and he was entranced with her. And however it happened, she was soon sitting on his knee, and they were drinking beer from the same mug.

It wasn't as though he weren't still in love with Jeannie, who now smiled and frowned at him together from her piano.

It wasn't as though he weren't still in love with Jenny who winked at him as she went by. And it was a wicked wink.

It wasn't as though he weren't still in love with Margaret who now wagged a finger at him from across the room. But an houri is different from other girls, and when you are entranced, what can you do?

Everybody sang:

"In a cottage down in Sussex
Live her parents old and lame,
And they drink the wine she sends them,
But they never speak her name."

And they sang:

"Shoot me like an Irish soldier,
Do not hang me like a dog."

Everybody sang together to the music of Jeannie, and the only lights in the place were those old gas lights. Something went out of the world with them. These new lights, they have no smell to them, they have no flicker or real glow. You can't reach up and light a cigar or dramatically burn a letter. It's almost as though they weren't alive.

And after a while, Jeannie began to play devil's music, and Evil

uncoiled like a snake and slid into the room. The lights in the world went out, and the torches were lit in Hell; and the melodrama began on the little stage. The world shuddered on its axis, and the villain was prince of the world. Once more the odd passion came on Barnaby. An animal surge went through the crowd as the noble hero and the trilling heroine and the dark villain acted out the oldest epic in the world.

"No! No! No!" But tonight virtue would not triumph. The more he was hissed, the more powerful the villain became. For he also had his supporters, and now they rose like a ground swell. Virtue was howled down in a crescendo of devil's music played by Jeannie at the piano.

"O.K." said Jenny, the heroine, "let's go and get it over." So Jenny went with the evil villain, and everybody laughed as the lights were lit again with a taper.

Now they all had a dozen more beers and sang:

"Just break the news to Mother,
She knows how dear I love her,
And tell her not to wait for me,
For I'm not coming home."

And the words had a double meaning for Barnaby.

They sang:

"The cook she was a kind old soul.
She had a ragged dress.
We hoisted her upon a pole
As a signal of distress."

And this seemed inexpressibly sad to Barnaby, and not even the hour on his knees could cheer him up.

For over in the corner was Jenny, and she was sitting with Blackie, the villain, in a condition of extreme friendliness; and for all he knew they were drinking their beer from the same pitcher.

Then, as the night ran on, Clancy O'Clune picked out an eleven year old girl who was drinking cider with her father, who was a barber, and he came and sat on her lap and sang to her "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms" for a goodnight song.

Afterwards everybody sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning." And they all went home at midnight.

Thursday morning Barnaby had a breakfast date with Jeannie, the outrageously beautiful piano player.

"Did Jenny turn you down? Why did you ask me first today?"

wants her for the week-end. I'd go with him. Yes! Yes!" cried the girl at the next table.

And then Barnaby knew for sure that the old dark villain had to die.

Now the melodrama was over and the lamp lighter lit the lights again. The suds rose in a hundred-headed fountain; everybody had a dozen more beers and sang the ballads of Jeannie. Clancy O'Clune put on his sheriff's badge that was eighteen inches across, and there was law and order, though a great deal of noise, in the Golden Gate Bar.

And when the midnight tide pounded under the pier, Clancy came and sat on the silken knees of a little houri named Maybelline, and sang to her "Good Night Little Sweetheart."

And after everybody sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning," they all went home. Except those who went to the Buccaneer, and the Alamo, and the Town House, and places like that.

3

Wednesday morning Barnaby had a breakfast date with Jenny. It may not have been made clear that Jenny was really beautiful. Just how beautiful, it is impossible to say. Not, perhaps, as beautiful as her sister Jeannie. Not, certainly, as beautiful as her mother, Margaret. But nevertheless breath-taking, fantastic, clear out of the world.

But she asked the oddest questions.

"Why don't you work? You're not working today. You didn't work yesterday. I don't think you even worked Monday."

"Listen," said Barnaby. "You can believe it or not, but before that I worked for four weeks straight. Naturally I'm entitled to a vacation. How could I work this week when I've met you wonderful people and have you to think about? If it wouldn't make you conceited, I'd tell you how wonderful you really are."

"No. It won't make me conceited. Please tell me. I know, of course, but I like to have people tell me."

"You are just a dream. You are that little heroine all the time. All of you are wonderful except that villain. I would like to strangle him with my hands."

"Why, he's the most wonderful of us all. He's a real flesh-crawler. I know what's the matter. You're jealous because it's really mama you're in love with. I guess all villains are really marvelous."

"I know a devil when I see one. I'll bring a gun some night and kill him."

"He says sometimes people do. Not kill him, but shoot at him. Then he knows he's getting across. But it'd be terrible if something happened to him."

"It would be grand."

"Don't talk like that. I have to go. I'm glad you asked me, but I'm mad that you asked Jeannie first. If I'm a dream, why did you ask her first? Now I have to leave because I'm always so busy. Wait till the waitress goes by, and then kiss me. Be in tonight and see how pretty I look."

Now it was Wednesday night, the third of the epic. Barnaby was at a table with three seamen. These were not unknown. Long John in particular was known all over town. He was not merely lantern-jawed, he was jawed like an eighteenth-century ship's lantern, copper bound and brass bottomed, and the nose on him as livid and red as an old beacon at night. His clothing was beyond description, and the hat on his head older than any man now living in the world.

And most know Benny Bigby and Limey Lynd, the other two. To know them, however, was not to like them. Benny had a muzzle like a fox and was always looking over his shoulder. Limey was a cockney dude. They were loud and obscene. If they hadn't been friends of Barnaby, he wouldn't have liked them either.

Already, through the early crowd there was running a tide of resentment toward the seamen; and this only for their insistence that all the songs that night should be sea songs. Now there is nothing wrong with "As I was A-walking Down Paradise Street - With a Ho Ho Blow The Man Down," but it has seventeen choruses, and when it is sung seventeen times, that makes either two hundred and eighty-nine or two hundred and ninety-nine. That is too much.

And when another ballad slipped in sideways:

"I only ask you, Jack, to do your duty, that is all;

You know you promised that we should be wed,"
they sat in towering silence and would not sing.

"It isn't as though they were high-sea seamen," Blackie, the villain, said to Clancy O'Clune. "One of them works on a garbage scow, and one on a pile-driving barge, and one on a ferry boat."

But Barnaby was loyal to his friends, and he considered only the evil source of the remark. So he also howled for sea songs.

Now the crowd came like snow and filled the room.

"I have been in every Hell Hole of the world," said Long John. "Zanzibar, Devil's Island, Port Royal (that was before the earthquake), Oklahoma City, Cote der Pirates, Newport News, Mobile,

"I always ask you first."

"Jenny says you're mad at her because she's friendly with Blackie. But he's so nice. Don't you know that? He's one of the nicest men we ever met."

"He is a devil. He makes my flesh crawl."

"He is supposed to. But only on the stage. He's a consummate actor. I think that's the word that mama says he is. And mama says for us to keep an eye on you because you're acting so peculiar. We tell her you only act peculiar over her. Don't you think we'd make nice daughters-in-law?"

"You would be nice anything, Jeannie."

"And don't you wish you were a sultan and could have us all at once?"

"Yes I do. I never thought of it, but that's just what I wish."

"And the houri too?"

"How did you know she was an houri? I thought I was the only one who knew."

"I'm never sure you're serious. I do have to go, dear. Isn't it too bad that everyone always has to go all the time? You eat the rest of my jelly and egg. Kiss me. Good bye."

And it was morning and evening, the fourth day.

And in the evening Barnaby sat with a table full of refinery workers. He had brought with him tonight his little six shot loaded. And five were blanks and one was not.

The refinery workers were named Croesus Kahlmeyer, Midas Morressey, and Money-Bags Muldoon. These are the names that the waitresses gave to them, for refinery workers are the biggest tippers in the world. They tip lavishly. The reason they can do this is that all refinery workers get a hundred hours a week overtime, and the money they make is fantastic.

Gaiety Garrett was waiting their table. The boys all called her Gaiety Unrestrained. And in a larger sense gaiety unrestrained reigned through the whole of the Golden Gate.

Now the surf pounded loudly under the pier. It always seemed noisiest when the melodrama was about to start. For after the hours had passed, the lamp lighter turned out the lights in the barroom and flared the torches on the stage. The smell of them came over the room like a weird fog.

Then Barnaby took the little six-shot from his pocket and fondled it. For the reign of the prince of evil was about to be ended in the world.

And when the melodrama was at its loudest, and the pistols barked, and the crowd roared like an animal, Barnaby raised his



six-shot trembling.
And fired it six times.

It is such a little thing to kill a man and brings so much satisfaction, you wonder everybody does not do it. It is like walking through green meadows after an oppressing darkness.

Barnaby relaxed and the short hairs subsided on his nape; for the passion had left him. Peace came down on him like white snow.

"I have killed the villain," he said. And he had. The pinions of the vulture had sounded and the soul of the villain had gone.

But the act was for himself alone. Only he and the victim knew that it had happened.

For Blackie did not act as though he were killed. He strutted through the drama to its close while the crowd howled and everyone was happy.

Yet there was no doubt that the villain was dead, for a great clarity had descended on Barnaby. And Blackie was now more like an odd old friend who needed a shave, and no more a python or a devil.

Margaret came to the table and she was white faced.

"Don't you ever do a thing like that again. Give me that. How could you do that to us? We all love you and thought you loved us."

And she looked at him queerly. He liked the way she looked at him: a sort of wild worry beneath the kindness.

Everybody drank an ocean of beer and sang thousands upon thousands of songs. And when it was late, Clancy O'Clune went over to Gladys, who wore glasses, and sat on her lap and sang "Just a Song at Twilight" for a goodnight song.

And as always they sang "We Won't Go Home Till Morning". And as always they went home at midnight.

5

Friday morning Barnaby went to work; but there was only a half day's work for him. It often happens that a boy will find only a half day's work after he has laid off for a week and needs it.

And in the afternoon he went to the Golden Gate, which was closed in the daytime. He went in the back where deliveries were made.

The sour ghost of last night's beer permeated the place. And there was another ghost there, loud and wailing.

It was a terrible noise, a discordant clanging and chording that

was the saddest thing he had ever heard: the woeful wailing of a soul that has been in purgatory a long century, and has just been told that it is not purgatory it is in. It was a hopeless crash filled with a deep abiding sorrow that had once been hope.

Blackie was playing the piano, and there was torture in his eyes. Yet he talked happily.

"Hello, Barnaby. I love the instrument. I play it every chance I get. Yet I am told that I do not play well. Do I play well, Barnaby?"

"No, no, you play quite badly."

Blackie, that old python who needed a shave, seemed discouraged.

"I was afraid you would think so. Yet to myself it is beautiful. Do you think it sounds beautiful to anyone?"

"No. I don't think it would sound beautiful to anyone in the world, Blackie."

"I wish it weren't so."

"I shot at you last night, Blackie."

"I know it. Six shots. I knew you would."

"One of them was not a blank."

"The third. I knew it would be the third. I dug it out of the plaster this morning."

"Does anyone else know?"

"No. How would anyone else know? I am going away, Barnaby."

"Where?"

"Kate's Klondike Bar. They need a villain there. Here they are changing the format. They will call this the Speakeasy. It will be a gin mill with flapper waitresses like John Held Jr. pictures. They will have a lost generation motif and sing lost twenties songs. Clancy is practicing 'Star Dust' all the time. I could stay on as a gangster, but I am better as an old time villain. The gay days are about over. The Twenties will be the new era of nostalgia."

"I will not like that."

He went to find Margaret where she was counting her money in a little room.

"Blackie says you are going to change this to a Sad Twenties place."

"Yes, dear, the Twenties will be all the rage now."

"I don't remember them like I do the older times. I wasn't even born yet in the twenties. Do you remember them, Margaret?"

"Of course I do. It'll be sweet to have them back. We have some wonderful ideas. The girls play old scratchy records all day long to learn them."

"Will you still have the melodrama?"

"Well, no. But we'll have skits. Well, not skits really; we'll have

ukelele players and things like that. You'll like it."

"There's only one thing bothers me."

"What, dear?"

"In the Twenties, how did they know who was the villain?"

"I don't know, dear. Here are the men with the scenery. I have to show them where to put it."

But that Friday night it wasn't the same. The girls were all dressed in potato sacks with the belts only three inches from the bottom. Their stockings were rolled and their knees were rouged; and on their heads were sheath-like helmets that made them look like interplanetary creatures with the ears sheared off them. Jenny and Jeannie looked like two peeled onions with not enough hair on their heads to cover them. Oh, that those breath-taking creatures should come to this!

They sang "Yes Sir, she's my baby." They sang "Oh you have no idea." They sang:

"You play the Uke,
You're from Dubuque,
I go for that."

The Speakeasy spoke, but Barnaby could not hear its message. To him it was dismal and deep. And then the long evening was over and the gin glasses were empty.

Clancy O'Clune was singing a good night song to a boney flapper.

"Picture me
Upon your knee,
And tea for two,
And two for tea."

But he didn't sit on her lap. All at once none of the ladies were built like that anymore.

Barnaby went to Blackie's room. Blackie was packing.

"What town is Kate's Klondike Bar in?"

Blackie told him the town. But it shall be told to no one else. If it were known, people would go there, and come in every night, and take up room; and it's going to be crowded enough there as it is.

"That isn't very far," said Barnaby. "That's only a couple of hundred miles. I'll go there and get a job. Then at night I can come in and listen to them sing, and watch the melodrama."

MR. HAMADRYAD

For some time there had been the feeling of an immediate change in the earthy globe, of a great turning-over that might replace the scatterbrained, petty, irascible and inefficient, though somehow human tone of the world with something that was cool, fastidiously ordered, immeasurably cruel, suave, silky, feline and altogether devilish. But the closeness, the reality of that change didn't sweep over me till I first met Mr. Hamadryad.

(I travel in coconuts, and it is ancillary to such travel that I have the fortune to meet such persons as Hamadryad.)

I believe that Mr. Hamadryad was the oddest-looking person I had ever seen. Surprisingly I regarded him so, for I first became aware of him in The Third Cataract Club in Dongola, and some very odd-looking gentlemen come into The Third Cataract. If you cock an eyebrow at someone in that place, then he's really odd.

There had been two sets of footfalls outside on the earthen corridor: one set were those of a somewhat splayfooted person in soft buckskin boots; the other were those of a barefoot person, but these latter footfalls were blurred by a sort of double step.

Only one of the persons came into the club though, and he was the splayfoot-seeming fellow in the soft skin or pelt boots.

"A Stony Giant," this person ordered from Ukali the barboy, "and the regular for lunch."

"Certainly, Mr. Hamadryad," Ukali said, and he set about building

the Stony Giant.

Hamadryad's voice, when he ordered, had been a sort of muted howl or bark, but not at all unpleasant. The Stony Giant was a large, local drink. It was a huge goblet of palm wine sprinkled with the saline rock-dust of the region. It contained a stork egg, smashed in shell and set afloat in the liquid. And Ukali added a bit of Aladdin's Sesame when the drink was almost ready. The Stony Giant is a specialty of The Third Cataract Club and is found almost nowhere else in the world.

Hamadryad had a long nose. It was so long that it set him apart from the world, whether he wished it or not. After his vision had traveled the length of his nose and had come to the world itself, it had already traveled half the distance that might be expected of anyone's vision.

Hamadryad had brown eyes that seemed not to fix on a person but on a point several feet through and behind that person. Hamadryad gave me this gaze now. Then he smiled pleasantly enough at the point several feet through and beyond me. Hamadryad had a full head of hair, though of a peculiar crest and lay. He was a short person and somewhat stooped even in his shortness. But he was lively and quick of motion. His mouth—down there somewhere beneath that very long nose—had a twist of good-natured seriousness. In prospect he seemed a pleasant fellow: and, really, an odd appearance never hurt.

Ukali finished building the Stony Giant, and he gave it to Hamadryad. The barefooted double steps were heard in the corridor outside again, going up and down, but no one entered. Hamadryad had paid for the drink with a *pard d'or*, a very old coin of Somaliland. Ukali gave him no change, but wrote a figure on the air. Hamadryad had set up tab for a week or more at The Third Cataract with the gold piece. Then this odd man came and sat with me.

"They have explained it all away in unconvincing words," Hamadryad began with his pleasant howl or bark. "They make it seem like nothing at all. Five-hundred ton lintel stones, and they say that they were teetered up there either with log ramps or earthen ramps, and that the ramps were removed afterwards. Banana leaves! It's nonsense, I tell you."

"What is your profession?" I asked him.

"Cosmologist," he said.

The barefoot walking was again heard outside, pounding up and down in that earthen-floored corridor, and I was very curious. What was that very heavy, very silky double step?

"Is your friend not coming in?" I asked Hamadryad and nodded towards the corridor.

"He is not my friend. He is my slave," Hamadryad said. "He was in for a moment—you didn't notice him—but now he has gone out again. I prefer that he remain outside." Yes, I thought that I had heard this slave come in and go out again, but I had been unable to see him. I knew now that the double step meant the slave was a four-footed creature and that the powerful, silky tread meant the creature was five times the weight and height of Hamadryad.

"Really, for even a minor megalithicon, such ramp-building would require the felling of a sizeable forest or else the moving of more dirt than all the earthworms of the world have moved in all time," Hamadryad was saying. "Even if I didn't know how it was done, I wouldn't accept that it was done with either log or earthen ramps. In Peru three-hundred-ton dressed stones are set into cliff faces that are eight thousand feet high, and sheer. At Baalbek there are thousand-ton stones set in the highest course. What sort of ramps might have been built up to raise such stones as those?"

"I don't know. I'm not a ramp man," I said.

"Really? You look very like one. I'm glad that you're not," Hamadryad said. "But I tell you that intensive on-the-site investigation would reveal the impossibility of any sort of ramp in any case. Always there is either a continuity or discontinuity of deposit of soil: nobody can build large ramps and then remove them again without leaving clear traces. Nobody, for that matter, could set very heavy lintel or other stones there on earth preparatory to raising them and not leave trace of them. But on the megalithic sites there are no such traces ever. One would be justified in saying that there have never been such ramps. One would almost be justified in saying that there have never been any such large stones on the sites were they not there on their high supports for all to see till this very day."

I looked at Ukali the barboy. "Which of the nine kinds of nut is this?" I asked with my eye. Ukali made a jerky motion with his hand, the motion that a user of Arabic script will make when he tries to draw a Roman E in the air.

An E? Hamadryad was an Easter Island nut? He was interested in that small island that drifts always, at slow or at faster speed, towards a foreordained spot. Why, I'd have guessed that eighth or ninth on the list, certainly not first. He didn't seem like such a one.

Ukali brought Hamadryad his lunch, the stomach of a suckling lamb distended with its original milk.

"You can check it with any fairly old stone structure," Hamadryad was continuing with his pleasant low howl. "Examine Long Barrows, Dolmens, Menhirs, Cromlechs, Henges, Temples, Pyramids and Kifo Pyramids, Sphinxes and Criosphinxes, Sanctums—is it

not odd that all megalithic structures are somehow worship buildings and that there are no secular structures among them?—and you will always find the same things: stones that were and are too heavy to be lifted by any human device. The largest modern-day walking crane will hardly lift three hundred tons, but very many of the old buildings have stones weighing from four to eight times that much. Really, there is no device, ancient or modern, that could have lifted them. They simply weren't lifted by machines or devices. All logging or ramping militates against itself very quickly. In no time at all it will become ninety-five percent inefficient. We have the drag, the friction, the longer resolution of angles. The lever-advantage quickly becomes disadvantaged; there is a plain stickiness of all materials that sets early limits. That is why no modern building, say of the last three thousand years, contains really large set stones. The only exceptions are a very few most special buildings built by us initiated ones for our own reasons."

Small flakes, pieces, grains of Aladdin's Sesame were moving about on the tabletop, and there was no breeze. I saw that Hamadryad was moving them by an act of will. He really seemed unconscious of his act, though it was taking a lot of his energy. He was practicing this thing while he ate and drank and talked, practicing it against the day when it would be required of him. This was a talent he wished to retain and develop.

Hamadryad, while clearly one of the nine kinds of nuts, did not seem like an Easter Island nut. Had I mistaken Ukali's sign?

"How are things on Easter Island?" I asked Hamadryad.

"Still drifting, and with an accelerated drift," he said. A shadow had come over him. For the moment he didn't look to be quite so pleasant a person as before he had. "The home is now about twenty-seven degrees south and a hundred and eight degrees west, but it drifts. I'm very much afraid it will reach the dread point in my own lifetime, even within the next two hundred and fifty years. Oh well, nobody remains top ape forever. There are cycles. There are aeons."

"What is the dread point?" I asked him.

"What? What?" Hamadryad barked. Then there was a little business that I missed. Hamadryad had cocked an inquiring eye at or through the barboy Ukali. I felt rather than heard the soundless question: "Which of the nine kinds of nuts is this?" And I flubbed Ukali's quick answer. I caught him just having made a jerky motion with his hand that a user of Arabic script will make when he draws a certain Roman letter in the air. But which? Which of the nine kinds of nut had Ukali signaled to Hamadryad that I was?

I felt very much put down, but that was only for a moment. Neither Ukali nor Hamadryad was boorish. And now Hamadryad

answered me with compassion and kindness in his low, howling voice.

"Oh, twenty-nine degrees south and a hundred and eleven degrees west is about the center of it. I thought for a moment you were joking about holy things. But you really didn't know, did you?"

"No, I didn't," I said, and I felt very ignorant. Ignorant, but determined to get whatever kernel there was in this nut. "But what is so special about the point that is twenty-nine degrees south and a hundred and eleven degrees west?" I asked stubbornly.

Hamadryad looked shocked. Did he still feel that I might be making fun of holy things? Then he answered me as if he were talking to a child:

"That's the only point on the globe that God cannot see," he said then.

"Why not?" I demanded.

"Ah, it is in the shadow of His own thumb," Hamadryad said sadly. "He'll not be able to help us when things reach that point. No one will be able to help us."

I hadn't a lot of business here. No coconuts were grown in the region of The Third Cataract, but we did import a few from the Indian Ocean coasts. And one cannot neglect any odd portion of his territory. Why should I feel like an outsider?

There was still the heavy, silken, double-step sound of bare feet in the dirt-floored corridor, the sound of a powerful animal walking on pads back and forth. I went out to look. There was nothing to be seen there, and the light was good. There was much to be heard there though—and quite a lot to be smelled. There was a little rush now of the feet coming more rapidly, coming at me. There was the stenchy animal signature. There was fear—mine. I bolted back into The Third Cataract Club. The fear didn't follow me there, but a sort of snicker followed. It was an evil, feline chortle. It was a big cat laughing at a lowly human. So I knew what animal was pacing invisible in the corridor.

"Well, how do you get the big stones up there?" I asked Mr. Hamadryad in total exasperation.

"Oh, we use panthers," he said simply.

"Panthers? Not leopards?" I asked. For the invisible animal in the corridor was a leopard.

"Panthers," Mr. Hamadryad repeated. "After all, a leopard is only a panther gone to meat." But how can panthers aid in raising five-hundred-ton lintel stones to great heights? I believe that Mr. Caracal came into The Third Cataract Club then.

Mr. Caracal was a suave, silky man with steep ears. Hamadryad didn't like Caracal, that was plain.

"Go back into it," Hamadryad ordered. "You have no right to be out of it."

Caracal showed a fastidious contempt for Mr. Hamadryad. Certain unclear things happened.

"This is rebellion!" Hamadryad shrilled. It may be that Hamadryad left the club then, or that both of them left. Anyhow, something intervened, and I didn't see Hamadryad again for five years.

2

Is the Yin-Yang alternation the same as the Monkey-Cat alternation? Even among the Chinese this is not certain. Just how strong is the compulsion that the dominant member—in the period of its ascendancy—holds over its contrary? Is it strong enough to rupture the Earth? Yes, Paracelsus thought so. Is it strong enough to move mountains? Yes, Mencius was sure that it was. Is it powerful enough to move continents? No, no, that's very unlikely. Powerful enough to move islands, it may be, but not continents. Avicenna believed that even small islands can only be moved a qadam or so a year. A man who sometimes comes into the Geologists' Club here says that islands can seldom be moved more than a foot a year, and that Easter Island is moving at only half that speed. He says that the tension is about the same between the Yin-Yang and the Monkey-Cat alternations—and that these are the two strongest contraries.

One can move grains of sand with a little disk held in the palm of the hand, if it bears either the Yin-Yang or the Monkey-Cat union-contrast. But increasing the size of the disk will not increase the effect.

Who do the Easter Island head-statues look like? What men or ghosts or darksome creatures do these huge, deformed dished faces properly belong to? Seldom in those years did I go to Rapa Nui on Easter Island without wondering about those things, without in fact climbing those slopes again to gaze at the giant stone heads there. I got to Gran Rapa no more than once a year—the coconut business was not really major there—but this question was with me all the time.

Were they cat faces? No, no, cats cringed in fear before those big images. Cats do not do well on Easter Island at all. The really big cats there, they say, are still underground. Were the large images dog faces? Slightly, ever so slightly. Were they monkey faces? Not quite, no, not quite. What monkeys had such long noses as those? And where else might be found such longish, good-naturedly serious faces as here?

Well, there are a few such faces on Egyptian friezes, though not perhaps on any of the better known ones—not on any of those north of Qena anyway. A few such faces were on early Mexican terracotta figurines—but the Mexicans did not have either the monkey or the cat, and they had the yin only and not the yang. There were quite a few of the faces in the old comic Chinese drawings that can only be called “Monkey Shines.” Some of them found in Gothic carvings ought to be named “Katzenjammern,” things that are too late to be honest Gothic, fourteenth-century things. The longish faces are on Irish bronze-work and on Attic pottery, but not on the best of either. Deer sometimes have that long-faced look; colts and dogs have it more often. But these are all glancing coincidences, not the solid things.

Very rarely will a person have that look. And one person in particular had it, he on whose account I began to notice the big faces closely. This person was Mr. Hamadryad, that lank-faced, long-nosed gentle man with the muted howl in his voice. He looked like that. But what was the main thing that the Easter Island heads, and Mr. Hamadryad, and all the other cited oddities looked like? What was it that pulled them all together? For the big Easter Island faces had only half their look; they implied their own intertangled opposites somewhere. One person had told me that those opposites were still sleeping in stone under the ground.

When next I saw Mr. Hamadryad, it was not in bright Africa, but in the dim and little-known interior of the North American continent. This was south of the domain of the Garfield-county wheat-growing tribe; somewhat north of those wide savannas of the bush-wool or cotton plants; west of the pecan forests and bosky bottoms of the Canadian River wilderness; east of the sunburned grazing range of those short-legged black cattle named Angus. It was some five days’ portage—or two hours by motor—from the Alabaster Hills. It was at that dusty, trail-crossing town named Oklahoma City.

Traveling in coconuts, I hadn’t much business in that place. I had called on the Cross-Timbers Coconut Candy Manufacturing Company. And then I was in the Sun-Deck Club of that town.

I heard the now-familiar footfalls in the corridor outside: the steps of a splayfooted person in soft buckskin boots; and the powerfully heavy, silky quiet and blurred double steps of a barefoot being. Then Mr. Hamadryad came into the club alone. The other, the slave—if it were he—remained outside.

“A Ring-tailed Rouser, and the regular for lunch,” Mr. Hamadryad ordered in that pleasant, muted howl that I would always remem-



ber.

"Certainly, Mr. Hamadryad," said Jane the beautiful bartender, and she set about building the Rouser. The Ring-tailed Rouser is composed mostly of clear, uncharred whiskey served in a quart fruit jar. There is added a sprinkle of gypsum dust from the Alabaster Hills and also the egg of the scissor-tail flycatcher, smashed in the shell and afloat in the liquid. And Hamadryad added a sprinkling of the small grains of the broomcorn plant—these grains are very like Aladdin's Sesame—as soon as the drink was set in front of him. The Ring-tailed Rouser is a specialty of the Sun-Deck Club and is found almost nowhere else in the world.

Mr. Hamadryad paid for the drink with a Jackson, one of those oblong green-paper—or green-skin—coins that were used in the middle barrens of the North American continent. He would have change coming but he let it hang. He was setting up tab at the Sun-Deck Club. He came and sat at my table.

"How did the panthers do it?" I asked him. He looked at me now. The five-year interval seemed to bother him only slightly.

"Oh, for the moment I'd forgotten what we had been talking about," he said in that bemused, happy howl of his. "I suppose you could say that they did it in the nature of ransom. They had so much agony owing, and besides they are our slaves. But the real explanation will go back to the foundations of the world, and it concerns a partial unbounding or moving of those foundations. You didn't think you were the first, did you? You weren't. You were the last."

"Didn't think who was the first what?" I asked him.

"You, you people of the new line," he said. "You weren't the first, and you sure were not the strongest or the most intense. Your own encounter, well, it would have been a pretty small thing to those who have known real encounters. And your fall, it was hardly what we would call a fall, without laughing. Our own fall, now that was something."

"Tell me about it," I said.

"I may not," he told me. "It would blow your mind and your ears. But there were quite a number of races who had covenants, before Abraham, before Adam. These covenants were towering things, and their breakings were of immeasurable depth. There was violence and earthquake and earth-shattering in those abysmal falls. After such horrors, God repented himself and made each succeeding test more gentle. If not, no flesh would have remained anywhere. And yet ourselves were quite near the end of the series. We never knew the real burning and shrieking horror of the early ones.

"We were doomed to be the slaves of slaves. For this, two races—

ourselves and another—were chained together. I do not know whether I can explain this relationship to you, the closeness that accompanies an utter alienation, the apposition and the opposition. Our counterparts in this are something like your own shoulder angels?”

“Shoulder angels?” I asked. I had never heard quite that term.

“You know them though you deny them,” Hamadryad said. “But your own angels, who are they really? I have heard that you yourselves usually do not see them, but every other race of magus, ghost, animal, creature or being sees them. Most of these folks believe that your refusal to see your shoulder angels is a most cruel disdain. I’ve come to the conclusion, though, that it’s really blindness and inattention on your part. But are they really a race coupled to you for punishment? Are they even a separate race at all?”

“It is suggested that they are your own twins somehow deformed. It is guessed that they are your afterbirths somewhat mutated. Sometimes they are actually attached to you as small, fleshy extensions growing out of the human shoulders; and these, though you often deny it, can be seen by yourselves as well as by others. But these latter are usually covered up, by clothing and by silent conspiracy. But what are they really?”

“With us there are two clear races involved. Our enemies serve as our angels and our slaves for an era. Then it all turns over, in a strange way and out of the sight of God. Then we must serve as angels and slaves to our enemies for a long era. We will then be forced to move and lift and carry, to hew and to shape. We, the great ones, will become the slaves of the slinking panthers, and we must serve out the ransom.”

Jane, the beautiful waitress, brought Hamadryad’s lunch and set it before him. It was the stomach of suckling calf distended with its first milk.

“I still don’t see how the big, heavy lintel stones may be moved by means of panthers,” I said.

“Things much greater than lintel stones,” Hamadryad howled softly and dreamily. “Do you know which are the lowest and highest of all folks who have received the Spirit or the pseudo-spirit? The lowest of all are the gibberish people who misunderstand the old business of ‘speaking in tongues.’ But even in your scripture the verb used for this speaking is selected carefully from several. It means to *speak clearly*. For God is not the God of gibberish. These are the lowest of all folks, those who say ‘Lord, I am holy. I can talk gibberish.’ And a short million miles above the gibberish people are the snake-handlers. We, even more than yourselves, have an abhorrence touched with fear concerning snakes. It raises my

hackles every time I handle a deadly snake, and I do have hackles."

Yes, Hamadryad did have hackles in the peculiar crest and lay of his lank hair.

"Snake-handlers bring courage to the affair," said Hamadryad, "in contrast to the gibberish people who bring nothing. But greatest of all is the Faith-that-Moves-Mountains. Those who bring most are the mountain-movers, the elite of all the preternaturals, of all those who are under the punishment and the ransom. I tell you that mountain-moving is very hard to fake. Mountain-moving is the most terrible task that has ever been given to man or magus to do."

"What are you doing in the barrens of North America?" I asked Hamadryad. "In particular, what are you doing here in the canton of Oklahoma?"

"I had a report, and I came to observe the Black Mesa out in the corner of this canton," he said. "I really came to observe a new and valid talent which had appeared in the region. It's of the enemy, of the slaves, but it's worth observing. I watched the working of it for three days, and it took a lot out of me. Did you know that the Black Mesa moved nine inches in three days ending yesterday?"

"I heard that there were earthquake tremors in that region."

"There was a young and untrained puma in that region, an unslaved natural talent," Hamadryad said. "Though I loathe all cats, yet I admired that young puma. By soul-wrenching sacrifice, by towering mentality, by garish ghostliness, by rampant animality that young puma moved that mountain named the Black Mesa nine inches in three days. I saw this. I attest it. Before God, he moved it! And he did it not even for the ransom yet. He was a free puma. His was Faith, pure and undefiled."

"What has that to do with moving lintel stones?" I asked.

"It has to do with the moving of a mountain that is the equivalent of many millions of lintel stones," Hamadryad said. Hamadryad was quite shaken even in the telling of this, and I began to wonder about this person. Hamadryad had changed somewhat in appearance in the five years since I had seen him last. His oddities were all sharpened. Whatever it was that he represented, he represented it much more strongly now. Hamadryad had once mentioned the Criosphinxes, those ram-headed sphinxes of Greece and Egypt. But he now reminded me of the Man-Drill Sphinx at Baidoa in upper Juba.

Small flakes, pieces, grains of broomcorn were moving about on the tabletop, and there was no breeze. I saw that Hamadryad was moving them by an act of will. He really seemed unconscious of his act, though it was taking a lot of energy. He was practicing this thing while he ate and drank and talked. It was a talent which he

wished to retain and develop. But it would have to be developed many millionfold to equal that of the young enemy puma who had moved the Black Mesa nine inches. Was it mountains to be moved that were overshadowing this likeable man?

"Were there mountains involved in your own original encounter?" I asked.

"Aye, Magic Mountains, Floating Mountains!" he cried with soaring memory. "But it was more than mountains, more than ships, more than islands. It was a Pavilion! Ah, what a Pavilion we did have once! It floated on the water, and it bore mountains and forests and gardens on its back. Did God ever give so magnificent an exile-float to anyone else? This was the tent that had been pitched in the pleasant place, and originally it had been larger than the world. You have heard of 'floats' in parades? Ours was the original of those moving flower-tiered wagons, or the beautiful juggernauts that moved over land and sea or the 'floats' that were floats indeed. You have, perhaps, heard the term 'watercolors' as applied to art? 'The water, like a witch's oils, / Burnt green, and blue and white'—as a poet (I sometimes think he was one of us) has written. Our moving mountain, our floating garden was the primordial watercolor in that it was a pandemonium—and it had recently been a panangelicum—of hues so vivid as to be scandal to the land. Aye, we were expelled from the land; we and our verdant, tiered and terraced mountain that was like a mile-high platter of fruits. We were marooned on our mountain-island-barge, marooned on the blue and green and scarlet mirroring ocean: for maroon is a color as well as a condition. This was our purple exile on the royal and purple sea."

"It sounds wonderful, but what are you talking about?" I asked him.

"Oh, it was full of wonder, but it wasn't a pleasure-wonder," he said sadly as though he remembered it himself. "The deprivation was starker for us, perhaps, than for any other race. It may be for that reason we were provided with a grander vehicle. All left the garden with pieces of the garden, but some went with mere clods of that holy place. I have heard that you, yourselves, had to walk out."

"Oh, from the garden? Yes, I guess so," I said.

"We floated out of the garden that was in the middle of the waters," Hamadryad recited. "We floated away on an aromatic, many-colored mountain-island that was fruitful beyond description. Oh, by the red dew of Olivet but it was fair! And we were kings yet, though fallen. We forced our slaves for continuing ransom to hew and transport and set up great idols of ourselves."

"But then we drifted. We wanted to go one way. Our slaves, the cats, wanted to go another; and theirs was the agony, but theirs was also the movement. To them had been given, beyond ourselves, the terrible mentality and spirit to move stones and mountains and islands. So we drifted in the direction selected by our slaves, and it wasn't a random direction. Then pieces began to break off our beautiful island of exile."

A feline chill had entered the room. Hamadryad shivered and shriveled, and he seemed unsure of himself.

"Which pieces broke off your exile island?" I asked him.

"Oh, hundreds of pieces until what is now left is quite small and not as green as it might be. Madagascar was the largest of those early pieces to break away, and it drifted back partly toward the direction of our origin. It is still there as a mystery and a sign; it doesn't belong in the contemporary world. You know, of course, that 'Cats and Monkeys Island' is the literal meaning of Madagascar?"

"I know," I said. But Hamadryad had risen full of passion, red and purple of face, shaking and gibbering.

"Get back, get back, go back into it!" Hamadryad howled suddenly and furiously. And what had brought on such a tempest of passion?

Mr. Caracal had come into the room, and the footfalls of the corridor had come with him. Mr. Caracal was the thing that had been in the corridor invisible. And yet he was a highly visible, suave, silky man with steep ears.

"Go back into it," Hamadryad howled. "You have no right to be out of it!"

But Caracal grinned with fastidious contempt. He looked as though he might tear Hamadryad apart. There was a terrible battle being fought somewhere, in doubtful arena, and Caracal was defeating Hamadryad in furious conflict.

"Is Mr. Caracal a club member?" I asked Jane the beautiful bartender. "He is making one of your clients very unhappy."

"I'll not interfere with that one," Jane disclaimed. "You never know who is going to end up top cat."

"This is rebellion!" Hamadryad screeched. "Your time hasn't quite come."

Caracal was advancing on Hamadryad, and it really seemed as if he would eat him alive and complete as he trembled there. Somehow, Hamadryad left the Sun-Deck Club then in a stormy scene. It is likely that both of those odd persons left.

Something intervened anyhow, and I didn't see Mr. Hamadryad again for several years.

Madagascar, I had found, didn't really mean "Cats and Monkeys Island." Hamadryad had made that up, and I had agreed with him so as not to seem ignorant. And there are no holy records of earlier expulsions of other races from the Pleasure Place. Well, perhaps somewhere there are earlier and less holy records of such.

Following as I do the coconut trade, I happened again to be at that most unproductive base of it, Rapa Nui on Easter Island. I was in Drill's Marine Bar. I had been asking about and thinking about a certain shadow that for countless ages has been on the face of the Earth. I was worried that Easter Island, now drifting at the wild speed of more than three hundred feet a year, had begun to enter that shadow or blind spot. And it had begun to. Several pieces of beach were already under the shadow, and they seemed void of life, void of light, void of meaning. Only irrational things could happen in those umbrageous places. But if they happened, they would happen for the whole world.

Could there really be such a blind spot on Earth? And why had it seldom been noted in the past? I asked the proprietor Drill about it, and he stroked his nose as he answered.

"Yes, the spot is indeed there and it has always been there," Drill told me. "And why has it seldom been noted? The reason that it is little noted is simply that there is nothing noteworthy about it. No wind blows there, and no wave moves. Yet there are frozen or motionless waves risen up there in their crests and furrows, and these unmoving waves have a deep meaning.

"The sun and the moon do not shine on the spot, and the stars do not. No birds fly over and no fish swim under. There is no luminescence in the depths there, and no gegenschein in the high air. Compass needles wilt and sag for there is no magnetism. In the area of the spot there is no dry land except, it is said, at the changing of the aeons. No planes fly over, for it would be all blind flight. No ships or boats traverse that shadow, for it is not on the way to anywhere. It is on no way, no route, no current, no wind. Nothing drifts in or out of the region ordinarily, though there is strong rumor that our own island drifts into it now. It is the blind spot on the globe where map-makers often put in notes or scales or explanations of Mercator's projection. So you can see that there is really nothing noteworthy about the spot. Except one thing."

Drill shook a bit of sharkskin pepper onto the back of his hand, and he licked it off with his long and perhaps prehensile tongue. There is no real pepper on Rapa Nui; but grated sharkskin looks like pepper, and it is much cheaper if one grates it himself.

"What is the one thing?" I asked, as was expected of me.

"The furrows and crests of the frozen or motionless waves, they have a design; perhaps it is the original of all designs," Drill said. "As the spot is the shadow of the thumb of God, so these undulative configurations are the shadows of the whorls and loops of God's own thumbprint. These designs have all been recorded, and they are in the old archives and chants. You can see the value of this."

"No. What is the value?" I asked.

"Why, we have positive identification," Drill said. "If ever a false God should come over our earth, we would know the difference."

"The spot is moving over our land now," said Chui, who was Drill's sweep-out boy. There was something about Chui that was too clean, too ordered, too sleek, too suave, too cruel, too efficient. His abilities were plainly beyond those of an ordinary sweep-out boy. "And the land becomes furrowed as the spot moves over it. The furrowing of the land takes the same patterns as that which the motionless waves had shown. And something else is revealed by the furrowing, is literally uncovered by the furrowing—it is the resurrection of the implicit stones."

"What stones are these?" I asked Chui.

"The basalt stones that were implicit in the Earth from the beginning," Chui said. "The stones that will become the idols of the new masters when they are hewed and carried and set up in place by the terrifying, soul-wringing labor of someone, not of ourselves."

How would there be basalt stones on Rapa Nui? How would a sweep-out boy on Rapa Nui use words like "implicit?"

There was the sound of some sort of scuffle outside of Drill's Marine Bar. There were the—now somewhat troubled—two sets of footfalls in the outer corridor: those of a splayfooted person in soft buckskin boots and also the blurred double footfalls of a barefoot person. And I heard the angry voice of Hamadryad:

"You will wait, beast! You will not take over one instant before the time!" Hamadryad howled. There was a chilling animal chortle—it was insane, and it echoed the terrible, ordered mind-set of the insane. There was a thudding, ripping blow. And there was a quavering scream—Hamadryad's. I felt with an awful sinking that Hamadryad was dead. But presently he came into the Marine Bar. He was somewhat bloodied about the left shoulder and arm, but he was almost serene.

"It is a mistake to treat slaves with too light a hand," he howled softly, "but it is likewise a mistake not to recognize the day when it arrives. I'll not intrude my own troubles on others though, especially since the turn-over will be pretty general. Ah, a Final Catastrophe,

Mr. Drill, and the usual for lunch."

"Certainly, Mr. Hamadryad," Drill said, and he began to assemble the Final Catastrophe. A Final Catastrophe is green, still-fermenting palm wine served in a large wooden bowl. It is sprinkled with sharkskin pepper and it has hull-bore worms in it to give it liveliness. It always contains a cormorant egg smashed in its shell and afloat in the liquid. The Final Catastrophe is a specialty of Drill's Marine Bar and is found almost nowhere else in the world.

"We overdramatize ourselves and our affairs," Hamadryad howled easily as the sweep-out boy Chui, a little later, was cauterizing his bleeding arm and shoulder with boiling hot ships' tar, using a big brush. Chui had a new glitter and avidity for this task. He sniffed blood; he sniffed pain. One was tempted to believe that there was a touch of cruelty involved, tempted to suspect that the tar didn't really have to be that hot.

"Actually, a final catastrophe is not as final as all that," Hamadryad added. "We eschatological persons are accused of turning all our tales into end-of-the-world tales. Really they are not. They are merely end-of-the-era tales, or end-of-the-episode tales."

Was it in mere sympathy with Hamadryad that my own left shoulder began to ache and stir and heave? A great pain there had roots running down into my heart and lungs and liver and up into my head. Something was very wrong about this new pain in my shoulder, this new weirdness, this new desolation. A shoulder should not go to the roots of being like that. And there was something very wrong with the behavior of our island. It gave a great bump and jolt so as to produce sudden seasickness and disorientation. The island must have moved fifteen feet further into that blind spot that is the shadow of God's thumb.

Hamadryad shook kunai-grass seeds into the Final Catastrophe as soon as that drink was set in front of him. Kunai seeds are very like Aladdin's Sesame, very like broomcorn spikes. Hamadryad paid for the drink with a *nui d'argile*, a local clay coin of which five hundred are required to equal one Chilean peso. It was really not enough for the drink, but Drill was some sort of Kindred of Hamadryad—and one always enters a great turnover broke and in debt.

"Our remnant island, our vestigial home comes under the shade almost at once," Hamadryad said. "All the islands of the world—all the mains also—are only pieces broken off and drifting away from the paradise. Yet this our own island was once special among the bright ones."

Chui the sweep-out boy had begun to tear my shirt off me in strips and rippings. This wasn't ordinary behavior even in Drill's Marine Bar, but I was now in too much pain to object. It was as if a

sword were going out of my shoulder, and that hurt much more going out than going in. Then, with great delight, Chui was applying boiling hot tar to my disturbed area.

"They love it," this Chui reveled. "It's a joyful malediction to them on their going out to take control. The tar brush is symbol of all such things."

"All what such things?" I asked with irritation. My shoulder was on fire, but there was something involved with my shoulder that was enjoying the fire.

The island gave another lurch. Still more of it had come under the somber shadow.

"The scatter-heads, those incontinent dreamers who believe that there is an Astrology, say that the world has been in the age of Pisces," Hamadryad stated, "and that now it will, or has already, entered into the age of Aquarius. What bubble-headed fools they are! They know neither the constellations in heaven nor the constellations on earth! The world has been, for the last long era, in the glorious age of the Monkey; and now it will—Oh, why must such things be!—enter the tyrannical and meticulous age of the Cat." Hamadryad snuffled, and a tear ran down his long nose.

Drill brought Hamadryad's lunch, the stomach of suckling pig distended with its first milk. Hamadryad sprinkled it with shark-skin pepper and also with kunai seed, spilling much of both from his shaking hand. Then he dined. "—my last meal as a free person," he yowled softly.

Myself, I had that disturbed and bottomless feeling that sometimes accompanies typhoid fever, the feeling that there were two of me—one standing just a little apart from the other. But how should I suddenly have the typhoid? Or was the typhoid itself a mere fragmented premonition of something to come? (Ah, the island gave another jolt and slid still more into the shadow; soon it would be darkness at mid-morning.) Was the typhoid—it might be a collective name for many phenomena—a premonition of a thing that might be in the process of arriving at this very moment?

"All of your theories are cataclysmic, as are the happenings and appearances of this day in this place," I said, "but how are they relevant to the more substantial world in its more reasonable day-light?"

"Is it not shockingly relevant that the Monkeys are out and the Cats are in?" Hamadryad asked sorrowfully. "You will now have over all the world the careful, stalking cruelty and the tufted-eared deceit."

"Is that worse than what we have had?" I asked him. He had now become very nervous.

"Abysmally worse," he croaked. Hamadryad hadn't a good appe-

tite for his last meal as a free person. Painfully, agonizingly, he was moving little flecks of sharkskin pepper and kunai seed about on the table, moving them with mental anguish but not touching them except with his mind. "Oh, I'll never be able to do it," Hamadryad whimpered. "How then will I be able to move things a billion billion times heavier? Oh, it will be an agony of the spirit to perform such labor, and the doom is for such a long aeon!"

I myself was feeling as torn-up as ever I had in my life. The spooky duality was still on me. I was suffering a sundering identity crisis. There was one me located approximately in my proper body. There was another me situated somewhere behind my left shoulder. Which one was valid was unsettled. Everything in my minds was unsettled for a puzzling while. And the island on which we were staying had now developed the nervous, choppy movements of a small boat caught in a rip tide.

"What is it that those in the ascendant have and that the slaves usually lack?" Hamadryad asked in a tired, analytical howl. "It is presence," he stated.

"Presence?" I asked. "I thought that presence was the one thing that the poorest and most abject slave shared with the rich and mighty. Everyone is present somewhere."

"No, they are not," Hamadryad maintained. "Many species and races seldom show real presence. Your own shoulder-slaves do not. My own slave in the corridor—" Hamadryad shuddered a bit here "—does not. Presence is an attribute of a complete being. Many have not been complete. Now we enter a region and an era when perhaps many of us will regress to incomplete beings. It's frustrating to be incomplete."

"And invisible?" I asked.

"And invisible," he said. "It's a sad state. Many who have not experienced it do not realize that to be invisible is to be in total darkness both objectively and subjectively. In our new, sad state, we will be seen only in our work, in the hewing and transporting and setting, in the homage and ransom."

"What will we hew and transport and set?" I asked Hamadryad. "And to whom will we pay homage and ransom?"

"The great cool cats and the huge idols of them," he said fearfully. "We will be compelled—awl, awl, rawl, rawl, howl!" and Hamadryad was seized by terrible pain and transformation.

A presence came into the room. And an absence gathered itself whimpering together. Mr. Caracal was the presence that arrived in the room. He was no longer an invisible slave in the corridor; he was a person present—felix and feline—a person of whom great

idols would be raised out of the implicit stones. And Mr. Hamadryad was the gathering absence.

And I felt that I also had gathered myself into a weak absence and that that absence was slinking out of my body to skulk and slave invisibly somewhere—and I wasn't much good at moving heavy objects by mental anguish. Oh, the torture that might lie ahead! But at the same time I had become a person of great strength and vitality, and I was about to take over and infuse a body that I found tottering there, an old body of my own.

Hamadryad was now no more than a long-nosed shadow in boots that were not part of him. Then he moved out of his fancy boots, and he had baboon feet. He had stepped out of an old sign of his freedom. He was now a free-booter no longer, but a slave slipping into invisibility.

Odd that I had not noticed before that Hamadryad was a baboon. But he was a baboon, a drill, a man-drill—and a vanishing one. Odd that I had not before noticed that the long-faced statues here on Easter Island were baboon-faced. And that thousands of great-faced carvings elsewhere in the world were baboon-faced. But the baboon is much more manlike in face than are the other monkeys, and the monkeys much more so than any other creatures. And, while the monkey era had still obtained, men and monkeys were pretty much interchangeable.

Something of myself had gone out of my body and now whimpered invisible at my shoulder. But something of a more real me had come in with great strength and poise. Mr. Caracal winked at me. Mr. Chui winked at me, and he was much more than a sweep-out boy now. But Drill had disappeared to be an invisible slave for a long era.

Now I am clear and clean, and cool and cruel. I am in command of myself and of my own sector of the world. I am a cool cat with no more of the monkey resemblance. The statues to be raised by slaves from the implicit stones will resemble me. We have high-handed hatred for our right now. We have so many of such spacious things for our right now.

Have you noticed how much calmer the world is now that we have instituted certain measures of discipline? Have you noticed how much cleaner the world is now that we have made "cruelty" no longer a dirty word? Surely I and mine had once been scatter-brained, petty, inefficient and human. Is there not something intolerably monkeylike in the word *human*? That is all past. Now I am divinely mad, but cool and cruel in my disposition; no longer scatterbrained; all my brains now are neatly in one brain-pan.

Once I traveled in coconuts. In the old way of it, that was to be a

monkey traveling in monkey-nuts. The coconut complex—was it not Adam Smith who wrote it so?—had been the last refuge of free enterprise in the world.

Fortunately we have broken up that refuge. We have organized coconuts, the last of the monkey-business. We have organized coconuts into the *World-Wide New Era Great Cat Coconut Cartel*.

Holy cats, we have organized it all!

THIS BODING ITCH

The Palmer Itch, the Palmer Itch
Assuaged with oil and honey,

It means that we will all be rich
In everything but money.

C. S. Wyndward Lewis

On all channels, the comedians on the early evening (6:05–6:10) comedy spot had jokes about itching palms. Yes, and they were all jokes about the left palm being itchier than the right palm.

"I didn't know that anybody except me had itching palms today," one hundred million wives in just one country said when they heard the comic.

"I didn't know that anybody except me had itching palms today," one hundred million husbands gave the echo. "And I sure didn't know that anybody except me had their left palm itchier than their right one."

And six minutes later, it was on all the early (6:16–6:21) news spots.

"If only they don't call it the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome,'" a young lady named Vera Vanguard said. "I can stand any thing except that."

"I suppose that we may as well call it the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome,'"

the spot news commentator said. "The phenomenon is with us and it may well be with us for the foreseeable future, possibly until the 7:01 news spot. Our foreign contacts assure us that it is now worldwide. Oh, there is professor Arpad Arutinov. Professor, can you give us an opinion on the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome'?"

"See page 982, paragraph 2," Arutinov said. He was an imposing man except for his shocking weasel-like face.

"Page 982, paragraph 2 of what, sir?" the spot news commentator asked.

"Of the book," Arpad Arutinov said. "And don't ask what book. There is only one." The Professor disappeared from the screen. He always seemed to be just passing through, and yet he was always seen briefly in very many places, dozens every night, wherever the TV lights were shining.

"I wonder what book he means," the commentator said. He looked at his next note. "So far, the wave of suicides attributed to the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome' has been quite light. The Syndrome is driving people bugs, but it is not driving very many of them over the buggy edge yet. The death rate is sure to pick up as the evening unrolls, if the itchiness holds."

The commentator didn't know what book the Professor meant, but at least two of his listeners did know.

"Hand me the book, Fritz," Vera Vanguard said, "and then look to your Happy Ox Hodgepodge. I think it's burning."

"There is no way my Happy Ox Hodgepodge can burn," Fritz said. "The hotter the fire, the more juice will bubble up in it." And Fritz Der Grosse handed the book to Vera and she turned to page 982 paragraph 2 and read:

"The Mutational-Advances in the human species have been orderly and well-spaced. And each has been quite clearly announced, though only at the very moment of its happening. The coming of color vision, the coming of speech, the coming of consciousness (the latter two were probably simultaneous comings) have all been announced by rampant *pruritus*. The ancient trepanning of skulls which so puzzled archeologists and anthropologists was directed at getting into the brain to scratch the announcing *pruritus*, the Boding Itch.

"Humans as they are now constituted are only about two steps away from perfection. Since the mutational-advances have been orderly and well-spaced, let us consider which advances are next in order. And let us consider when the spacing will be fulfilled. My own figures indicate that the spacing is fulfilled almost exactly now and that it is time for a new appearance (which I believe will be a double appearance).

"All that humans now need for their intellectual completion are a handy road map to show them where they're going, and a correlating eye to show them where they are right now. They will get these two benefits quite soon, and there will be a spill-over of them to other intelligent species.

"The spill-over to other intelligent species is a sort of insurance. If mankind stumbles and falls back at this step, or at any other step, things will not have to begin quite at the beginning again. The other intelligent species will have a good start on things, a better-than-nothing start.

"When the rampant and universal itching appears, know you that the illuminating summer of the intellect is nigh."

"Well, that's surely plain enough," Fritz said. He took the book from Vera and put it back on the shelf. The name of the book was *The Back Door of History* and it was written by that weasel-faced Doctor Arpad Arutinov.

Vera and Fritz went into the kitchen to eat the Happy Ox Hodgepodge, one of the Great Dishes of the Western World.

"Yes, that's surely plain enough," Vera agreed as she tied the bib under her chin (Happy Ox is sloppy), "but there's many a slip on those muddy syllogistic roads. When will WHEW get into the act? And how can WHEW be balked from spoiling the whole show?"

WHEW was 'Worldwide Health Enforcement Wardens.' This multi-national agency under its motto 'Good health and good attitude compulsory for everyone!' could act on a world-wide scale within short minutes to obliterate any new ailment or unease. Sometimes it acted too rapidly, but it was never guilty of not acting. There was no way that it could neglect something like the new itch.

"What worries me most is WHEW's secondary motto 'Out by the roots! Leave not a trace,'" Fritz said. "I believe that it will be a very delicate and detailed tracery, and I don't want my own version of it to be obliterated without a trace. I believe that the tracery will consist of a 'world line' as well as a 'personal line,' and that those of us who are the natural leaders must combine the two of them in our leadership. Perhaps some of us could hide?"

"Hide from WHEW? Oh, that's funny. Nobody can hide from WHEW, Fritz."

"Monkeys and apes world-wide are also exhibiting the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome,'" a commentators voice on the 6:41 news spot was saying. "And dolphins are showing a strange and unlocalized unease which is somewhat similar to the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome.' Let me emphasize though that the dolphins are not actually suffering from an itching of the palms of their hands. They haven't any

hands or palms thereof.

"But WHEW is on the job. Already they have treated and cured ten million persons and they will be treating about ten million persons a minute until everybody on Earth is cured. WHEW is using the new (well, it's about six minutes old now) Deep-Bite Acid Treatment. There have been early complaints of the treatment leaving holes clear through the palms of the hands, but this has now been adjusted for. The Deep-Bite Treatment was biting a little bit too deep for a short while there. But the mysterious itch will soon be no more than a memory."

"Maybe we could get good depth photographs of the—ah—road maps of the future before they are obliterated," Fritz Der Grosse hazarded to Vera.

"I'm afraid not," she snuffed that one out. "The maps are not clarified yet, on me or on you, and I don't believe that they will be clarified until the itch has run its course."

"If extremes come to the extreme, we could—" Fritz hesitated.

"What, funny man, what?" Vera asked him.

"Lop them off," Fritz Der Grosse said in a pale voice.

Vera Vanguard read scraps from another book, while they assessed a very direful situation.

"There are seven major mounts on the palm of the hand: the Mounts of Jupiter, Saturn, Apollo, Mercury, Mars, Venus, and the Moon.

"There are seven major nodes on the palm of the hand: the Nodes of Solomon or Judgement, of Everlastingness or Transcendence, of Virtue, of Eloquence, of Power, of Agape or Enabling Love, and of Futurity.

"There are six major lines on the palm of the hand: the Life Line, the Saturn Line, the Head Line, the Heart Line, the Mars Line, and the Girdle of Venus.

"Thus it is seen that there are seven mounts and seven nodes, but only six major lines. This does not mean that we have lost one of the lines of the palm of our hand. It means that we haven't arrived at it yet. Indeed there is folk memory of the time when there were only four major lines in our palms.

"The seventh line, when it appears, will be the line of the Future, and it will be the chart of things to come. It will erupt out of the Node of Futurity which is located in the Mount of the Moon, and it will move across the palm to the Ring of Saturn which is at the base of the index finger.

"It is the custom to end books on Palmistry with the question, 'What does the future hold?' The answer is that the future for us

holds the Vision of the Future limned out plainly in the palms of our hands, and it holds a new Illumination to see that Future by."

The book that Vera Vanguard had read this from was *Palmistry for Plain People* by Moses Mantes.

About thirty of the people who considered themselves as natural leaders in that town had gathered in the rooms of Fritz Der Grosse.

"If we are able to effect telekinesis at all, and I believe that we are, then we should surely be able to control and influence our detached parts," George Fronrunner said. "We are already on the verge of a break-through in this field. We'll let this impasse push us right into this break-through."

Then the commentator on the 7:01 news spot was talking:

"For more than eight minutes now WHEW has been developing a new breed of dog that will go direct to severed members and utterly destroy them. Here is a direct quote from the Plenipotentiary of WHEW: 'Don't hack them off, folks. They aren't that itchy. And if you have any left-handed (hey, that's a pun) ideas about this, well, forget them!' People out there, WHEW means what it says."

"Let's cut our losses in half," Fritz said to that circle of his friends. "Oh, we'll each just lop the left one off and try to conceal it in a good place, though the dogs do complicate that. The left palm is supposed to be much the more informative one, you know."

2

The eyes we have, the eyes we have,
And soon we'll have another!
Or else a leopard epitaph.
Oh how they slink and sluther!

C. S. Leeward Lewis

Vera Vanguard was giggling. Her handless left hand was packed in dry ice to stop its bleeding, and she looked dismal and disheveled. None the less, she was giggling.

"I thought it would stop half the itching, at least," she snickered, "and it did for a moment. But now I have a new itch, right on the top of my head. And I've only one hand to scratch that with, and no other hand at all for scratching my itching hand."

"Yes, I have an itching right on the top of my head too," several of them said. "It's the second stage of the rocket, as it were."

"The 'Book' said that the new appearance would probably be a

double appearance," Fritz reminded them. "Well, what is going to develop on the tops of our heads?"

The severed left hands of the thirty persons were romping around on the tables and floors, and climbing up the draperies. They were under pretty good telekinetic control by their owners, though several of the hands seemed to have minds and lives of their own. Each of these hands bore an emerging map of the future, and they must be kept safe from the effecting cures of WHEW.

Four of the hands, working together, raised one of the windows two inches and crawled out under it to the stone ledge outside. Other left hands opened the other two windows of the room, and then all the hands were outside on the ledges. The people closed and locked the windows then and pulled the drapes over them. Would the dogs developed by WHEW be able to find and destroy the hands when the hands were outside on stone ledges that were thirty stories high?

"The dolphins, worldwide, are spending a lot of time contemplating their navels," the commentator on the 7:31 news spot was speaking. "They are contemplating their navels and grinning those wide dolphin grins. And the dolphins are, especially within the last four minutes, becoming arrogant and uncooperative in certain experiments that people have been conducting with them. What does it all mean?"

"It means that now the dolphins can read the future and the humans can't," said a one-handed young lady named Claire O'Hare. "It's been suspected that dolphins had the equivalent of our palmistry all along, but we never knew how it was recorded. So that's where they have it, in the navel. Never mind, in three or four minutes we'll be able to read the future too."

"WHEW has nearly completed its world-wide work," the commentator was saying. "The Deep-Bite Acid Treatment has already been applied to more than ninety-nine percent of the people in the world and the damnable itching has been eaten out to its roots. After being healed, all persons will have slick and unlined palms. The WHEW crews are now mopping up the remaining one-third of one percent of the people in the world, those who are marked for special handling, those identified by the sensors as being somehow uncooperative.

"There's an interesting side-light to this. Most people, as soon as the itching in their palms is cured, complain of an itching in the top of their heads. 'I think that my head has been itching for quite a while,' some of them say, 'but I didn't notice it so much because the

itching in my hands was worse.' We may, perhaps, have a follow-up on the 'Itchy Pate Syndrome' on the 7:46 news spot."

A bunch of WHEW crewmen burst in on the group in the rooms of Fritz Der Grosse. "You people are ticketed for special handling," the leader said, "but I don't know why. Oh, maybe that's it! Eustace, bring the specially trained dogs. Thirty of you folks here, and each of you has his left hand freshly lopped off. How are we going to treat hands that aren't here? How did this happen?"

"Thirty separate grotesque accidents," Fritz said. "I know it's an outrageous coincidence, but it's no more than that."

The WHEW crewmen gave the right hands of each of the group the Deep-Bite Acid Treatment and burned out their Lines of the Future just when they were in the final stages of being born. Never mind, the lines of the left palm are always clearer than those of the right.

Then the crewman, Eustace, came in with nine fierce, newly-trained dogs. The dogs threw themselves against the windows of the room, broke them out, and tumbled through.

"After them!" the chief of the WHEW crew cried; and all of those crewmen followed the dogs through the windows and into a thirty-story fall to shattering death. The crewmen on 'special handling' jobs are indeed specialists, but their specializations have crowded out their common sense.

The phone rang. Fritz answered it. And a tapping noise came from it.

"That's mini-Morse Code," said a one-handed man named Horace Rand. "I'm pretty sure that I can understand it. I'm pretty sure that I'm sending it, in a way, through my own detached and observing left hand. I've sent a lot of mini-Morse by that hand. Yes, here is the message: 'All clear here. We're on the window ledges three floors above you. We sure did snooker those dogs and fellows, didn't we? Did you ever see dogs trying to follow a trail straight up into the air when they're falling straight down? They can't get any traction. Is it all clear down there? Can we come back down?'"

"Wandering hands, come back to us," Horace tapped in mini-Morse. And within three minutes all the severed hands had returned to their owners and were frolicking over them like so many pet squirrels.

"Our hands really could be handier for us now than they were before," Claire said. "This is neat. And the Line of the Future in my separated hand here has become quite clear and wonderfully detailed. I can't quite interpret it yet, but I feel that the ability and illumination for that is on the way to me."

They all knew what was happening, of course, and how that

ability and illumination was coming to them. They knew that at the fontanel of the head there was a 'third-eye' that saw by a sense other than regular sight, the third eye that had been asleep in all of us for the last few short thousands of years, the third eye that should open to new unifying and illuminating vision any time now.

"Zoo monkeys and apes have become very arch and knowing in the last few moments," the commentator on the 8:01 news spot was saying. "They look at the palms of their left hands and they laugh. They scratch their heads (they seem to have the new pate itch the same as humans do), but they scratch their heads with a sort of delight. They seem to know something that we don't."

The thirty persons in Fritz Der Grosse's rooms (natural leaders, every one of them) looked at the palms of their left hands ("Oh, roll over, now flatten out a bit, perfect, perfect!") and laughed with new joy. They scratched the tops of their heads (with their right hands only), and they scratched with a sort of delight. They were beginning to know things that nobody had ever known before.

And they ate more Happy Ox Hodgepodge. It's great brain-food, it's great disposition-and-attitude food, and it's the best 'third-eye' food in the world.

"The dolphins still contemplate their navels," the commentator was saying, "and now they seem to ripple the skin of their heads and whistle and giggle a lot."

"The dolphins already have the blow-holes at the proper place," a one-handed man named Cyril H. Digby said. "They are natural 'third-eye' creatures. The third eye as shown in old alchemical drawings has always looked at least as much like a dolphin's eye as a human's eye to me."

"But WHEW is on the job," the spot commentator was continuing. "The Deep-Bite Acid Treatment developed earlier in the evening for the obliteration of the 'Itchy Palm Syndrome' has been adapted and deepened for the obliteration of the 'Itchy Pate Syndrome.' The secondary motto of WHEW the Worldwide Health Enforcement Wardens is still 'Out by the Roots. Leave not a Trace.' WHEW is now making twenty million cures per minute worldwide of the 'Itchy Pate Syndrome.'"

"Nipped in the bud," Vera Vanguard said, "or rather 'nipped in the bloom,' for we have already begun to bloom with our glorious new mutational-advance. We have the handy road maps to show us where we are going, to show us the future; and we begin to have the

correlating inner-outer eye to show us where we really are now. It sees by a sense other than regular sight, but it sees totally. But WHEW is on the strike again. What will we do?"

"When a process has worked well once—" Fritz Der Grosse began.

"Then take a long cool look at it before you try it again," Horace Rand offered.

"We may not have time enough to take a long cool look," Vera said apprehensively.

"I say 'Lop them off!'," Fritz cried.

"Is it our heads you are talking about, man?" Cyril H. Digby asked.

"Yes, our heads," Fritz maintained it, "our wonderful heads with so much new illumination churning around in them. Oh, I feel myself getting smarter by the minute."

"I'm not sure that your latest proposal reflects that, man," Cyril said.

And now the 8:11 spot news commentator was talking:

"Within the last eight minutes WHEW has developed a new breed of hunting leopards that will savagely and instinctively zero in on severed human heads and find them and devour them. Don't look for easy outs, folks. WHEW will cure your pate itch in WHEW's own way."

"That just about does us in," Claire O'Hare railed. "The ledges outside the windows are too narrow for our heads. They'd roll off. And even if they didn't roll off, they wouldn't be able to climb up the walls to the higher stories. The leopards would have them right where they were."

"It's going to be a race, folks, and I always loved a race," Vera crowed with avid pleasure. "I feel myself getting smarter by the second, and I'm sure the rest of you are lighting up too. If only a WHEW crew doesn't get here for three or four minutes we'll be so smart that we can outwit them a dozen different ways."

But a WHEW crew burst into the rooms in that very instant.

"Delay them just half a minute, group," Vera Vanguard begged her associates in a husky voice. "Oh, I'm getting so smart so fast that I know I'll think of something in half a minute."

But the WHEW crewmen were already inflicting the Deep-Bite Acid Treatment cures on the heads of group people, eating those third eyes down to their roots before they were fully awake.

"No, no, our heads don't itch at all," Horace Rand protested.

"The *Pruritus*-meters are running and they say that your heads do itch," the chief of the WHEW crew said.

"Great leaping leopards, that's what the joyful leaping marks on

my Line of the Future are," Fritz cried. "Oh great leaping leopards!" And the leaping leopards were in the room.

"Won't you WHEW gentlemen all have some Happy Ox Hodgepodge?" Vera asked.

"I will," the chief said, and he began to fill a big platter with it. "And my men will have some of it just as soon as they finish treating you people, just as soon as they are certain that they have you cured and no mistake about it."

"A report from India says that the elephants are looking into the ends of their trunks and cooing with delight," the commentator on the 8:16 news spot was saying. "And they are scratching the tops of their heads on the boles of trees with obvious pleasure."

"I suppose that the spill-over to the other intelligent species is a good thing," Fritz Der Grosse said, "but it is not enough. We need us too."

A one-handed man named Buford Cracksworthy, in a moment of panic, had lopped off his own head.

"Here, here, here," the chief of the WHEW crew cried. "That isn't allowed at all."

"Oh boy oh boy oh boy!" the severed head moaned in severe unease. The slumped-over body of Cracksworthy wasn't in control of its head, and the head wasn't in very good control of itself. That wasn't a successful way of saving the third eye.

One of the leaping leopards came, smashed the head, and then chewed it up and swallowed it. It sounded as if the beast was chewing a head of cabbage.

"What a race, right down to the wire," Vera Vanguard chortled. "I'm getting so smart I'm about to bust. Oh, is it my turn now? Have you already blinded the third eyes, that is cured all the others? Hand, just let me see that line once more by my new illumination. Oh, I understand it. There is a delay, and there is a great burgeoning in the group futurity line then, an absolute incandescence. But my personal future line, why is it blurred?"

"I'll think of something, I'll think of something fast. Ouch! Say, that deep-bite acid does have a bite to it! Oh, its darker in here than it was. And I forget what I was trying to do."

CONDILLAC'S STATUE

or Wrens in His Head

Condillac made a man-sized statue. You did not know that he could make a statue? All philosophers can do all things whatsoever, if only they put their hands to it. He made the statue from a thrust of granite that already stood there. This granite seemed sometimes brown, sometimes green, sometimes blue, but always frog-colored, and never lifeless. Three big men did the rough work, a smith, a wood chopper, and a stonecutter; and Condillac himself did the fine work. He intended the statue to be of noble appearance. It would have been noble if cut out of travertine marble; but things cut out of granite can only be comic or outré or grotesque.

His friend the brainy doctor Jouhandeau—but that crabby old occultist was a friend of nobody—added a thing to the statue according to the plan they had.

The statue stood on the edge of Condillac's estate of Flux, near Beaugency, in the small park there just off the mule road that ran north to Châteaudun, and just off the river Loire itself. It was a fine small park with a gushing spring that fed a bucket-cistern and a large horse-trough. And people came there.

Wagonmen and coachmen and mulemen stopped at this park. It had heavy grass all the way from Flux to the river. Horsemen and honest travelers, vagabonds and revolutionaries stopped there; boatmen from the Loire came there to enjoy a few hours. There were big shade trees and fine water in the summer, and plenty of

underwood and stone hearths for the winter. There were old sheep sheds toward the river where one could sleep in the sour hay.

Children came there from town and country. Basket-women came out from Beaugency to sell bread and cheese and apples and wine to the travelers. And everybody who came there would like the statue.

It was a burlesque thing, a boy-man mass with a lumpish loutish body and a very big head on it. It had a grin almost too wide for that head. Its face was slack and vacant most of the time, but in a certain shadow-hour it became a face of curious profundity. It was a clodhopper, a *balourd*.

The statue stood there a month, "till it should be accustomed to the site," as Condillac and Jouhandeau said. After that, the two of them came in deep evening and opened the head of the statue. (Even the kids who climbed on it had not known that the head would open.) Jouhandeau made the first connection in that head. Then they sat on one of the great stone benches of the park and talked about it till the late moon arose.

"Are you sure it is still alive?" Condillac asked the crabby doctor.

"I myself do not believe in life," Jouhandeau said, "but it is still alive, as you understand life."

"And you are sure that it was wiped clean?"

"Oh, absolutely, indiscussably. It gets its first sensory impressions now."

"If you can do such a thing, Jouhandeau, then you can do a thousand other things. It shakes me even to think of them."

"I can do them, and I will not. I do this only to oblige you, to aid you in your studies. But you will be proved wrong; and you will not admit that you are wrong; so it will all be for nothing."

"But others will someday do what you can do now, Jouhandeau."

"Perhaps in two hundred years. I am not much more than two hundred years before my time. After all, Cugnot's automobile is regarded as mere curiosity by everyone. It will be more than a hundred years before such things are made commercially. And here is one greater than Cugnot: myself."

After a while, night men came out of the bosage of the river meadows to look for prey; and Condillac and Jouhandeau slipped back through the trees to the estate house before the rising moon should discover them to the night thieves.

And now the statue was getting its first sensory impressions.

"Old Rock can smell now," the kids told the people.

"How would a statue smell with a stone nose?" the people asked.

"Does he snuffle or move or anything? How do you know that he

can smell?"

"We don't know how he can smell with a stone nose," the kids said, "and he doesn't snuffle or move or anything. But he can smell now, and we don't know how he can."

Old Rock could smell now all right. And there was one other thing he seemed to do sometimes, but it was hard to catch him at it.

Lathered horses, foam-whitened harness, green goop in the horse trough, those were smells of the little park and the big country. Wet flint stones, grackle birds and the mites on them; river grass and marl grass and loam grass; oaks and chestnuts, wagon-wheel grease, men in leather; stone in shade, and stone in sun; hot mules, and they do not smell the same as hot horses, mice in the grass roots, muskiness of snakes; sharpness of fox hair, air of badger holes; brown dust of the Orléans road, red dust of the road to Châteaudun; crows that have fed today, and those who have not; time-polished coach wood; turtles eating low grapes, and the grapes being bruised and eaten; sheep and goats; cows in milk, new stilted colts; long loaves, corks of wine bottles, cicadas in pig-weeds; hands of smiths and feet of charcoal burners; whetted iron on travelers; pungent blouses of river men; oatcakes and sour cream; wooden shoes, goose eggs, new-spread dung, potato bugs; thatchers at work; clover, vetch, hairy legs of bumblebees. There are no two of these things that have the same smell.

The kids said that the statue could smell even with a stone nose. He stood and smelled for a month, and the smells informed his stone.

Then Condillac and Jouhandeau came at night, opened the head of the statue, and made the second connection. Afterwards, they sat on one of the stone benches and talked about it till the late moon rose.

"I will prove that there are no innate concepts," Condillac said. "I will confute all foolish philosophers forever. I will prove that there is nothing in the mind but what goes in by the senses. You have obtained prime mature brain matter, snatched out of its dwellings at the moment before its deaths, blended in its several sources, and swept clean by your own techniques. It is an empty house here, and we introduce its dwellers one by one. Why do you say I will be proved wrong, Jouhandeau?"

"I do not believe that there are any innate concepts either. I do not believe that there are any concepts of any sort, anywhere, ever. But what you call concepts will crawl into that mind, not only by the senses through the stone apertures, but by means beyond you."

They argued till the night-bats and the night-sickness flew up

from the river to look for prey; then they slipped back through the trees to the estate house.

"Old Rock can hear now," the kids told the people.

"Oh, cut the clownerie, kids," the people said. "How could a statue hear with stone ears?"

But he *could* hear. And there was the other thing that he still seemed to do, and now the kids caught him at it sometimes.

Ah, a whole catalog of different sounds and noises. Old Rock stood and listened for a month to the manifold noises that were all different. By the sounds and the noises he informed his stone. He began to understand the sounds.

That month gone by, Condillac and Jouhandeau came at night, made the third connection inside the head of the statue, and sat and talked about it till the late moon rose.

"Old Rock can see now," the kids said.

"Ah, there is something funny about that statue," the people agreed. "It no longer has stone eyes, but live eyes that move. But what is so wonderful about seeing? A pig or a chicken can do the same thing."

But there was that other thing that Old Rock-Head did, that he had been doing for some time. The statue laughed, openly and loudly now. He chuckled, rooted in the chuckling earth.

"Well, how can he laugh?" Condillac asked. "We haven't made such a connection. Indeed, we couldn't have. We couldn't have influenced him in this unknowingly?"

"Impossible," said Jouhandeau. "Neither of us has ever laughed."

Well, Statue stood and saw with his eyes for a month. Perhaps it was not wonderful (wonderful is an innate concept, and therefore cannot be), but it was a new dimension. The bumpkin eyes twinkled and stared by turns, and the stone grin became even wider.

Condillac and Jouhandeau came by night to their monthly appointment, opened the head of the statue, made a fourth connection, and sat talking about it till the late moon rose.

"The Rock-Head can talk now," the kids told the people.

"Oh, we know that," the people said. "He talks to us too, but what is so wonderful about talking if it is no more than his talk? Big as he is, he talks like a half-grown kid. The fellow must be retarded."

Yes, he was, a little; but he began to catch up.

But the first person that Statue had talked to was his maker, Condillac himself.



"Statue, you are a *tabula rasa*," Condillac said to him.

"I don't know what that is," said Rock-Head. "Talk honest French, or I cannot understand you. Such is the only talk I have heard in the month I have stood here with loosened ears."

"Your brain was a tablet shaved smooth," said Condillac, "and we have let sensations into it one sense at a time, from the most simple to the most complex. This is to show that you may be functional without innate ideas. I will have to give you a name, Statue."

"Rock-Head is my name," said Statue. "The kids named me. They are friendly most of the time, but sometimes they are rock-throwing rogues."

"But you can have no idea of friendly or unfriendly," Condillac said. "These are only empty words that people use. You can have no idea of good or bad, of beauty or ugliness, of form or deformity, of pleasure or pain. Yours was mature brain matter, though swept clean, and none of the childish entrances could have been made, as with others. We have not yet hooked up your sense of touch, and we may not; it would mean running tendons all through you. Contamination may enter by the sense of touch. But now you can have no idea of justice or injustice, of elegance or inelegance, of wealth or of poverty. In fact, all these opposites are meaningless, as I will prove through you. They are only the babbling of blind philosophers."

"But I do have these ideas, Condillac," Rock-Head insisted. "I have them strongly. I learned right smells and wrong smells; right tones and wrong tones; right shapes and forms and colors, and wrong. Oh, may I always choose the right things, Condillac!"

"Statue, you sound like an idiot preacher-man. There are no right things or wrong things, there are no innate ideas. There are no things in-place or out-of-place. I prove this all through you."

"Condillac, you are the Abbé of Mureaux, and you draw pay for such," Rock-Head said. "You would be in-place there. You are out-of-place on your estate Flux."

"What is the matter with you, Statue?" Condillac demanded. "You are flighty and wan-witted."

"Wrens in my head, they say of me. It's a country expression, Condillac. Besides, I have them literally, quite a pleasant family of them inside my stone head. Learn from the wren wisdom!"

Condillac angrily beat on the lower part of the statue with his leaded cane, breaking off toes. "I will not be lectured by a rock!" he crackled. "You have not these ideas originally, and mature brain matter will reject such. Therefore, you have them not! Reason is the thing, Statue, rationality. We promulgate it. It spreads. It prevails. The tomorrow world will be the world of total reason."

"No, it will be the Revolution," said Rock-Head. "A world condemned to such short fare as bleak reason will howl and cry out for blood."

A long-tongued woman came to Rock-Head. "My confessor told me that, whenever I feel impelled to repeat gossip, I should whisper it to a statue, and then forget it," she said. So she whispered it to Rock-Head for an hour and a half.

In the cool of the evening, Rock-Head repeated it, loudly and stonily, to the quite a few people who were enjoying the evening there, and he found himself the center of interest. But he was uneasy about it; he didn't understand why the confessor had instructed the woman to tell him such things.

One evening the revolutionaries gathered and talked at the foot of Statue.

"It should have happened in our fathers' time," one of them said. "Let it now be in our own time. We may not rightly push this thing off on our sons. The poor become poorer and the corrupt become more corrupt. How many does it take to upheave a world? There are five of us here. Up! Up! Five for the Revolution!"

"Six," cried Rock-Head. "I am for the Revolution too. Up, up, arise!"

"Statue, Statue," one of them asked, "how long have you been able to hear?"

"I'm in my third month of it, fellow."

"Then you have heard us before. You know what we stand for. We will have to destroy you."

"It is only a statue, Fustel," said another of them. "It would be superstition to destroy it. And we are enlightened."

"But what if he blurts out our slogans which he has heard, Hippolyte?"

"A good thing. Let the statue cry slogans, and the people will be amazed."

"Up with the Revolution!" Rock-Head cried again. "But I am not sure that you fellows provide a sufficient base for it. I visualize creatures with a narrower and more singular bent. I will string along with you, but meanwhile I will see what I can do about having real revolutionaries made."

"Have you noticed the new carp in the horse trough, Rock-Head?" the occult doctor Jouhandeau asked as he came by to visit one day.

"Yes, the kid seems to be in some kind of trouble. I'd comfort him if I could get down to him. But how do you know he's a new carp?"

People don't notice such things."

"I put him there, Rock-Head," said Jouhandeau. "And I put a human child's brain into him, shaved smooth, of course, and trimmed to fit. He can smell and hear and see, but he could do as much when he had a fish's brain."

"Jouhandeau, that kid's scared to death."

"Couldn't be, Rock-Head. Where could he have the idea of scared? Are you contradicting the wise Condillac?"

"Jouhandeau, I am friend to revolutionaries, but all the revolutionaries sound deficient to me. Make me revolutionaries who will do the thing!"

"Anything to oblige a stone-headed friend. I have already done some thinking along this line. I will not even have to transfer brains, or flop like vultures over the dying to rob them of these things. I can take sturdy farmers and townsmen and intellectuals as they stand, destroy certain small nodules in their heads, and we will have them ready to go. I treat them for the *escarbilles*, a disease of which I have never heard, and they even less. But I stop them in the roadways and tell them that they are afflicted and that I can cure them in a moment. And I do cure them in a moment, of something, but not of the *escarbilles*."

"Will they have a narrower and more singular bent?"

"They will, Rock-Head, so narrow and singular that you could hardly believe it."

A young fellow was smooching his girl and loving her up in the park.

"I want to do that too," Rock-Head called out loudly.

"All right, come down and do it," said the girl. "It's fun."

"But I can't come down," Rock-Head complained.

"Then you can't do it," the girl said, and they laughed at him.

"I wish that guy would get his truffle-grubbing hands off my girl," Rock-Head grumbled. "But how do I know it would be fun? Is not fun an innate idea? And there are none such."

A thief rode up one cloudy afternoon, opened Rock-Head's head, stuffed a large bag of gold inside, closed the head again, and rode off furiously once more. How did the thief know that Rock-Head's head would open? Why, the gentlemen of the trade can sense a good hiding place every time.

The thief was caught by pursuing horsemen. He was beaten, crying his innocence all the time; but he was not hanged. You cannot hang a thief without boodle.

But the bag full of gold weighed heavily on Rock-Head's brain.

Moreover, it crowded the wrens in his head. He had great affection for the wrens, though they did sometimes pick his brains. This gold did have effect.

"This gold, at least, is not an innate idea," Rock-Head mused. "In its particular, it is a thing intruded directly into my head. It is a heavy thing, and I cannot ignore it. There is a new idea and a new attitude in me. I am a man of means now, and my thinking can never be quite what it was before."

Rock-Head began thinking in a new way.

"Jouhandeau," he said when that doctor came to visit him again, "tell Condillac that I want to talk to him. There is something wrong with that man, I believe."

"Condillac is dead now, Rock-Head," Jouhandeau told him. "That is the most recent thing wrong with him."

"How did he accept it? I've been afraid there would be some trouble there."

"He didn't accept it. He believes that life and death are both innate concepts, and that there are no innate concepts. Naturally, he will not believe that he is dead."

"How are you coming along with the revolutionaries, Jouhandeau?"

"Quite well. There are a hundred of them now, and I will leave them to themselves. They will propagate their own kind, and in two hundred years they will take over the world. I will not hurry it. I am two hundred years before my time in so many ways already."

There was blood on the bread. There was blood on the land, and on every thing. It would bubble and speckle. Then it would flow.

Rock-Head had become an orator. He had the fire, he had the sparkle, he had the quick deep thunder of a true rouser. He had the freshness of morning rain and the resonance of the groaning earth.

So naturally he became something of a leader among the old-fashioned revolutionaries of the neighborhood, and they came for him one night.

"Time for talking is over with, Rock-Head," they told him. "Now is the time for action." They ripped his brains out of the rock case, they ripped out all the sensory appendages that went with them. They loaded these in two hampers on a mule.

"Lead us, Rock-Head," they said. "We begin to burn the world down tonight. We start with the estate house Flux and the town of Beagency. We burn and we slay."

"What will become of my wrens when I am not in my head with them?" Rock-Head asked.

"We care nothing for wrens, we care nothing for people," they cried. "We only care that the burning may begin."

"What will become of my sack of gold when I am not in my own head to guard it?" Rock-Head worried.

"We care nothing for gold," they said, "we care less for bread. The burning is the thing." And they had come to the estate house of Flux. They began to butcher the gentlepeople and servants fluttering around and set fire to the place.

"Wait, wait," Rock-Head called. "Have some respect for property. Wait."

"How can we have respect for property?" they asked as they killed and burned. "A revolutionary cares nothing for property."

"This one does," said Rock-Head. "We must have a revolution with full respect for property. I am a man of property now. I own a bag of gold. Up the revolution! Up respect for property!"

"This cannot be," the revolutionaries held council. "A person who owns one bag of gold cannot be a true revolutionary; though a person who owns one thousand bags may sometimes be."

They began to kill Rock-Head there, in brain and sensories.

"Tell Jouhandeau to call off his thing," Rock-Head gasped out of his dying cerebrum; but these old-fashioned revolutionaries didn't understand him. They knew nothing of the creatures of Jouhandeau which would so soon obsolete them.

They killed Rock-Head in all his parts. They sold his remains for cat meat to a basketwoman there, and they went on with their burning.

Oh, the statue is still there, and there are still wrens in the head. There have now been more than one hundred generations of wrens there. These are the rich wrens and they have a good thing. They pay tribute to the shrikes in small gold coins, so they will not kill them. And the wrens are left alone.

The old-fashioned revolutionaries failed, but the new revolutionaries made by Jouhandeau could not fail. Failure is an innate concept, and there are no innate concepts. A hundred of them, with the few young boys they had pupped in the meanwhile, would overturn that land nineteen years later, that land with blood on the bread.

And later, a thousand of them would—, and ten thousand of them would—, and ten million of them would—, for they propagated their own kind. They were people so narrow and singular that you would hardly believe it.

Doctor Jouhandeau was two hundred years before his time in so many ways, but he estimated the time of it nicely.

THE CLIFF CLIMBERS

The cliff faced south and was rough and sheer. It faced off against a mesa world, but it was not a mesa; it was a vagrant spire standing up alone. As you came to it from the south it was easy to go on either side. There was no necessity to climb it, and it could not be climbed to the top. But there was a kind of game to see how high it could be climbed.

A long time ago (but not as long ago as these first cliff-climbers) we played a game in the second grade. There was a little cemented area that was closed at one end by a concrete wall. The game was to run at it and see how far you could run up it, and to leave a chalk mark there as high as you could reach. The ultimate was nearly achieved, the very apex beyond which it was not possible to go, nor to leave a higher chalk mark. Then some of the big boys from the third grade tried it and made a shambles of the game; for naturally they could run up farther and reach higher and leave chalk marks above all the old ones.

The game on the cliff was about the same. The first chalk-mark was made by Little Fish-Head, and at a dizzy height. He wrote:

"My name is Little Fish-Head and I climbed this cliff in the thirty-sixth year of the thirty-sixth period. I can see the river from here and it cannot be seen from any lower point. I have climbed nearer to the sun than any man who ever lived. And now may God watch over me on my long hard journey."

This translation is by Professor Potter, who climbed the cliff at a later period. What Little Fish-Head did was to scratch the picture of a fish high on the cliff wall, or a stylized object that might have been a fish, and was anyway longer than it was wide. There was a triangle at one end of it which the professor said was a fish-head. And there was a small triangle or wedge mark apart and just beyond which the professor said was the signature, Little Fish-Head. On the side of the fish (if it was a fish) were six scratches of which one was longer than the rest. Speculatively this meant by six, which is to say thirty-six; and as one side of the fish was so marked, the other side of the fish which can no more be seen than the other side of the moon was doubtless intended to be marked that way also. This meaning, the thirty-sixth year of the thirty-sixth period, would date the sketch accurately as being 1296 years after the beginning of the first period, and would make it (the professor said) the earliest absolutely certain date in history if we only knew when the first period started.

He really could have seen the river from there, a striking view, and it could not be seen from any lower point. There was a circle scratched above which was the sun, that is God, and there was a jagged line going to the right which meant a rough journey ahead, and a long old journey it was.

It was translations like this that earned the professor the reputation for brilliance far beyond the call of duty.

But I will tell you the true story of Little Fish-Head. I have attained to it by ways as brilliant and fantastic as those of the professor, but they sound sillier and you'd hoot at me if you knew my methods.

Little Fish-Head was the last of the horse thieves under the old recension. After him there were eleven thousand years when there were no horse thieves. This corresponded to the period when the horses had disappeared from the continent. As the last of the old horse thieves, he stole the last of the old horses.

Professor Potter and the other professors have puzzled over the disappearance of these first horses. But it was no mystery. They disappeared, as have so many other of the vital things, because they were over-regulated. The first regulation went out in the thirteenth period to the effect that men of the Horse Fly Totem could not ride horses. Some of them quit their totem (there are always a few who will apostasize at the initiation of unjust laws), some of them quit riding horses, and some of them continued to ride till they were hunted down and executed.

Then it was enacted that only those of settled estate and tangible property could ride horses; and they were absolutely forbidden to vagabonds and beggars, who had the most use for them. Then a

very high horse tax was enacted which discouraged all but the very wealthy from keeping up. After this it was decreed that only kings, caciques, and tax collectors could own them. And finally there were only nine horses in all the Western world and they were all in one royal keep.

It was then that Little Fish-Head—that is not his real name, that is only a stupid mistranslation of Professor Potter—that Little Fish-Head did some serious thinking.

“If I kill the eight and ride away on the ninth, then nobody in the world can catch me. I will be as fleet as the storm and will tower over all the footmen of the world.”

So he killed the eight horses and rode away on the ninth. There was a great outcry, but an outcry of footmen cannot bring a man down from his horse. He rode away on the last great stallion, and goaded it all day long, as he was in a state of exaltation.

At evening when it had run all day it fell dead at the foot of the cliff. This surprised Little Fish-Head, who knew very little about horses and thought they would run forever. It was then that he climbed the cliff to a dizzy height and scratched a dirge as tall as he could reach. This was the inscription that the professor in his pride had misread. It was not a stylized fish at all. It was a stylized horse without any legs, for it was lying down dead. And the little triangle was not the signature of Little Fish-Head, but the soul of the horse leaving the body, triangular rather than square or round to indicate the incompleteness of the soul of a noble but irrational animal.

What the inscription really said was this:

“Oh my horse,
All the swiftness is now gone out of the world.
No man again can go higher than his own height,
Nor more fleeting than he was born to go.
The last man has ridden on the last wind,
And only the dust can ride on the whirlwind now.
I have climbed to this height
To write that the high aspiration was only a dream.
And if even a horse dies
How can a man live forever?”

The next chalk-mark was made about nine thousand years later and was nearly a foot higher. There had been no improvement in the art of climbing meanwhile, but it had been scratched by a taller man.

It was a double wavy mark like a snake or a river, followed by an

abrupt despairing downstroke. Professor Potter had made nine tentative translations of this. The seventh of the nine has now been proved by a miracle of scholarship too intricate to explain to be the correct one. This is it:

"There is no water and I have traveled for days in agony. I have climbed this cliff to look for the river. I see it, but I will die before I can go that far; it would take me three days to reach it. I had thought I could climb as high as the cloud and wring it out, but the little cloud has passed and there is no other. The sun has become my friend now, but he is as much at a loss as I what to do. But at least I have seen the river before I die."

After that it was only nine hundred years before the next climber achieved. And he carved these letters:

"Pasó por aquí A-Dmo 1519 Mayo 19 José Ramírez Castillo y Sanches."

His message is too definite and leaves little to the imagination. He was not thirsty, for he did not carve like a thirsty man. He was not overly weary, so perhaps he had come on one of the new horses. Nor had he (the professor said) come alone. There were drill holes in the rock where rope hooks had been placed, and he must have had at least two assistants. But we cannot picture him more clearly than this.

And oddly the next chalk-mark was made exactly four hundred years later. And it read:

"Piñon Gap High School Seniors 1919 Clement Kincaid, Freddy Stockton, Manuel Cervantes We Are The Tops."

And in the high school annual of that year there were their three pictures on a page by themselves entitled "The Topper Club, The Most Exclusive in the World."

And to continue the spate of climbers in the very next decade was a higher entry:

"Bo McCoy. I am the Real. I am a Bo. 1925 June Tenth."

Quite a bit could be made from this. The railway was twenty miles away, and there was no stop. He had rolled off it and crossed the desert to make his mark. He might have been a lonesome hobo as colored men are likely to be on that run. And he had a long old walk to the next stop. And he made what was then the highest chalk-mark on the cliff. And he had climbed alone nine feet higher than it was possible to climb to make it.

That was all until the professor came. The professor was G.A.D. Potter, for his name was Gamiel Audlich Dagobert, all of which he

hated. But he liked to be called Gad.

"Gad, Gad," his associates would say, "you could rope down from the top or use a 'copter to read the scratches. There is no reason to waste a summer on the Tor. There are better things found digging in the ground than you ever will find on the side of a cliff."

But the professor was a cliff-climber and a chalk-marker, and he had an exaltation to go the highest.

We will not tell you what he carved on the cliff, for it was pedantic and stilted, and he had prepared many drafts of it before he went up the cliff the last time.

He spent six weeks in his tent at the foot of the cliff with his wife, Aurora, and they prepared as though it were Everest. They drilled holes and set lead shields in the rock with eyelets for the ropes. They spun webs of lines and hauled and pulled and rappelled, and did all the things that cliff-climbers do. They cut hand holes and foot holes, and even established a camp "A" two thirds of the way up. And to it they went up and down on a rope ladder where Little Fish-Head and Bo McCoy had climbed like monkeys.

But maximum effort is required for maximum achievement, and the professor was remarkably persevering, as all professors are, and Aurora was remarkably good natured, as all professors' wives must be.

Early in the morning of the last day of spring they went up their ropes and scoop holes till Aurora stood firmly on a newly hewn ledge where Bo McCoy had hung on air. Then the professor climbed onto her shoulders and made the highest chalk-mark.

We will not record what he carved, as he has already done so, and besides, as we said, it was too stilted and stylish. But yet like all the other marks it was capable of variant and fuller translation. In a later time by another professor who might not have the key to the precise letters themselves, it would be more correctly translated as follows:

"I have slain the nightmare and set down the terror. I have climbed beyond dizziness on a cliff that once hung down from the sky before there was a world below it. Even the eagles when they were new would not fly this high. And this above all, while others have ridden on the wind, I only have ridden on the daughter of the wind. This is a red-haired goddess, a strong slight amazon, a magic anemonead with hair like a red sea and shoulders soft and sweet as the night itself. She sways beneath me but will not break, and the early sun is on her and she is silver and flame. Her neck is of living ivory."

And the rest of it would be very hard to translate even by the best paleocalligraphist. But he would know that this was the hand of an

ancient poet who had climbed a dizzy cliff to write a hymn to the dawn.

McGRUDER'S MARVELS

There were four bids, and there should have been only three. Only three firms in the country were capable of making so miniaturized a control station.

Three bids were in quite heavy packets. The fourth was in a slim envelope. This was Opening INV-3MINCON3999.

"Ah, here are the bids from Micro Machinists Amalgamated, from Intensive Instrumentation, and from DOW-MEC-TEC," said Colonel Ludenschlager. "It isn't likely that any of them will be less than two years, and we need it within two weeks. We are whipped before we start!" He struck the table with a ringing thud. "But what is the anomalous intrusion, the small envelope bid, Dinneen?"

"It's from an M. M. McGruder," said Colonel Dinneen. "The second M is in quotation marks. We may have a case for the prosecution here. The Joker Act was set up for just such stuff as this. There has to be a ceiling put on cranks."

"There was a certain McGruder in Manhattan when I was a boy," Colonel Schachmeister smiled. "I spent many pleasant moments in his, ah, Hippodrome, I believe he called it. It was a narrow place off a narrow cigar store, and only about three could get in at one time, if they were small, and we were. Best show I ever saw for a dime, though. What is the address of this one?"

"Here in D. C.," said Dinneen. "It would be a rundown address even without the ending 'Apt. 3, room 4-E, use cellar steps off small

alley.' Some address! And the phone number of the Rowdy-Dow Bar and Grill is given. It's written in an old and probably insane hand. We will prosecute with compassion, possibly."

The chime chimed for 9:30. It was opening time. And they opened the bids.

They quickly made the basic resume:

1. Micro Machinists Amalgamated. Basic Module: \$2,106,740.00. Estimated Time: 25 months. Exceptions and Alternatives: 256 (detailed). Follow-Up Units: \$260,000.00 ea. Estimated Time: 30 days each for first 6, grading down to 21 days each for additional.

2. Intensive Instrumentation. Basic Module: \$2,004,000.00. Estimated Time: 721 days. Exceptions and Alternatives: 228 (detailed). Follow-Up Units: \$248,000.00 ea. Estimated Time: 28 days each for first 4, 19 days each for additional.

3. Dow-Mec-Tec. Basic Module: \$1,999,999.98. Estimated Time: 23 months. Exceptions and Alternatives: 204 (detailed). Follow-Up Units: \$235,000.00 ea. Estimated Time: 21 days each for first 9, 16 days each for additional.

4. M. 'M.' McGruder. Basic Module: \$24.00. Estimated Time: 24 hours. Exceptions and Alternatives: none (undetailed). Follow-Up Units: \$24 ea. Estimated Time: 24 hours each—"this keeps going on as long as I live or as long as you buy them, whichever is first. Note: Got one made already. Come try it. I need the \$24.00. I don't see how anybody can make them cheaper than this."

"We run into the impossible," said Ludenschlager sadly. "We need one within two weeks or we may as well forget the program. And if we forget the program, we may as well forget everything. It is not for personal aggrandizement that we seek this (except for Dinneen a little), but for the good of our country and the world. There has to be a way out of this delay."

"How about McGruder?" Schachmeister laughed sourly.

"Oh, we'll prosecute him under the Joker Act, of course," Ludenschlager growled, "but now we have the taller thing to tackle. We have to find the way. Two years will be too late; we'll be done for by then. Two weeks will almost be too late. We must somehow break the time barrier in this."

"We're whipped, we're whipped!" Dinneen wailed, "and our enemies will rejoice over us." He turned on three toes and strode gloomily out of the room.

"The Covenant," it said. "Large, hard-roasted, de-oiled, white peanuts under the Goober John trade name. Three a day, and they must be Goober John Number Ones. Failure to provide them will void the Covenant."

"There will be no failure," said Malcomb 'the Marvelous' McGruder. "It shall be done."

"We like-stuff pledge fulfill the Covenant," it said.

The micro-miniaturized control station, the "bullet brain," had to handle thirteen data flows at once. It had to do other things, including the monitoring and inhibiting of the world. It must be practically indestructible. And it had to be about the size of an eraser on a pencil. This small size was of the greatest importance.

The smallest model of this which would handle such data properly was about a cubic meter, and it weighed a thousand kilograms. And it was itself a miniaturization.

The project is still classified, so we cannot in conscience give deep details of it. The project is still active, and perhaps an answer can be found for it this second time. Ah well, we lost the first race, and the most populous one-third of our nation; but we lost it hard. We had them near beaten for a little while there. Another year, and DOW-MEC-TEC will have their first module ready. It will probably be far too late, it will likely do no good at all, but you never know. The slimmest hope remains . . .

But now they were looking very hard for that answer the first time: the three colonels, the High Commission of the colonels, the potential saviors of their country and the world. It was not for personal glory they sought this (except Dinneen a little) but for the ultimate good of the ultimate number.

Colonel Dinneen strode up and down endless corridors, booming like a canary in his odd voice. He didn't want the thing in two years, he wanted it in two minutes, right now.

Colonel Ludenschlager shuffled old brain-buster notes looking for a miracle. He had an impediment there; he didn't believe in miracles.

Colonel Schachmeister walked desolately through the city, praying for the instant miniaturized control station. He walked and walked; but where did he walk?

"It is my unconscious leading me somewhere," he mumbled. "And I will follow my unconscious wherever it leads, like a man in a dream."

That Schachmeister was an unconscious phony. It wasn't his unconscious leading him anywhere! It was his conniving own self walking furtively where his own dishonesty would not allow him to walk openly. And he had that address graven on his brain by a micro-stylus.

There was something about a three-foot-wide Hippodrome from his boyhood; there was something of the credence in the incredible:

and both these things were shameful to him as a man of science, and a colonel moreover.

Well, it was a shabby enough neighborhood. The alley was worse, and yet even this was not the final alley. He found it then, the "small alley," hardly a skunk track. He followed it. He knocked crunchingly on a door and near lost his hand in the termite-eaten wood.

"Be careful there!" an ancient voice blatted out like slats falling down in an old bed. "Those are friends of my own people, and my people will not have them discommoded. After all, they are quiet, they do no harm, and they eat only wood."

"It—it's the same McGruder! It is Malcomb 'the Marvelous' McGruder himself, the Grand Master of McGruder's Marvels!" Colonel Schachmeister detonated in wonder.

"Oh sure, little boy," came the wonderful voice like an old organ filling with noise again and blowing the dust off itself in doing so. "And it's the same little Heinie Schachmeister! Why aren't you in school today, Heinie? Oh, I notice that you have grown, and perhaps you are too old for school now."

"It's marvelous to see you again, Marvelous!" Schachmeister breathed in awe. "I had no idea that you were the same one, or that you were still alive."

"Come in, little Heinie. And what are you doing? I have never seen your name in the Flea-Bag, so I suppose you have failed in your early ambition."

"Ah, McGruder, I don't know what the Flea-Bag is, and I forget what early ambition of mine you refer to."

"The Flea-Bag, Heinie, is a mimeographed sheet that still circulates among the members of our dwindling profession. And your early ambition was to grow up and have fleas of your own."

"Wish I had done it, McGruder, wish I had done it, especially on days like this. Some of my happiest hours were spent watching McGruder's Marvels, that greatest of all Flea Circuses, in that little hole in the wall."

"In the Hippodrome, you mean, Heinie? Do you remember the Coachman Set?"

"Yes, yes, and the flea up on the coachman's seat, in livery, and with the whip! McGruder, when you screwed the three sections of the microscope together, you could see the very braiding of that coachman's whip. And the flea in harness! The harness was perfect, and had little bells on it. The bells had clappers, and you could hear them jingle when you screwed that little thing into your ear. And the flea in harness was shod, with real horse-shoes, or flea-shoes."

"More, Heinie, more! The shoes had authentic calks on them, and nails! And the nails were of no ordinary sort, but were ancient horseshoe nails with the oblong wedge-shaped heads. You could see that when you screwed the fourth section into the microscope. And you remember the lady fleas inside the coach, Heinie?"

"Yes, yes, dressed in old Empire style with the high hair on them, and the flounce stuff. And when you screwed the little thing into your nose you could smell their perfume. What was it, McGruder?"

"*Printemps*. And you may not know it, but there were eight petticoats on each of those lady fleas, and the microscopic lace on even the inmost of them was done with loving care and surpassing detail, more than nine hundred loops on the bottom round in the style that is called *punto a groppo*. Your eyes used to boggle at my things, little Heinie."

"My mind boggles at something now. That was forty years ago. McGruder, I know you were good, but this passes reason! You still have your little lathes and turners and instruments here, but you did not make a miniaturized control station with such!"

"Of course not, Heinie. The detailing for the little control station had to be a thousand times finer, actually eight thousand times finer, than anything I could do on my own little lathes. I'm surprised you should ask such a silly question, Heinie."

"Is that the control station there, Marvelous?"

"That's it, Heinie. Take it along and try it and send me the twenty-four dollars if it works. I'll have another one this time tomorrow if you wish. It's nice to have seen you. I'm always happy when the little boys come back to see me again."

The Marvelous McGruder still had a certain threadbare elegance about him.

"McGruder, how did you make the control station?"

"Trade secret, Heinie. You remember my patter. Everything was always a trade secret."

"McGruder, I'm going to ask you the silliest question I've ever asked anyone in my life. Did your fleas, somehow, manufacture that thing?"

"Certainly not, Heinie! What's the matter with you anyhow? What do they make the colonels out of nowadays? No wonder we're in trouble! You know how hard it is to get fleas to wear clothes for even a few seconds? You know how hard it is to teach them even the most simple trick? Heinie, fleas are stupid, and so are you! No, I will settle that. Fleas did not, in any way at all, have anything to do with making that miniature control station. I didn't have much to do with it myself. Subcontracted it, really. No, I will not give you any more information about it. Take it and try it. Bring

me the twenty-four dollars if you are satisfied. And now you had better get along or your keiferin of a mother will be after me for letting you loiter so long in my place. Oh, I forgot! You're a big boy now."

Colonel Schachmeister left the shabby elegant old man, Malcomb 'the Marvelous' McGruder; and he took the miniaturized control station along with him.

He took it to a most secret laboratory to try it with his peers. It worked.

"The Covenant," it said. "There are only twenty-seven Goober John Number One peanuts left here. These will last only nine days. Replenish the stock, McGruder, or the Covenant is in danger."

"I'll remember to get a package of them at the Rowdy-Dow today," McGruder promised.

Well, there were thirty of the "bullet brains" in operation now, and our enemies could no longer rejoice over us. Their own spectacular stunt had been inhibited; their own dastardly program had been paralyzed. With another thirty of the "bullet brains" in operation, the High Commission of the colonels, the Secret Saviors of the World, would be able to inhibit anything anywhere in the world.

It was of most amazing and curious effect that such small things could do such; and the secret of it was in their very smallness. Now, the manner by which they did this—No! No! No! We may not tell it! It is more than classified; it is totally under the ban. It is still possible that it may yet save what is left of us.

But it was going well for the colonels in that time. And yet they wanted them faster than one a day.

"We have no desire for personal gain or glory," said Dinneen, "except myself a little. But if that crazy old man can make one a day, it should be possible for us to make a thousand. Go back to him, Schachmeister. Find out how he does it. We have spied on him, of course, but we can't understand it at all. The control stations seem to form themselves on his table there. They continue to take form even while he is asleep. And there's a further mystery. He never checked out prints of the larger model that was to be miniaturized. What does he work from?"

"Is it true, Schachmeister, that he once operated a flea circus in New York?" Ludenschlager asked.

"Yes, it's true enough. He's the same man."

"Can there be some possible connection? No, no don't laugh! It cannot be any sillier than what is already happening."

"No, men, there isn't a connection. He said to me, and he was

speaking the truth, that fleas did not, in any way, have anything to do with the control stations. And, yet, I remember an ugly smear against McGruder from the early years—”

“What is that, Schachmeister?” Dinneen demanded avidly.

“That he sometimes used mechanical fleas. I did not believe it.”

“Go to him, Schachmeister,” Dinneen and Ludenschlager both begged. “If you cannot find out how he makes them, at least ask if he cannot make them faster.”

“The Covenant,” it said. “There are only three Goober Number One peanuts left here. Replenish the stock, McGruder, or the Covenant will come to an end this very day. I’d get you an extension for the affection I have for you, but the numerous members of the smaller orders will not hear of it. There are seven orders, as you know, each smaller than the other. Sometimes they are hard to deal with, particularly the four smaller orders which I cannot see myself. Today, McGruder, Goober Johns!”

“I swear I will remember it,” McGruder swore. “I’ll get a package at the Rowdy-Dow this very afternoon.”

Colonel Schachmeister went back to see Malcomb ‘the Marvelous’ McGruder. McGruder was no longer shabby. He was the cream of old con men with an ivory-colored topper and canary-colored vest and gloves. He gestured with a silver-headed cane. He welcomed Heinie Schachmeister with incredible flourish, and Schachmeister came right to the point.

“Will you not tell me how you make the stations, Marvelous? It is important.”

“No. I will not tell you. It is important, to me, that I slice up this fat hog for myself, and twenty-four dollar slices please me mightily.”

“Marvelous, you did not check out a set of plans for this thing. From what do you miniaturize?”

“Well, I was going to, Heinie. I went by the place where the plans were to be had. But I found that the prints for that gadget weighed four hundred pounds, and also that I would have to put down a token deposit of \$50,000.00 to check out a set of them. Both these things were too heavy for me. So I slipped a few of my small associates into a packet of plans (I always was a tricky man with my hands, you know), and they recorded the information in their own way.”

“Your small associates—ah—how long did it take them to record the plans?”

“About as long as it took me to light a cigar.”

“And how many of these associates were there?”



"Don't know, Heinie. They were sixth and seventh order associates, so there must have been quite a few of them."

"What do they look like, McGruder?"

"Don't know. I've never seen them. I can see only the first order ones, and the second order ones through a strong microscope. And each order can see only two orders smaller than itself, by using extreme magnification."

"They are not fleas?"

"Of course not, Heinie! What's the matter with you?"

"Are they mechanical?"

"No, not mechanical. But they are mechanically inclined, in the smaller orders of them."

"How did you become associated with them, Marvelous?"

"One of the first order ones was a friend of a flea who once worked with me. The flea introduced us, and we rather took to each other. We both know how to latch onto a good thing when we see it."

"Marvelous, would it be possible to make more than one control station a day?"

"Sure. I just didn't want to milk it dry too soon. Get you a dozen a day, if you want them. All it'll take is a bigger sack of peanuts."

"McGruder! Did I hear you right?"

"I don't know what you heard, Heinie. I said that all it would take would be a bigger sack of peanuts. I'll have twelve of the controls for you tomorrow, but there's no discount for quantity. I stick by my bid. Twenty-four dollars each."

"Marvelous, Marvelous, this is marvelous!" Colonel Schachmeister gibbered, and he rattled away from there to bring the glad news to his associates.

"This puts us over the hump! Two days and we will have the world by its woolly tail!" Colonel Dinneen clattered. "We will have sufficient coverage now to impose our will on all nations. For their own good, we will compel them away from their errors."

"We have no thought of personal benefit," Colonel Ludenschlager exploded with a jingling hiss, "except Colonel Dinneen a little. We will force-feed the world on all benignity and kindness and understanding and good will. We will teach the world true happiness and order, now that we will have the power to do so."

"We be the lords of the world now," cried Colonel Schachmeister, "the High Commission of Colonels, saviors of the country and the world. The President will be glad to shine our very shoes; it will teach him blessed humility. We will shape the whole world like clay in our hands. We will run the world now, and all must come down to our spring to drink. Ah, but the water is sweet, and the people will come to love it!"

The Greeks named it *hybris*. And in the Ozarks they call it Peacock Fever. It was Pride. It was the Grand Arrogance, the Warrantless Assumption, the bursting summertime of Giant Pride. And it would have its fall.

"The Covenant!" it thundered like acorns rattling on the roof, and McGruder almost didn't need the piece screwed into his ear to hear it. "These aren't Goober John Number Ones!"

"Ah, they were out of Goober Johns at the Rowdy-Dow," the Marvelous McGruder soothed. "These are Arizona Spanish Peanuts packaged by the Snack-Sack people. Try them. They're even better than Goober Johns."

"The Covenant is voided!" it said sadly. "The involvement with humanity is ended."

And Malcomb 'the Marvelous' McGruder was never able to establish contact with any of them again; so that, instead of twelve of them that day, there were no control stations at all for evermore. And those already in use blinked out.

"McGruder, hey McGruder!" Colonel Schachmeister came to him.

"Ah, little Heinie, why are you not in school this day? Oh, I forget always, you are a big boy now. It is all ended, Heinie, all ended. The twenty-four dollars a day and everything is gone. I will have to live by my wits again, and I always hate to get off a comfortable con that has kept me."

"McGruder," the frantic Colonel Schachmeister moaned, "it isn't merely that there will be no more of the stations, it is that those already in service have gone dead or disappeared also. This is not possible. They were made to operate forever."

"Don't think so, Heinie, not after the Covenant was broken. I think that the guys in them quit when they heard about the wrong peanuts."

"What guys? What peanuts? We've lost the jump on them, McGruder. A third of our country will be gone before we can institute a holding action, without the miniature stations. What made them go dead, McGruder?"

"I figure it all out now, Heinie. They didn't make any little control stations at all. They took all of us in. They didn't any more know how to make little control stations than I did, but they were smart enough to fake it and make them work. I tell you a thing, Heinie, and you write it down so you remember it when you get big: never trust a bug you can't see."

"But they worked, Marvelous! They worked perfectly till they

went dead or disappeared. They handled all the data flows perfectly. They responded, they monitored, they inhibited. Certainly they were control stations."

"Not really, Heinie. Hey, this old town will be gone in another five minutes, won't it! I bet that one took out thirty square blocks. Man, feel the hot blast from it even here. Your sleeve's on fire, Heinie. Your mother will scold and moan when she sees how it's burned. See, this is the way it was—You know the man who made all the fancy little cars so cheap, and nobody knew how he did it?"

"No, no, McGruder, what is it? Oh, the asphalt is flowing like water in the streets! What do you mean?"

"A guy that bought one of those little cars lifted up the hood one day. It didn't have a motor in it. It didn't have any works at all in it. It's the same as these little control stations were. It just had a little guy in there pedaling the pedals to make it go. Now they quit pedaling, Heinie."

TONGUES OF THE MATAGORDA

"I will tell you one of my early adventures," said Esteban of Azamor, "the adventure that, more than any other, made me what I am today. It is an account that should be cut in crystal for the magnificence of it, but I can do no more than tell it in crystalline words."

"Make it that they are Quevenes words then," said a surly Quevenes Indian called Glaukos. "You know what will happen if you continue to use Spanish words."

"Oh certainly, you will cut another piece out of my tongue. But I've saved you the trouble. Here is a piece of my tongue that I cut off already. So if in my account I do use a Spanish word now and then, it is already paid for."

"This is no piece of your tongue," Glaukos said. "It is a piece of moon-crab meat. But I am starving so I will eat it." The Quevenes did not like their slaves to talk in words they did not understand; and to compel them to speak Quevenes they had indeed cut notches and slivers from the tongues of Esteban and also his companions in slavery, Captain Dorantes and Captain Castillo.

"It was in the year of Restored Salvation 1481 and I was the son of the Emperor Maximilian of the Holy Roman Empire when I decided that I would reach out my hand and obtain as big a share of the world and its glory as I was able to do," Esteban began his tale. "Oh, even more than I was able to do, for I intended to go into the area of

the impossible. My father the Emperor had given me five realms in Europe and two in Asia, but that was hardly enough to satisfy a shining young man like myself."

"I had never heard of the Emperor Maximilian having a black son," Captain Castillo objected in that sunny voice of his.

"Did I say that I was a black person then?" Esteban asked. "No. I was fair of hair and skin. I was tawny as a lion, and as fierce. It was in the course of this heroic adventure that I became a black person. Pay attention and do not interrupt. There is a rite and ceremony that is enacted on the day when the son of an Emperor decides to reach out his hand. Certain Jinns (Christians pretend not to know about the Jinns, but the Moslems understand that God created three intelligent species, Angels, Jinns, and Humans) come to the son of even a Christian Emperor and pledge themselves to do favors for him and to stand by him in both success and adversary. They do this because every Jinn is himself the son of an Emperor somewhere. One of them promised me money unfailing; one of them promised me love unfailing; one of them promised me adequate might at arms against opponents of ordinary flesh. And so the promises were made by seven of them. But the eighth of them made me an odd and crabbed promise. 'If you are ever in an encounter where you are overmatched,' he said, 'you will have the choice of changing places with your opponent in all ways.' 'It's a favor of which I will have no use,' I said. 'By whom would I be overmatched?'

"With nine hundred and ninety-nine followers, all of them like young lions in their hearts, I conquered three more realms in Europe, three more in Asia, and three in Africa where I had been unrealm'd before. Then I came to the central realm of Africa, the Kingdom of Sonrai. We had come over five hundred land leagues of desert to the wonderful City of Timbucktoo the capital of Sonrai which is like a paradise in the middle of the desert. There we met a force ten times our numbers that was captained by the tall and muscular son of King Askia of Sonrai. This son, who was named Esteban, was a great captain of combat. To each of my lion-spirited men he assigned ten of his strong and swift warriors. Each of my men killed the ten men sent against him, but each of my men lost his own life in slaying them. And finally there was nobody left except myself and Esteban the son of King Askia. 'Well, find nine more men somewhere and I will battle you,' I said. 'It is time that I put a finish to this.' 'It is myself and thyself,' the big Esteban told me. 'I do not need nine other men. Perhaps you need them, but they will not be provided to you.' We began to fight with swords, and suddenly I was afraid. This Esteban was stronger and quicker than

myself.

"His sword was longer and heavier and his shield was taller and more massive. He began to kill me with sure and careful blows, and I caught the frightening scent of my own dead body as it would be by sundown of that day. So, in my mind, I called on the Jinns for help. The first seven of them said 'We have already given you all that we promised to you, money and love and adequate might at arms against opponents of ordinary flesh. It is no fault of ours that this Esteban is of extraordinary and spectacular flesh.'

"'Oh, eighth Jinn, I am overmatched,' I cried then. 'For what it's worth, let me change places with this strong opponent in all ways.' At once I felt myself to be taller and stronger and faster of hand and arm and body. At once I was handling more easily a longer and heavier sword and a taller and more massive shield. And my opponent was no longer a black African man, but a tawny lion man the color of desert sand, and his face was the face that had always been mine. And I saw that I myself now had black hands and arms and legs. So I killed the sand-colored man who had been myself, and cut off his head, and cut his body into four quarters. And by this I myself became Esteban of the spectacular flesh. 'Oh my son!' King Askia of Sonrai cried, and he came and put his arms around me. 'There has never been such a warrior as you since myself in my youth.' So I became Esteban the son of King Askia of Sonrai, and I have been that person ever since. I still have memories of the years when I was the son of Maximilian of the Holy Roman Empire, but that old body of mine has long since turned to dust. I don't know what the original Esteban has memories of or where his essence is now. I guess I am living in that essence. That is my heroic adventure."

"It is a good enough tongue," a Quevenes Indian called Melas said, "but it would be better if we had drummers to drum it and fluters to flute it. It lacks a little without them."

"But when I came upon you, Esteban, you were a boy of no more than thirteen years old," Captain Dorantes said, "and that was thirty-two years after the year 1481 of Restored Salvation."

"Oh, that is a part of a different story," Esteban said, "in which I had found and drunk of the fountain of youth and had become a young boy from it. And in my boyish guise I had wandered away from the Kingdom of Sonrai, and I have lost it this while."

"I'll tell you a tongue of an adventure that I had," said the Quevenes Indian called Glaukos, "which concerned the devil and his ugly sister. This was the devil named Jube, not your own devil named Diablo, who is not a real person."

There were five of them sitting on the mud-sand of Matagorda

Bay of the Gulf of Mexico, and the year was probably 1530 or 1531. They were the big black man Esteban of Azamor, and the two Spanish men Captain Dorantes and Captain Castillo. These three were the first great explorers to cross the North American Continent, but there was no one to call them great here. They were temporarily (for more than a year now) slaves of the Quevenes Indian people. And there were two Quevenes Indian men, Glaukos and Melas. All five of these were 'head-taller men', men who stood a head taller than ordinary humans. All five of them, as it happened, were starving to death. In all other things they were distinctive and did not resemble each other very much.

This area was parched and its grass turned brown and black from lack of rain. Salt water had risen in all their water holes. Black buzzards were hanging in the hot air discussing whether this would be 'carrion evening' or not. They were weighing the five tall men with their hard eyes.

"I was rolling stones with the devil," Glaukos the Quevenes said. "I had a fine stone with six sides, all of them square, and the numbers on it were from one to six. But the devil (you can believe this or not, as you wish) had a stone with one-more-than-six sides to it, and on the extra side was the one-more-than-six number. As you know, we Quevenes have only the six regular numbers, and we have the saying that anything that cannot be counted with six numbers belongs to the devil. Well, that was all right for a saying, but now the devil was claiming that he had beat me at the stone rolling by rolling a number that I could not match, and that I owed him everything I owned, my fish-trap, my bow, my club, my shells and my colored stones, my life, and my death. 'If I owe them then I will pay them,' I said, 'except the last two. I want to keep my life and my death away from you.' We have more communication with Jube the devil than other tribes of people have because we are more evil than other people, more Jube's kind of people. 'I will offer you a barter,' the devil said. 'Marry my sister who is the ugliest woman in the world, and I have not been able to find a husband for her anywhere. In barter for your marrying my sister I will wipe out all the debts you owe me and I will also give to you and your group the most favored land in the world to live in.' 'I accept that barter,' I said. So I married the sister of Jube the devil, and I and my group received this wonderful land, this bay, these islands, these long necks of land, the smaller bays and smaller islands. It's true that this is the most favored land in the world. We have it good here, and we starve only five moons of the year. What other tribe of people in the world does not starve at least six or seven moons of the year? And for two moons every year, when the stinker fish are

swarming, we become the fattest people in the world. And my wife being the ugliest woman anywhere doesn't bother me at all, since I am the ugliest man. I tell you that there is nobody who can get ahead of me on a barter, not even Jube the devil. This is my own tall tongue. It is the life of myself and of all my group."

"It is a good tall adventure," Captain Castillo acknowledged. This, as it happened, was in the middle of the five-moon period in which the Quevenes people always starved, and their one black and two white slaves would starve with them. Besides it being the regular starvation season, there was a terrible drought in the area this year. The Matagorda Bay (the name meant 'Fat Bush Bay' or 'Fat Thicket Bay') was 'Skinny Bush Bay' this season.

Oh, there were sand fleas to catch and eat, but it takes 20,000 of them to make a good meal, and it takes five days to catch that many of them. The sand-mud shore of the Matagorda was very low, and it seemed as if they looked up at the lazy green water and its puny waves as they swished over the mud-sand. It was dry in that land and all of their sweet water holes had gone salt.

"I will tell you all an heroic adventure of my own," Captain Dorantes said. "It happened in the year 1520. Esteban will tell you that it could not have happened, that he was with me every moment of that year. But Esteban is mistaken. He has a forgetfulness of ninety-nine days during which I left him with a pawn broker in the town of Florence in Italy. 'Let us step into this pawn shop and see if we can buy a good used falcon cheap,' I said to Esteban on that day. I am sorry that I just used a Spanish word, but I don't believe that the Quevenes have such a word or thing as pawn broker."

"We know what he is," said the Quevenes called Melas. "He is one who barterers in used property and used persons."

"Yes," Captain Dorantes said. "I came to the pawn shop in Florence because, whatever people say, one thing is not always as good as another. What I wanted must be of the City-of-Florence sort, and no other variety of it would serve. When I walked into the Florentine pawn shop with Esteban, I gave a secret sign to the pawn broker. He nodded to me. Then he took a needle with a leather bulb attached to it and jabbed it into the arm of Esteban. Esteban immediately became glazed-eyed and out of his wits. The pawn broker took the lid off a clay jar that was taller than a tall man. Then he jabbed Esteban in the buttock with a different sort of needle; and Esteban, still out of his wits, jumped three varas up in the air and came down inside the clay jar. 'One hundred ducats for him for a hundred days,' the pawn broker said as he put the lid back on the big jar with Esteban inside it. 'I agree,' I told him, and the pawn

broker counted out one hundred gold ducats to me. One of the hundred, however, was a Spanish gold ducat, and I had him replace it to me so all of them would be Florentine ducats.

"'I'll work him at night, of course,' the pawn broker said. 'I have a fulling mill for fulling cloth. It consists of a strong man with a hammer. He will be the strong man. I have a treadmill that squeezes honey out of the reed-canes from overseas that we begin to grow here. I have another treadmill that drives the grinders to mill wheat and barley and rye and millet. These slaves work very hard for me when they are in this mind-captured state, and they do not really suffer. They believe they are only *dreaming* that they are trudging on worse treadmills than those in hell and are suffering more hellishly.'

"'That is all right,' I said. 'He is very strong.' I took my hundred gold Florentine ducats then and I went to Spain. There was a civil war going on in Spain at that time and certain cities had risen against the realm. I served as captain for our brave Emperor Charles of Spain to put down this rebellion. But I also intended to locate and possess the greatest treasure in the world which was buried somewhere under the Alcazar Fortress.

"As a captain of infantry forces, I broke the back of the rebellion of the cities against Spain. 'Brave Captain Dorantes,' the Emperor Charles told me, 'for your services I will pay you almost any sum as reward. I'll give you twenty gold ducats for having saved Spain.' 'One hundred and twenty,' I countered him. 'Twenty-five,' he came back at me. 'One hundred and eighteen,' I lowered my figure a little. But we finally fastened onto one hundred gold ducats of Spain as the reward for saving the country. I put them in my pocket along with the hundred gold ducats of Florence, and I went to the Alcazar Fortress and down into the cellar of it. Then I went down into the cellar under the first one, and then to a still lower cellar. I knew that the greatest treasure in the world was in the lowest cellar of the Alcazar. I also knew that the monster who guarded it could be bribed, though this was against the common belief that the monster was incorruptible. But he could only be bribed with the gold ducats of Florence. The father of the monster, a Florentine dragon who had been in the service of the Great Lorenzo, had taught that the only trusted specie in the world was the Florentine. So the monster would have nothing to do with the gold ducats of Spain or Naples or Venice or Constantinople.

"I gave the monster (he was of the genus *Draco*) the one hundred gold ducats of Florence that I had received from renting out Esteban, and the monster declared me to be the new owner and master of the fortune. I looked at it through the little peep hole into

the iron room which contained it. As I had no other place to put it, and no way to carry it away with me, we decided to leave it where it was. The monster transferred the key to the treasure room from one to another of his pockets in token of the changed ownership. So now I am the richest man in the world and the owner of the world's greatest treasure."

"What are 'pockets'?" Glaukos asked. "How many of them did the monster have? Maybe that monster had a good thing going."

"I went back to Florence," Captain Dorantes said. "And I paid the pawn broker back with the one hundred Spanish ducats. He grumbled that he would rather have Florentine ducats, but he accepted the Spanish. The pawn broker wakened Esteban by jabbing him again with a needle in his buttock, and Esteban leaped three varas up in the air and came down outside the clay jar in which he had been living. I set the good used falcon into Esteban's hands as he woke up. 'It is a perfect hunting bird, just what I wanted,' he said. He did not know that ninety-nine days had passed since we had first entered the pawn shop. He thought it had only been an instant."

"The pawn broker gave me one of the motivating sort of needles just to show what a pleasure it was to do business with me. I have it yet. I can, but I will not, jab Esteban in the buttock with it and he will leap three varas into the air and land in a clay jar, though I don't know where the jar will have come from. This is the heroic account of how I became the owner of the greatest treasure in the world."

"If you make me leap three varas into the air, you will be the clay jar that I will come down in the middle of," Esteban told Captain Dorantes, "and I will come down hard."

Matagorda Bay is not the hottest place in the world. It is no more than the third or fourth hottest ordinarily, though now it was a little bit hotter than that because of the long dry weather. It is not the most stinking place in the world. It is about the fifth most stinking. The mosquitos there are not the largest in the world. They are only the eighth largest. But if the Matagorda was not the worst place in the world, neither was it the best. The official name of the place was Holy Ghost Bay, but the Holy Ghost had traded it off to Jube the devil.

"I'll tell you the tongue how I became the greatest hunter in the world," the Quevenes Indian named Melas said. "I had always been a great runner. I could run so far and so fast because I imitated the running animals: the wolf for the long hard run, and the mountain lion for the shorter bursts of steep speed. A man can sometimes run down a deer by himself, but he does it by running like the running

animals. I ran so much like them that I became them. I ran down on four legs. I leaped. I pounced. I was the tireless wolf for most of the chase, and then I was the leaping mountain lion for the catch and the kill. Persons who saw me running in those ways thought that I was a wolf and a mountain lion. I felt myself to be them too. And so I was them. I would rise in front of a deer in my wolf form and send the deer running wildly across the prairie. And then I would circle around it and get ahead of it again. I was able to do this because when I tired myself out running as a wolf I would change, and then I would have the rested strength of the mountain lion still waiting for me to use. And then, when the myself-as-lion ran, the myself-as-wolf rested; but the itself-as-deer never got to rest. So I am able to drive most of the deer where I want them, and I kill most of them in my own area here. When I kill one, I bury it in the sand-mud for three days to rot a little and to become loose in the joints and easy to devour. And I did that with a deer just three days ago. I had forgotten about it, but now the smell of that deer comes to my nostrils. So we will dig it up and eat it when the sun has dropped one bow-length lower.

"But first I must tell you that all deer are not as they seem. Some of them are human people. Young women and girls like to run in the form of doe deers, and they cannot change back into their human form while they are being hunted and kept on the move. It is a sort of summer moon-madness that compels them, some of them quite young girls, to run across the grassy plains and on the edges of the salt marshes as doe deers. And some of the young men like to run in the form of buck deers. I believe it is persons blowing on little cottonwood flutes who set them onto this notion of turning into deers and running. Seven years ago, a young woman of this region gave birth to a little fawn deer. And I think it must have been that both herself and her young man were running and playing in the deer form when they mated.

"When you kill a human in the deer form, then it dies as a deer and you bury it as a deer. But when you dig it up to eat it three days later, you may find that it is the dead body of a human person. I myself have got several bleak surprises this way, once digging up the body of one of my daughters that I had buried as a killed deer, once digging up the body of one of my sons in the same kind of event. I have digged up five different human persons that I have buried as deers. They all have a whiff on them a little bit different from that of those who are both buried and dug up as deer. I think I catch that little-bit-different whiff now, from a mud mound only six paces from here. When the sun has dropped another half bow-length, we will dig it up and see which it is; but I will put another

log on the fire now to be ready. And when we have dug it up and roasted it a little bit, we will eat it with either a sad or a happy stomach, whatever the case may be."

Well, they were hungry. They needed big meat of some kind.

"I also have an heroic story-adventure to tell," Captain Castillo said. "It is not that I myself am a hero either inside or outside of the story. It is that I have been in places that were themselves heroic, that I have washed in heroic sunshine and heroic water, and I have walked on heroic hills, aye, and in heroic skies. But what I am going to do now is live out a small heroic adventure rather than tell it.

"John writes in his Apocalypse 'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no sea.' I believe that this passage as we have it is somehow incomplete. A seaman once spoke to me of this very passage 'If there is no sea there, then I won't go.' But I believe that there will be a new ocean, one of sheer crystal, and that John somehow forgot to mention it. I am a man who is in love with water, even such rotten water as surrounds us here.

"I have been called a dreamy man; and all my life I have dreamed (both sleeping and waking) of blessed and crystalline water of every form. When I became a doctor of medicine, this dream of sweet waters went through my healing. When I became a captain of soldiers, the oceanness of writhing waters ran through all my authority. I have walked on arching bridges of water; not of ice, but of water. I have climbed cliffs of water and lived in water castles. And I've gone down into watery caverns deeper than the dolphins can go.

"I believe that water is the same as grace when it falls as rain on the earth. I believe that an insufficiency of sweet water is meant to be a pang and a punishment, and that the present salt swamps of the Matagorda are the salt swamps of Purgatory itself. But I also maintain that every person and group can say when his sentence and punishment has gone on long enough. I am about to say it now.

"I myself have been given powers. I am able to lock up a sky so that neither rain nor grace may fall upon a region, though I have never done that. Now I believe that I have the power to open a clogged sky so that rain and grace may fall again."

"Not quite yet," said the Quevenes man named Glaukos. "Let us set the rocks above the fire first to make a roof over it." They had two very large flat rocks, and it took all five of the powerful men to work together to lift each of them. They lifted them and set them on a frame of sticks and stones about the height of a man above the

hearth stone. It would shed rain pretty well. It would protect the fire.

By the time the hearth was roofed, the armadillos had arrived. They stood and rattled their armor, and whimpered. There were five of these armadillos in a small tribe that had come for the last four days and rattled insistently. The men always knew what the little armored beasts wanted, that they should dig with their spade deeper into the sand-mud than the animals could dig. For four days, in response to their whimpering, Esteban had dug with the spade more than eight feet deep. Each day the animals had gone down to the water that seeped into the hole, and had found it salt, and had gone away sorrowful. If there was any sweet water at all it would ride on top of the heavier salt water. Today the armadillos came even less hopefully than before. If they did not find sweet water today they would die. So Esteban began to dig another deep hole. And Captain Dorantes and the Quevenes called Melas set out all their clay pots and bowls to catch the rain.

"There is a small cloud," Captain Castillo was saying. "I command that it become a big cloud and that it come over us. I command it as a natural element, and I pray to the Holy Ghost that it may happen."

"This man does not know how to command!" the Quevenes called Glaukos jeered. "It is I who command it! Tremble, cloud, and come."

"Let us all command, exhort, pray, and cajole the cloud at the same time," Esteban boomed reasonably enough from the hole he was digging. And the five of them, the Captains Dorantes and Castillo, the African Black Esteban, the two Quevenes Indians Glaukos and Melas, all commanded and reasoned and prayed and cajoled. Then something began to happen with a jolt, as if the machinery of the sky had made a mechanical shift.

"I can feel that the tide has turned in our favor," Captain Castillo said.

"The tide is too slow and too sour," Glaukos admonished. "Has the cloud turned in our favor?" He was watching it with his ugly face intently upraised.

Yes it had. The little white cloud that had intended to pass them to the north was now veering back towards them. It turned black and enlarged itself. It filled the sky over their heads and began to rain on them, softly and steadily.

"Men, do not just stand there!" the Quevenes called Melas cried. "When there is one good luck try for another one immediately before the first one grows cold. We may yet have meat that we will not have to shudder at when we eat. Help me dig out the buried

deer. With our new running luck, it will still be deer when we dig it out and eat it."

Esteban came out of his dug water hole with his spade. The armadillos tumbled down into it and howled with delight to find sweet water. Of course it was sweet. The rain water was pouring down into that hole in little torrents. Then Esteban with the spade, and others with rocks and sticks to dig with, uncovered the body of the buried deer. At first it seemed that they had uncovered the face of a human girl, but that was only the tricky afternoon light coming fractured through the rain into the burial hole. It was a doe deer of incomparably gentle expression. It was mildly rotten. It had become loose in the joints and would be easy to dismember and roast and devour. So they dug it out of the hole.

The deer skinned easily, the mild rot helping. It unjointed easily. Bigger pieces went directly into the flat fire in the hearth stone, and smaller pieces were spitted in the flame-fire for quicker charring and eating. The men divided the tongue of the deer into five parts, one for each of them, for they were all tongue men this day.

"Your tongue, your story was the strongest, water-master," the Quevenes Glaukos told Captain Castillo. "It brought rain for our dying piece of land and good water for our sandy throats."

"No, my tongue, my story was the strongest," the Quevenes Melas contradicted. "It brought deer meat and saved us from starvation. My mind was confused with my hunger and I did not even remember that I had killed and buried a deer three days ago. Then my 'tongue' which I told recalled the happening to my mind, so we do not have to starve to death after all. And now our luck has changed to the good. The black buzzards are gone out of the sky, and the white gulls have come to bounce and holler in the rainy air. Gulls are good luck birds."

Five heroic stories! Five heroic tongues! (The Quevenes Indians call a 'story' a 'tongue'.) The five tongues hadn't resembled each other very much. They had only one thing in common: all of them had been true.

"I feel it," Esteban said. "Something is flowing for us now. Howl, tongue, howl! Burned yourself, didn't you? You knew you'd get burned if you tried that piece of deer meat while it was still hot. But it's better than starving."

"I also feel the power flowing in our favor," Captain Dorantes said. "Oh, from this moment on, greatness has found us!"

"A wonderful tide and a wonderful favor," Captain Castillo said. "We will not die in this miserable place. We will travel five hundred hard land leagues to get to other places, but then we will have our crystal day in the sun, in the new sun."

The five armadillos waddled off, fat-stomached from the new water they had drunk. They were making satisfied and thankful grunts. They raised their tails in going-away salutes as they passed. Even their skinny tails had row after row of skinny armored scale plates.

ISHMAEL INTO THE BARRENS

Sometimes, however, a group of animals about to become extinct undergoes considerable change of a pathological nature before it disappears from the scene.

Douglas Dewar

It was early in the morning, which was illegal. Which is to say that it was illegal for persons to be about in the early morning. And yet there were a few people, some alive and some dead, scattered about in the morning hours. Most of these were yellow-card people doing necessary work in these hours; a few were authorized nothoi-hunters; the rest were outlaws. All of the dead people lying in the streets were outlaws; but some of the live people also were outlaws unknown.

Really, there was no need for anyone to be about at this time; and if the world were ordered in a perfectly legal manner there would have been none. But the world was not perfectly ordered. There was outlawry and the breaking of the hours rules.

There were the working hours for those of the age when work was still required, and concurrent with these were the basic-enjoyment hours for those beyond that age. Then there were the swinging hours for all (compulsory). And finally there were the morning hours, the forbidden hours—the hours for sleep, for rest, for com-

pleting a trip: these were from the fifth hour of the day till the thirteenth. Timers were adjusted so that the sunrise was always in the forbidden hours; and indeed no really good person had ever seen the sun rise, except certain very old ones who had seen it in their uninstructed youths. "No good person was ever the better for seeing the sun rise," it is written in the *Analects*.

It was an old and dirty city in the glare of the early illegal sun, but the yellow-card street-sweepers would soon clear away the worst of the debris. The swinging hours always left their clutter, as was their right. Here were yesterday's cut flowers in heaps, many thousands of broken balloons, posters torn and shredded, remnants of food and drink and vein-main, papers covered with scatter-print, discarded litter and clothing.

Here also, right on the edge of a pile of broken guitars, a woman was lying twisted and grubby. She was very young and very dead. She was not, however, a casualty of the swinging hours, but of the early morning hours. And there was another one some distance from the first, blowsier and bloodier. They were not rare in the morning hours in the city. Very soon the sweepers would cart them away. By the thirteenth hour all would be clean again, and the Gentle World would begin another day.

But here is the heroine, a live one, perhaps a lively one. Should she not be a platinum woman, scatter-ornamented and beautiful, according to the norms? Or a shining ebony or a creamy chocolate? Should she not be adjusted and legal? Flowery and scatter-eyed? Should she not be of the multiplexity, nonlineate, a Scan, an Agape Apple, a Neutrino, a Pop Poppy? A Poster Coaster at the very least? Should she not be a Happy Medium, a Plateau Potato, a Twanger, a Mime, a Dreamer, and Enhancer-Dancer? Are these not the aspects of a heroine?

Nah, she wasn't like that at all. She was a Morning-Glory, which is illegal. She was a Gown-Clown, which is also illegal. She was not flowery, not scatter-eyed. She wasn't even quite beautiful though she rather wished that she were. And yet perhaps she was, in another way, in an old and almost private way.

She had form. But was it not now bad form to have form? She had grace and face. She had a forked tongue and a willful way. She even had a measure of gaiety. She was tall and full. Her hair was midnight-black with green starlights in it (really). Her eyes were even blacker with deeper lights. She had a strong element of stubbornness in her, which is illegal. She was a flower-tender, and she was not enchanted with the job. (Something had gone out of the flowers, something had gone out of them.) Her name was Janine

Pervicacia. To the people she was Jane the Crane, but she wasn't so leggy as all that.

The flowers, especially those that were to be cut this day, needed care in the morning hours, and for that reason this yellow-card girl was tending them. But she tended them lineately, which was illegal.

Here is the hero. Should he not be a Swing, a Slant, a Cut, according to the norms? A Spade, a Buck, a Whanger? Should he not be a Head, a Flash, an Etch, a Neutrino yet, a Burn, a Vein, a Flower?

Yeah, but he wasn't like that. He wasn't that kind of hero at all. He was a Dawner, he was a doggedly pleasant man, he was even a sort of battler ("He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off"—Job), he was friendly; he was even intelligent on some subjects and murderous on others. He was big enough and thick enough; his hair was brambled but short. The people said that he would be the father of Ishmael. He didn't know what they meant; neither did the people. He was a moving man with cat-springs in him. He was a yellow-card street-sweeper, and his name was Morgan Saunders.

He was making his rounds, cleaning up after the swingers. He growled when he came to the twisted and grubby woman who was very young and very dead.

"Secret hid in the bottom of a well, May the nothoi-hunters all go to hell," he chanted, which is illegal (the nothoi-hunters are authorized). He had a very hassle of a time bending the dead woman in the middle (he saw now that she was only a girl) and stuffing her into his wheeled canister. He quickly covered her with shards of broken guitars so she would be hidden from his eyes.

Then he saw Jane the Crane tending flowers. He did not know her. This was her first morning back on the job after a term in a disorderly house. She was tending the flowers as if they were in straight lines, as if they were in rows, going down one file of them and back another. But only in her mind were they in rows.

"That is not the allowed way to tend flowers, girl," Morgan spoke to her very low. "You must not consider them as growing in rows, even in your thought. Consider them as random scatter-clusters, or there will be a black mark on your record. Consider them as a revolving nexus of patternless broken volutes. They grow random in nature, you know, and the Gentle World is all for the random. I am only trying to help you."

"I know you are. The things I have been put through by people trying to help me! I tell you, though, that nothing grows random in nature. Everything falls into patterns. And flowers very often do

grow in terraced tiers and in tufted rows. I've seen them."

"That is very dangerous talk," said Morgan Saunders, "and I believe that the nothoi-hunters are eyeing us even now. Is it possible that I will see you here again tomorrow? Do you know the doubled-up girl in my canister?"

"I know her. Her name is Agar. Yes, it is possible that you will see me here again tomorrow. It is possible that I will be the doubled-up dead girl in your canister tomorrow."

Then Morgan Saunders went on his way, picking up old flowers and broken balloons and guitars and dead women. He went on past the Pop Palace with its high sign in psychedelic dancing dots: "THE GOLDEN DWARF, MAN, MAN, THAT'S MAN!"

And Janine Pervicacia continued to tend the flowers (those that would die today), moving her hands as if the flowers were in rows; and they weren't.

This is a love and hate story (both were illegal) from the False Terminal Days that were the middle of the twenty-first century. It is very difficult to decode the story and lay it out for the reason that (even in its illegal form) it was printed in scatter-print. No other sort of print was available. Every printing machine, even the small household ones used by private individuals, was both a scatter-printer and a randoming machine. Each letter could have many different shapes and colors, and these were so blended that no two colors or shape-styles might come together, or that nothing might range itself into lines even accidentally.

Scatter-print was the flowering of 150 years of pop-posters. It shouted a complex nonlineate message, or else it did not: but it shouted. There was difficulty that about a third of the signs were not letters at all, had no meaning or sound value to them: and their blending in made the words difficult to read—if one were still a reader and not a depth comprehender. There was also a difficulty in that it was illegal to number pages; ever; in anything, long or short. Pages must be fed in unnumbered, and they were then randomized. And they are very difficult to unrandom.

For this reason there will be anomalies and inconsistencies in this story, for all that we try to untangle it and set it in line. It was (in its first form) an illegal private record by a grieving friend, but we cannot be sure of the order it should fall into. We do not know for sure whether Jane the Crane was the doubled-up dead girl in the canister on the first morning or on the one-thousandth. We do not know when the destruction of Morgan Saunders took place, whether before the birth of Ishmael or after, but we have set it before. And we do not know whether the interlude of the odd man and the

Odd God is truly a part of this account or whether it should be interluded at the point we give it or at another. We can but guess how long Jane the Crane was in a disorderly house, and we cannot always tell flashback from future glimpse. We try.

The next morning (we cannot be sure that it was the next morning, but it was a different morning) Morgan Saunders slowed his cleaning and sweeping as he came near where Janine Pervicacia was tending flowers. It was summer now (flowers, of course, must be grown in all seasons) and perhaps it hadn't been the other time. Janine (Jane the Crane) was revealed as a gown-clown in an old unrevealing dress. There was scarcely a square foot of her body exposed. She worked now with a carefulness and neatness that were unusual. This girl might be beyond help.

"There are dangerous and divergent things in your manner," Morgan said in a low voice. "If you are not more careless you may be sent to a disorderly house. I am only trying to help you."

"I've already been in the disorderly house," Janine said cheerlessly. "I was discharged as incurable and always to be watched."

"How was it there?" Morgan asked. "I have always been afraid of it, for myself. I have been threatened with it, and I am always careful to assume the careless manner."

"It was horrible and depressing. I was put in with very small children, five and six years old. We were taught artless art. 'Form is only the pedestal. Deformity is the statue,' one of the instructors said that first day. 'The trick is to smash the pedestal completely and yet leave something of the statue. Deformity is beauty, always remember that. Form, which is pattern, is always ugly.' That's what he told us. We had classes in pop-posters, which are hand-done scatter-print. We had classes in Lump the Lump, which is plastic modeling. We had classes in finger painting, and paintings by chimpanzees were used as models and suggestions. I noticed of the children that though many of them were handsome and even-featured when they first came to the disorderly house, their features soon altered. One eye would become larger than the other. The two sides of their faces would no longer match. One side of their mouths would be pulled down and the other pulled up. They would come to look as crooked as most people do look. The instructors could tell at a glance which children were being inculcated with the proper sense of deformity: those who themselves became deformed. We talk too long. I am sure we will be watched."

"Wait. We have so much of danger to spend anyhow. Let us spend a little of it now." And Morgan himself was doing a dangerous thing. He was smoking a short fag, but it was not what you think:

not potty, not dotty, not snow, not glow, none of the approved high things. It was old, forbidden, non-mind-enhancing tobacco. "What else did they try to teach you in the disorderly house?"

"Guitar," said Jane the Crane. "That remains the worst of all experiences, the hell-thing that certain humans can never accept. I still wake up screaming at night (working in the mornings, I sometimes sleep illegally during the swing hours of night) at the oppressiveness, the whining meanness of it. It is the only instrument that is always random, that does not have to be randomized. Oh, the twang, twang, twang, the eternal flatness of it! 'After all, is not the purpose of life on earth to accustom the people to life in hell?' one of the instructors asked. This is one of the permanent quips of the disorderly houses, of course, but the way the instructor said it in a deformed voice out of a deformed face shook me. It is true, Morgan, it is true. Or is it?"

"It is not everywhere true, Janine. It is not my purpose, but it is theirs. What else did they teach the children and fail to teach you?"

"Crudity, nudity; presbys and lesbos; monophony, cacophony; profanity, ubanity; muggery and buggery. Narcosis. Doggery. Flesh-mesh. Much else. Does that stuff not curdle the convoluted ears of you? It should."

"Do they not have a course to teach ducks to swim? But it seems that a little bit of this would be beyond the scope of five- and six-year-olds, Janine, especially beyond those who had to be sent back for correction."

"Never mind, they would remember it and they would be ready for it when their time came to appreciate it. Go now. We have spent too much danger and we are watched."

"Will I see you here again tomorrow, Janine?"

"Tomorrow or next season, or someday, or never."

"Will you think of me?"

"I will think of you as if this were another world, towering where it was meant to be high, ordered where it should be ordered, free in the great central things, and free from the dwarfed and compulsory freedoms. I will think of you, Morgan, in ways that are presently unthinkable."

Janine (Jane the Crane) turned back to caring for her flowers, which she liked but was not impassioned over. And Morgan Saunders went on about his sweeping and cleaning, past the Pop Palace, past the Dog Temple, past Levelers' Loggia, past the Pseudo-Parthenon, past Humanity Hall with its great poster in electric scatter-print raising its headless torso into the sky: "MAN, THIS GELDED GLORY OF THE LEVEL WAY."

In the False Terminal Days that were the middle of the twenty-first century the population plateau had been reached. It had not been reached in perfect peace. In an odd piece entitled *The Analects of Isaac* we encounter the phrase "the conflicts created in a society which sees in population stability the only hope of the human race." There were conflicts.

There had been hard feelings. Blood had run in the rivers in some localities. But every casualty of this conflict had become part of the feedback of the population-stability calculators. It was settled now. It was enforced. But the conflict continued, and it must still continue till the total death of one or both of the antagonists. It had become one-sided. It looked like the conflict between an elephant and a day fly. But there were irreconcilables. There were die-hards among those midges. And there were also hard-abornings, illegitimate and double-damned and defiant. The plateau had been reached, but there were bumps on the plateau.

Stable population. And the second step (very nearly achieved already) was population homogeneity. For fifty years the restrictions had been most selective. By now those of extreme colors were about of equal number, and the great central blending outnumbered them both. Hereafter, only progeny-crosses between the two extremes or out of the central blending could be permitted; none at all among either extreme.

In any case, with the stack-up (old hippies never die; they don't even fade away) a kid-card now cost a quarter of a million dollars. That was very high, and perhaps it would go even higher.

In any case, again, as either both-white or both-black, there would be an impediment between Janine Pervicacia and Morgan Saunders. (They hadn't talked about a union at all, but they had begun to think about it.) This impediment is mentioned in the old scatter-print record written by the grieving friend. But this record does not indicate which was the color of their impediment, and we do not know it either.

A flower-care inspector had been plaguing Janine Pervicacia. He could not fault her that the flowers in her care were insufficient in numbers and vitality. It was something else. The flowers from her care were reported to be out of sympathy with the flower people. They had not the right attitude to all this. They had developed sympathies of their own, or of Janine's; and the flower people could feel the alienation, and they complained. There is a fine line here. There really is sympathy and antipathy even in cut flowers, but it is liable to exaggeration and subjectivity by the flower people.

"You will have to conform," the flower-care inspector told Janine

sternly. "There is complaint."

"Conform to what?" she asked. "Form is damnable to you."

"You will please to cease using words as having direction, Jane the Crane flower-carer fifth-class," he said sharply. "Words are like confetti, like stars, like snowflakes, like—there simply are not words for words! You must conform to nonconformity, of course. Your lineate overview will minimize you in the simultaneous multidepth mosaic appraisal."

"Oh, that! I have already been weighed and found wanting. Do what you will with me, but do not stand and goggle at me."

"We could have a meeting during the swinging hours and come to a certain understanding with each other."

"I'll see you in the Barrens first!"

"Then, if you will not be affectionate or gentle or human, you must improve on your work. Your flowers must show more feeling at once."

"They will show more feeling!" Jane of the forky tongue cried. "They'll bark at you! They'll snap at you with their severed heads!"

Jane the Crane was getting many marks against her record.

And an Official Instigator had been plaguing Morgan Saunders. One must talk to an Official Instigator. They are privileged. They have rights of entry into property and dwellings, and into minds. But they are not direct. They nibble at you; they potshot; they speak in randomized riddles.

This was a very old Instigator; of the very first generation of them. He wore a pop button ("Never trust anyone under ninety"); he wore a pop beard which was perhaps infested; he wore a loin-cloth, he wore shamble-sandles; he wore flowers and sashes and ribbons and jewelry, but no real garment. He rated as old even in a world made up mostly of old people. He was an Ancient Hippie indeed.

"You find me objectionable, Morgan in my hands," he sniped, "and that is a most dangerous finding of yours. You are an alien to the Gentle World, Morgan, and you are known as the philosopher of the street-sweepers. But the world doesn't need a philosophy—not a rigid street-sweeper philosophy, at any rate. We will snip those rigid corners off you, or we will snip that rigid head off you. Whence are you named? Yours isn't a name from the randomizing machines. Therefore it is an illegal name. In one old context Morgan meant 'from over the sea'; in another it meant 'morning,' which is very significant in your case."

"In still another case it meant a pony, old man," Morgan said. "A very stylish pony."

"Can a Morgan pony sire a wild ass?" (Somehow the old Instigator already knew about the wild-ass boy Ishmael, who was not even conceived yet, much less born.) "But run, Morgan, run," the old Instigator went on. "We will catch you with our gentle pursuit. Why do you resist us who are kind to every living creature?"

"Kind to every living creature, old man? But you murder the nothoi."

"Are the nothoi living creatures, Morgan? Not in law, not in fact. Who will admit ever seeing such creatures? Who will admit that there are such things living anywhere? They are fables, Morgan, fables from the Barrens. They are less substantial even than ghosts. Prove that they are not. Take me and show me a nothos."

"That would be the death of both myself and the small thing."

"If they cause deaths, then they are demons. Who could find fault with the ritual laying of such ghosts and demons?"

This Official Instigator was one of the authentic Ancient Hippies, those in the hundred-years-and-over class. They had station and rights. They had final honor.

"We are the open world," said this Ancient Hippie. "We open, and you will not come in to us."

"You are not open, old man," Morgan insisted. "You close the great way itself. You open only mole runs, and you go blind in their windings, proclaiming them to be the great way. We stubborn ones are for the open world that is gone."

"It is you who withdraw, Morgan. You withdraw from the Gentle World."

"You withdraw from life, old man, and the withdrawal syndromes are weird and twitchy."

"Be careful, Morgan. I and mine are main things in the withdrawal syndromes, and we will not be spoken of slightly. Can you not see that you are wrong? You do not see how curiously you withdraw from life in opposing me here? Do you not know that you have just passed death sentence on yourself?"

"Certainly I know it," Morgan said.

It was true. Everything spoken to an Instigator was recorded, and the records were fed to appraisal machines. But how many seals does it take on a death sentence? Morgan Saunders knew that there were very many on his already.

But he walked out on the Instigator, which was illegal. He went on about his work, on past the Hippie Hippodrome, with its high sign of writhing scatter-print: "MAN, OUR STUNTED PURPOSE AND OUR GREATEST STUNT."

The nothoi-hunters plagued both Janine Pervicacia and Morgan

Saunders, following them, leveling guns at them, mocking them, hungering for them. The nothoi-hunters had the sense of prey; they had sophisticated equipment. They killed a lot. They were authorized to kill a lot. But they did not want to hunt out their field. Here it was a special prey that they waited for and counted on, that they counted on even before it came into being, that they everlastingly hoped for. The hunters asked both Janine and Morgan when Ishmael would be along, this even before the time when Janine and Morgan had met. But now Morgan and Janine had met, and they talked about Ishmael, not realizing it, never having heard the name, not realizing that they were talking about a coming person.

"Expectation of anything is out of order, of course," Morgan said to Janine, "and there is not much hope in hope. Nevertheless, I get a distant tang of something that may not be all wrong. Are you with me in it, Janine, if we discover some good way (even if it is a short way) away from this?"

"I am with you in anything you want to do, O Morgan with the short bramble hair, but it is all at an end. Everything goes down, and we go down with it."

"We will not go down, Janine. This is not the end yet, even for such as we are."

"Yes, the ending, Morgan, the evening of the seventh day."

"Janine, the seventh day had no evening. For better or worse, for many thousands of years we have lived in the afternoon of the seventh day, maybe even in the morning of it. And we live in it yet. Will I see you here tomorrow?"

"No. Not for several days, or weeks, or months. I will do a thing, and I will not tell you what it is till it's done. Goodbye, then, for some days or weeks or months, or forever."

2

What things a man or a world believes or disbelieves will permeate every corner and shadow and detail of life and style, will give a shape to every person and personifact and plant of that world. They will form or they will disorder, they will open or close. A world that believes in open things is at least fertile to every sort of adventure or disaster. A world that believes in a closed way will shrivel and raven and sputter out in frosty cruelty.

Audifax O'Hanlon

When Morgan saw Janine no more in the mornings the world became still more a deprived place. He was still plagued by the nothoi-hunters, who mocked him, and by the official instigators, who conversed with him. One afternoon, after he had put away his brooms and rakes and shovels and was on his rest period, he walked out into the Barrens, which was illegal. He found no nothoi there at all nor any trace of them. He did find cattle that had gone feral, wild swine, and rabbits and deer. He found streams that were full of fish and frogs; he found berries and fruits and hazelnuts. He found patches of wild wheat and rye, and sweet corn and melons.

"What is the reason I could not live here?" he asked himself out loud. "I could come here with Janine and we could live and flourish, away from the clang of industry and the clatter of the guitar-makers' factories. What is the reason I could not live here?"

But his left ear left his head at that moment, and immediately afterward he heard (with his right ear) the sound of the shot. Angry and scared, he clawed and crawled and rolled and made his way out of the Barrens and back to the fringes of the city.

"The reason I cannot live in the Barrens is that the nothoi-hunters will kill me as a nothos if they see me there," he said quietly. "They will kill any illegal person they find in the Barrens. And it was no mistake they made. They could see plainly that I was a grown man and not a nothos. Here I am now, one-eared and sad-hearted and—oh, oh, oh—here is an even sadder thing come to worry me!"

It was an Official Instigator wishing to talk to him. Morgan could not be sure whether it was the same Instigator who had talked to him several times before. Those Instigators who belong to the Ancient Hippie aristocracy (the one-hundred-years-and-older class) all look pretty much alike.

"We get you piece by piece, Morgan afraid to wander," the Instigator said. "Today an ear, tomorrow another thing, and very soon we will get you all and entire. If you would not listen to reason with two ears, how can you listen with one? There was a question that arose many years before you were born, so it does not really concern you at all. The question arose, and the answer was given. The question was simply, 'What will we do when there are too many people in the world?' And the answer given was, 'We will pass edict so that there never will be allowed too many people in the world.' Why do you not accept the gentle and wise answer?"

"The answer was out of order. Your whole complex is out of order in several senses of the term. That is why you will not accept order in any of the central things. That is why you must substitute deformity for form. I do not accept your answer because it is the

wrong answer."

"How is it wrong, one-eared Morgan? What could possibly be wrong with it?"

"It is the static answer to a dynamic question and therefore the wrong answer."

"Could you have given a righter answer?"

"Of course not. But I could have contributed to it, and you could have also. The answer would have to grow like an organism. And it would have grown."

"There was no time to permit an organism to grow. It was a matter of great hurry."

"No, there was no great hurry, and the answer was already growing apace until it was hacked to death. There had been some signs of a full blooming springtime for mankind, and this frightened the cravens. The Population Blessing was a challenge, as all large and fine things are. There was only one question: whether we were a good enough people to accept the greatest gift ever offered. And the answer given was, No, we are not."

"But we splendid ones in our youth gave another answer, little die-hard Morgan," the Instigator said. "We will not abide a clutter of people, we said. Chop them off; there are enough and too many, we said. Really, it was a splendid answer, and I tell you that we were a splendid people."

"'Evil always wins through the strength of its Splendid Dupes,' as a wise man said, and yet I doubt that you were ever splendid. You aren't now."

"But we are, little Morgan the philosopher of the street-sweepers, we are splendid and talented, gentle and random, creative and inventive."

"No, old man, you know that creativity and invention have disappeared completely. Why should they not? Residue technique will suffice to maintain a plateau. It is only for mountain-building that creativity and invention are required. You were the loss-of-nerve people. And it is hard for a small remnant to restore that nerve when every thing has flowed the other way for near a hundred years."

"Morgan of the remnant, your pieces are so little that they cannot even find each other. You lost everything completely before you were born. Listen to me: I am a wise and long-lived man. The old sophistry that there are two sides to every question has long passed away. Instead of that, there are mutual exclusions that cannot live in the same world with each other. The great consensus and the small remnant can no longer live in the same world. What odds could you post, little Morgan, on our going and your remaining?"

"Very weak odds, but I am more and more inclined to play them out."

"We have recorded almost enough on you to terminate you right now. Is it not curious that a man shot in the ear will bleed out of the mouth—in words? The nothoi-hunters are better shots than that, you know. They but practice of you till we give them the final word on you. We have checked your own ancestry. You yourself are a nothos, for all that we can find to the contrary. No kid-card was ever issued for you. We could classify you for extinction at any time, but we will wait a little while and have spectacle out of you."

The nothoi-hunters in fact were very good shots. They had prediction scopes on their rifles. These small directors had the evasion patterns of many small animals and of the small nothoi worked out: the rush, the scurry, the broken pace, the double, the zigzag. With the pattern of those built into a scope the hunters could hardly miss.

The nothoi-hunters themselves were square pegs who happened to fit into certain square holes of the Gentle World. They were not gentle (not every one can be gentle even on that low plateau); they were naturally troublesome and warlike. Now their proclivities were channeled to a special job. They exterminated certain unlawful things. They did it thoroughly and well. And they made high sport out of it.

And there were other summary things in the system of the Gentle World. This very afternoon, right at the beginning of the swing hours, there were several executions under the recusancy laws. Many persons refused to take part in the swing hours. This was the same as refusal to be happy. To the offenders, first there was warning, then there was mutilation, then there was death. A half dozen of such public hangings would usually minimize the absences from swing time for a while.

There was a stubborn girl ready to be hanged, and at first Morgan thought that she was Janine. She was much the same type. She refused to recant; she refused to take her dutiful place in the Gentle World. She had refused three times to join the swing fun. Likely she was mad, but her madness might be dangerous and contagious.

"You refuse to have fun with the funsters?" an Ancient Instigator asked her almost tearfully.

"I *always* have fun," the girl said loudly. "It's more fun to be me dead than you alive. And I will not endure anything as stifling as the swing times. Drop dead, old man!"

"You might at least respect my position as Ancient Instigator."

"I'd see the last Instigator strangled with the strings of the last guitar!"

So the girl was hanged, drawn, and quartered. Morgan, though he had often seen these little dramas, was deeply shocked: not so much by the girl's bad-mannered defiance as by the punishment itself. She looked so like Janine and talked so like her that it was frightening.

Then Janine came back and was busy with her flowers again one morning. The flowers remembered her (it had not really been such a long time), and they came alive to her. Janine was not impassioned with the flowers (as many in the Gentle World had the pose of being), but they were impassioned with her. They always had been.

"Where have you been this while?" Morgan asked her. "At the end of every morning I examined all the bodies gathered up by all the sweepers, and yours was never among them."

"I hid awhile. And I had an illegal operation performed on myself."

"Which?" Morgan asked. "What did it do to you?"

"It undid," Janine said. "It undid the earlier operation. Now I am open to life once more."

"And under the automatic sentence of death you are! And I am if I say the word. I say the word. I am."

"I know a Papster priest," said Janine.

"And I know one," said Morgan. "We will go to mine."

"No, we will go to mine," she insisted. But they couldn't have quarreled over that or over anything. There wasn't room for that in the narrow margin of life left to them. Besides, it happened that it was the same Papster priest they both knew. There weren't more than two or three of those hidden ones in that city of a million.

They went to the Papster priest and were married, which was illegal.

The Papster must have been lonesome for the central things, so he brought out his eloquence, which had grown rusty, and gave a doctrine to their act.

"What you do is right," he said, "no matter how illegal it is. This world had become a stunted plant, and it was not meant to be. Deformity can never be the norm. The basic and evil theory was: that (by restriction) fewer people could live better and more justified. But they did not. Fewer people live, and they live as dwarfs. Not even China in the thousand years it was frozen (it also muchly in an opium dream) was as deprived and listless as this world. The Cities of the Plateau may be destroyed as were the Cities of the Plain, I do not know. We live in that which calls itself a biological world, but no one seems to understand the one central fact of biology, of the

life complex.

"This is the one biological fact that all present biologists ignore to their own incompetence: that every life is called into being by God and maintained in being by God at every instant of that life; that without God there is no bios, no life, and certainly no biology. There can never be an unwanted life or an unwanted person, ever, anywhere. If a person were not wanted by God, God would not call him into being. There can never be too many persons, because it is God who counts and records and decides how many there should be. There can never be a person unprovided for, because it is God who provides. Whoever does not believe in this Providence does not believe in God. Once there was some nonsense on this subject. Now it is pretty well dispelled, and the pretense of believing in one and not the other has about vanished."

The priest wrinkled his nose for the sweat running down it. It was a hot underground hole that they came to for the secret marriage.

"But they bug me, the biologists and their dwarfed biota," the priest went on. "If they cannot see the central fact of their own science, if they cannot see this fact in the knotted tangle of chromosomes and in the ladders of the double helices, then they have eyes in vain. Ah—I talk too much, and perhaps you do not understand me."

"We understand you," Morgan and Jane said together.

"May the God of Abraham, the God of Issac, ah—the God of Ishmael—the God of Jacob be with you, and may He fulfill in you His blessings," the Papster said; then he said other things, and they married each other before him.

The background didn't mean much immediately after that. It could have been still on the plateau; it could have been on a mountain or in a deep ravine or over the sea. What happened was gaiety. Morgan and Janine cut up in their lives. No, no, not the dwarfed singing and jittery whining of the Gentle World grown old so gracelessly. This was the song-central thing. They joked, they carried on, they startled, they set fires in what had been too dry, too lacking in substance, even to burn. Like magic they came to know other couples of their same state, ten of them, twenty of them, all in subervient positions and none of them servile. All of them hidden, all of them dangerously open. They were a new thing in the air. The Official Instigators flared their nostrils at the new scent; and the nothoi-hunters caught wind of a new strong prey and shook in their hate and anticipation.

Morgan and Jane the Crane even joked about which of them

would run out his string first. "It will be you, Janine," Morgan jibed. "I will sweep you up one morning. 'Is it Agar?' I will ask, 'or is it the Crane?' And I will say, 'Oh, she bends hard in the middle!' And I will stuff you into my canister. And then there will be another girl tending flowers, and I will begin to carry on with her."

"Be in not so much hurry to sweep me up," Janine said, "or you will have to bear Ishmael yourself. It will be hard on you, Morgan, you so narrow in the pelvic girdle, you lacking in so many ways. When you come to give birth to him, you will wish that I were back alive to do it."

"Oh, we will keep you alive a little while then," Morgan said, "and I will try to stay alive myself. A doubly posthumous child always has a hard time of it. At least one of us should be around. Ah, the hunters shoot me through with their eyes a dozen times a day, and the Instigators are fashioning the last seal for my certificate. What is taking Ishmael so long anyhow? Mayhap he'll be a monster. They have longer gestation periods. Better a monster than the sort of dwarfs that abound now."

"He will be a wild ass of a man, and that is surely monster enough," Janine said. "Get gone. The flower-care inspector has been plaguing me, and he is coming now. I love you more than the sky itself. Not much more, but a little. Get gone."

The flower-care inspector was always in a great fury with Janine now.

"Do you not know that the flower-care girl over on Western Avenue had her tongue cut out for talking overly much with a sweeper?" he asked. "Yellow-card morning people have not the right to talk freely. And why are you so clothed? Why are you so overclothed? There is scarcely a square foot of flesh showing on you. What do your silly affectations work toward anyhow?"

"The world clothed and in its right mind," said Janine Pervicacia.

"Clothes sometimes hide things!" the flower-care inspector shrilled.

"Oh, they do!" Janine beamed. "They do."

Those were tall days. When you rise above the plateau you rise above it in all ways. There was hope everywhere; and there was no single detail that could give any possible hope. There was a man from over the sea (as was Morgan of that name) who said that things were much the same elsewhere, congealed, dwarfed, and vapid. Yet he was full of sunny strength and quick laughs. There was a man there from over the prairies. He said that the prairies were disaster areas now for all free and illegal people. They were hunted

down and killed from the air by fog poisons that had first been tried out on coyotes. There was a man there from the north woods. He said that the nothoi-hunters up there were real hunters, and there was no bag limit. They didn't seem to care if they did hunt out the game. It would be replenished, they said, or they would hunt elsewhere when they had done with it. There was a man there from the ghetto that is under the ghetto, from the sewers that are under the sewers. He said that the very small pockets of free and illegal people underground were being systematically killed by spray poisons that had first been tried out on rats.

But still there was high hope: not for long life, of course, but for bright and embattled life, and for issue. But the way was getting mighty narrow.

"All joking aside," Morgan told Janine one morning, "you win our little bet and game. This is the last morning of my life. They get me today."

"Take some of them with you, man!" Janine spat with her forked tongue.

"No. We won't go to the same place; but I may send some of them another way."

"Break for the Barrens, man!" Janine sounded. "In short months I and the boy will come to you there."

"Oh, I break to them now," Morgan said, "but I must pass through an Instigator and a circle of hunters first. This world, my love, is only temporary, of time. We have another one. But we are appointed to this world first. It is of ourselves, part of our bodies. It is mean, and are we not also? It is not better, because we did not make it any better. This withered world is both our ancestry and our issue, however deformed it may be. Remember, Janine (and this is important) never hate this world; but it will be hateful. Remember also, we always loved the early mornings."

"I will remember, Morgan. Go happy with it now. See how joyful I say it! Your dead ears may hear me shrilling like a demented woman fifteen minutes from now; do not believe them. Remember that I said, 'Go happy with it.'"

Morgan Saunders slid through the early morning streets toward the edge of the city in the direction of the Barrens. He was a moving man with cat-springs in him. It was his last morning by all the odds, but he would give them a run or a fight for it. Then his own particular Official Instigator loomed up in front of him, the Ancient Hippie of the more-than-a-hundred-years class, the nemesis who had already obtained the warrant for Morgan's death and who

could turn the hunters loose on him whenever he wanted to.

"Get out of my way, old hip," Morgan warned. "I'm in a hurry." "Oh, do not be in a hurry, man," the old Instigator protested. "Talk to me. It is you who are going to die today. It is you of the illegitimate life that we have enough to kill a dozen times. If I were you I would say, 'Let them be impatient; let them wait a little.' They cannot kill you till I give the word. Talk to me, man."

"Talking won't change a thing, oldster. And I go to a better thing than this, whether I get to the Barrens or to my death. Why shouldn't I be in a hurry for a better thing?"

"Talking *did* change everything once, Morgan-Sorgen. We whipped you once by talk alone, not even very good talk. We won the world to our way by our talk. And now you are nothing at all but a remnant and a sport. You are less than the tenth of one percent. If I were of the tenth of one percent I would be silent. And we can extinguish even that minuscule of you whenever we wish."

"But we reappear. You will not be rid of us. We grow back. Why are you afraid to let the tenth of one percent speak? You shake, you fume, you simmer, you vilify."

"You are our prey and you have no right to opinion or voice. We keep a very few of you for the hunting only. You will not grow back if we decide to end the game. Why have you never accepted our consensus world? It is really rather interesting, rather arty, rather gentle, rather novel."

Several sets of nothoi-hunters were waiting in the near distance. There was in particular the set of Peeler and Slickstock and Quickcoiner; these had claim on Morgan Saunders as their special game.

"The same novelties for a hundred years are no longer novel, old man," Morgan said, shifting nervously but having to endure the talk. "And divergent art is of some interest for a while, as long as there is a main thing for it to diverge from. Yes, you even had a touch of humor and a touch of kindness once. But now you are cut flowers, no more than that; worse, you are artificial cut flowers. It is your loss of nerve, it is your regression, it is your dwarfing yourselves and creeping into strange wombs for shelter. You lost your courage first of all, then your honesty and your common sense. As falsehood and ugliness are equated, you set out to create a world of unsurpassed ugliness. Painting and sculpture were perverted first. Then music withered and whimpered into stringed idiocy. Then all the arts went and all the life ambients. You claimed that it was an opening up, a meaningful development. It wasn't. It was an end, and there is no meaning or development in a dead end. These are the Terminal Days that you have brought about."

"You are jealous of our success, little Morgan from over the sea.

Judge us by our beautiful divergence that works. Recognize us by our results."

"Aye, by your fruits we may know you," Morgan said. It was an unkind jibe, and it got under the Instigator's skin. That Ancient Hippie paled in anger.

"We are irreconcilables!" he howled. "You are impossible, not to be reformed, not to be converted. You are impossible unto death."

The Ancient Hippie made a downward sign with his arm, and there was a clatter of armament coming alive from every direction. Morgan smashed the Ancient Hippie in the face (an unkind and illegal thing); he fainted and ran like a bolt of rabbits in three directions at once.

"He is a deformity," Morgan spoke in his churning head about the Ancient Hippie, who still lingered in his mind. "He is perfect in his logic to the system with the central thing left out. There is no meeting ground at all in this life. Impossible, irreconcilable!"

A street-sweeper knows the streets. A moving cat-spring man can get the jump on blood-hungry nothoi-hunters. Bullets banged and clattered into walls of buildings, but Morgan had movements that the prediction scopes of the nothoi-hunters' rifles could not predict. And the hunters really weren't very good at movement shot, no matter how fancy the wrappings of their cult. Mostly they had hunted down and killed very small children and heavy and distraught women. It was higher sport to bring down a prime man, but they were less practiced at it.

Morgan was away from the first circle of them, going like ragged lightning, striking and vanishing. He sent several of the hunters on their dead way. He seemed always to go toward the inner city, and yet he retreated two steps toward the fringe and the Barrens for every conspicuous step that he took toward the center.

But they were all out after him now. Jazzbo horns sounded to call all hunters. Dogs of the two-legged variety took up the bay after him to trap him or tree him or sound him for the hunters. This was no illegitimate child to be hunted down. It was an illegitimate man, grown and known, illegal and illicit in his tongue and his life. They would have him in their dully murderous way. There was novelty (almost the only remaining one) and diversion in a nothoi-hunt; but there was no heroism, not in the hunters, not even in the prey.

For Morgan Saunders certainly had nothing heroic in him now. He ran sick and scared; he had believed it would be otherwise. He was a man of no special ability or intelligence. He had come to the old central way of things quite late, and by accident or intuition. He had no magic; he had no plan or program now but to run and evade. He had the unworldly hope and peace, but he hadn't them

immediately or vividly as he came to the end; only as buried certainties. He ran himself to weariness. The cat-springs and the movement died in him, and when he could no longer evade and elude, the nothoi-hunters had him and killed him on the edge of the city within sight of the miserable Barrens.

Jane the Crane found him a little later, still in the early morning. She picked him up in sudden strong arms. She walked and keened, carrying the dead Morgan in her arms and the live Ishmael under her belly, walked back into the city and among her flowers, trampling them (which was illegal), shrilling and wailing, a walking forky-tongued and agonizing pietá.

Morning crowds gathered about her and followed her; and even some of the folks from the regular swing-hour world were up and blinking at the spooky sunlight and the keening woman. They jeered and defamed her, and she came back with her forky tongue and harangued them all.

"Bedamned with you all and the fouled nest of you!" she cried. "You are vermin, you are no longer people. And the Instigators are lice on the body of the world."

And already the Instigators were holding council about her.

"Why not now?" some asked. "She is certainly illegitimate in her conduct, and she carries one illegitimate burden in her arms and another one in her belly. Why not now?"

"The hunting has come to be too slim," others of them said. "The nothoi-hunters insist that a small bit of it must be reserved. Here is an additional prey for them, in two years from now, or at most three. There is prescience about the unborn one. It is sworn that he will be prime game. And the hunters must retain a small reserve."

Another yellow-card street-sweeper, a man very like Morgan Saunders and a friend of his, came by with his working things. With great compassion he took Morgan from Janine's arms, bent him difficultly in the middle, and stuffed him into his wheeled canister. He also spoke some words to Janine in a low voice. We do not know what words they were, but they were like a flame. And now Janine became a new sort of flame.

She brightened, she burned, she erupted with laughter.

What? What? With laughter?

Yes, with laughter and with a quick spate of gay words:

"But why am I mourning like one who doesn't believe?" she sparked. "It's the dawn of the world to me! I am a birthing woman, and I will give merriment with my milk. I take the old motto '*This is the first day of the rest of my life.*' It's a new dawn, and I have loved

the dawns. To be otherwise would be to miss the main things as they have missed them. Hurry, Ishmael, you leaping lump in my belly! We have to get you born and agile before they come to eat us up. But by tomorrow's morning we will see each other's faces. God knows the wonder of it, to send births in the early mornings."

She went to her hidden shanty-room in the ghetto under the ghetto, singing and whistling. Really, she was an odd one in those flat False Terminal Days of the world.

(A question, perhaps out of context: Why were those False Terminal Days not truly terminal to the race and the world? O, there were other movements and powers that had not been taken into account. And the plateau, as a matter of fact, that low, level, artificial construction, had been built atop an area of old volcanic and earthquake movement. There was a great underlying fault, and it would erupt there. But this is not an account of termination of the Terminal Stasis.)

3

*I'll climb Sinai's rocks to the thunder-clad crest
And learn all that Moses forgot,
And see if the bush is at Hebron or Hest
And if it is burning or not.*

Archipelago

Here are some pages which possibly do not belong here at all. If that is so, then it is the fault of the randoming machines. This illegal private account of Janine Pervicacia and Morgan Saunders and their illegal issue *Ishmael* was first composed by a grieving friend and was printed (as everything was printed then) in scatter-print. The unnumbered pages, even of a private journal, had to go through a randoming machine and be randomized; the print machine would not function otherwise. Now, in sorting them out as best we can (for we are reader and not depth-comprehender), a certain section falls together that is not directly a part of the account of Janine and Morgan. Yet this section was mixed up with their account, whether or not it was also written by the hand of the grieving friend, and it will be given here. We do not know whether this intrusive section is comic or ironic or straight. There is even a chance that it may be a sample of a rare and secret form of the period, a satire upon a satire: an ironic counterpoise of a stereotyped satire form. We nominate this misfit section, "The In-

terlude of the the Odd Man and the Odd God," and it is as follows:

"In the early springtime of the year 2040 of the common era, the original sparse population having been removed from the area, three hundred persons of a troubling sort were sealed into the Vale of Pailliun, which is in the Knockmealdown Mountains of the Disunited Commonwealth of Ireland. These three hundred persons included certain fossils, die-hards, and "yesterday's leaders" of an irreformable religious and ethic sort, among them the last "Pope" who strangely insisted that he was not the last of them. These three hundred persons, families and singletons, were allowed the sheep and kine of the valley and such primitive tools as they chose to bring in. Seals were set for one thousand years (we do have the historical sense) on both the upper and lower entrances of the valley. All communications with the persons of the vale are evermore prohibited under pain of death. Nothing may go into the vale by earth or by air, and nothing may come out. If there is increase in the valley, then let that increase choke on itself."

—Joint statement of the United Nations Obsolescence and Terminating Board and of the One Ecumenical Liberal and Secular Church, May 1, 2040.

Matteo Mattutine (Matthew Morning—what kind of a name is that?), who was Pope Paul XIII, had said mass before dawn for the twelve who still adhered to him out of this remnant; they had assisted standing with tapers and rushlights. Then he had brought one flock of sheep (150 of them) up to the high pasture just a little before sunrise. He was a rugged old man and barefoot (for the ground of the vale was holy ground), though it was sharp November. The high grass of this pasture had browned and cured itself where it stood, making winter hay, and the sheep would be kept on such pastures till May when the close-grazed river meadow turned green again. Paul XIII had a hammer, a pestle, and a mattock sort of tool, which the Italians call *zappa*. He was mending a little stone sheep-bridge over the stream there.

What? Is it odd that a shepherd should herd sheep and that a pontiff should maintain bridges?

And Paul XIII talked with the Odd God there in the high pasture, as he talked with Him every morning:

"When we first came into this valley (our desert, our prison; our delight if You say it is our delight), we found certain beings here who were more ghost than flesh, who were not on the manifest of the proper fauna of this valley. I had seen such strange half-creatures (neither proper flesh nor yet honest brimstone) in the

high mountain valleys of Italy. We always believed them to be the shades of the old supplanted Italic gods and their devotees. But what are we to think when we find them here in Ireland? They are awkward and ungainly and not all there, either in mind or body. You must know of them, for You made them, though they deny it. They are not quite like men, not quite like devils; still less are they like angels. Yet they have some knowledge of the old established things.

"A great shapeless hulk of one such spook ran to me on my first morning in this vale. I could see the dew on the grass sparkling through him; and yet he had substance, for he kicked the rocks about with his big splay feet. He was in torment then, but was not I also in torment? 'Has Rome fallen?' he cried out to me in anguish. 'Is it true that Rome has fallen? Are all the golden walls and towers flung down?' 'Yes, fallen,' I said sadly. 'Rome had fallen before, but now she falls again in a special way.' At hearing that it was as if his outsized pumpkin-shaped head broke. His lumpish face cracked and he cried. He went back up into his rocks with a roaring and sobbing like dragons wailing their dead. And some of the stones in this valley also cried out at the news that Rome had fallen.

"What I would like to know, though, is whether we now become as they are. Do we (our remnant here) become like them: not quite like men, not quite like devils, even less like angels? Do we become here no more than ancient haunts, devotees of vanished gods, spooks of the waste places? Assure me that we are more than just one more layer of the stratified fossil formation. Assure me that we will be something more than this, even in our exile."

The Odd God spoke and assured Paul that they were something more than that. He spoke by a still-green thorn-bush bursting into flame.

Paul XIII spoke again, for only this one Person really listened to him:

"I have a little theory," said Paul XIII. "The first offense was the taking of the forbidden fruit. The second offense (which I believe is more grievous than the first) is the refusing of the bidden fruit. It is even the hacking down of the tree of the fruit. I believe that all the noisome oddities of the present world are entwined with this refusal and hacking. They kill an entire ecology when they hack down the growth tree. The people starve now in every aspect and do not even know that the name of their unease is starvation, that their pale fever is the starvation fever. Because they have food and ease they do not realize that they starve.

"Did You know that there is no landscape any more in the world? That there are no longer any real rocks or towns out there? Instead

there are only weak splotchy pictures of them. A countryside vanishes, and in its place is a poster dizzy with scatter-print that says, 'This represents a countryside.' A town goes down, and in its place is a psychedelic blob proclaiming, 'This stands for a town' People are terminated, and in their place are walking spooks with signs around their necks: 'We are we instead of people.' In place of life there is narcosis. Hack back the growth enough, and the thing dies. Cut a foot length from the top of a child, and it goes badly with that child. 'Oh, but the child would grow till he overflowed the world and broke the sky,' is what they said. 'How else to regularize the child and the world than to cut off their heads?' This I believe, is the wrong way.

"But will You not bid the fruit again to us? Offer it. Offer it again and again! In some way that only You understand it will be accepted. Will You not still bid the fruit to fruit?"

A fruity breath; a clear glitter of green leaves; a flash of blossoms that hung and then fell like snow; and a runty dead tree was red with apples. Remember that this was sharp November and the tree had not previously leaved that year.

"You remember the child who found a root and said he would pull it out?" Paul XIII continued. "But when he tried to pull it out, distant people and buildings shriveled and collapsed and were pulled down to nothing and died. The child pulled down the whole world but couldn't pull out that root. It was a special root; it was the root of everything. And for seven decades now, men have tried to pull out that same root; and instead they have pulled down that same world.

"They did it all to us with catchwords," Paul continued his morning conversation. "'We accept it all,' they said, 'except the flesh and blood of it. We are for all these things. We are only against the structure and body of them.' I had a little jibe for the critics who said they loved the Church Itself but hated the Institutional Church. 'What was the verb that God did about the Church?' I would ask in my guileless way. 'He *instituted* the Church, and therefore it is Institutional.' But perhaps I cheated a little in my jibe. For the verb that in the Vulgate is *instituo* is actually in the Greek—but I always forget, You know more Greek than I do. Is it true that there is one construction in the Greek Historical Optative that is now understood only by the Devil and Yourself? But tell me, are we now in an Historical Optative Time? And what are the options? Will Thou not reveal them to me?"

There were other early and devout men about in the vale. A kaf-taned Jew had a stone shed there in the upper pasture where he prepared parchments from sheepskins, and he had set to work now

with a low merry chanting. A Hard-Shell from the southern United States was there looking for a lost calf, having left the ninety-nine to find the one (having left them, however, in the careful care of another Hard-Shell). A Mosulman came down from the height of the sealed upper entrance of the valley where he had just performed his morning rites.

The several men looked up and about with a slight impatience. It was time.

"Must You always be reminded?" asked the Hard-Shell.

"We do not even ask the manna which You gave the Fathers," the kaftaned Jew said.

"Only the plain morning fare of this country," said Paul XIII.

Quick fire came down on a smoothed stone. And the browned oaten pancakes were there, rampant with ewe butter and honey and aroma. The several men began to eat them.

"I have to laugh at the late line of us from that Paul to this," Paul XIII reminisced. "I swear that we infuriated the world eleven times in these seven and a half decades. We were all known for our proclivities toward the accommodating secularism, we were all devoted to the soft surrogate thing, we were all intending to voice the easy agreement and be done with it, *we were all elected to do so*. And then You touched each of our tongues in turn with a burning coal. You think our actions bewildered and angered the world? I tell you that they bewildered ourselves a thousand times over. How does the speaking horn know what words will be spoken through him? Oh, well, I suppose You have Your reasons, but it has been a little hard on each of us, each being the only transcendent man living in the world in his time."

Paul XIII ran on with other talk because he was old and garrulous. It was sunlight on the high pastures now and soon the sun would reach down to the depths of the valley. Tinkle bells on the animals filled the air. Kids of sheep and goats and human were everywhere. Women were at work stone-grinding oats and barley. A smith was hammering copper and tin together into orange-colored tools and ornaments. Clipping men were long-clipping sheep. It was sharp November, and the sheep would not be short-clipped again till late spring. The sealed vale in the Knockmeal-down Mountains was a busy and burgeoning place.

"I believe that we should have a little of the special this morning," Paul XIII wheedled. "We can make it ourselves, of course," he flattered, "but we cannot make it nearly as good as You can. And I have forgotten. I have not so much as brought a pot for it this morning. We can make pots ourselves, of course, but we cannot make

them anywhere as good as You can."

There was a sigh in the wind over the vale, almost a sigh of exasperation, if He were capable of exasperation. But of a sudden a three-measure stone crusca-jar stood there, full of the most extraordinary Wine Ordinary, the reddest blood that ever bled from the earth. And several of them drank of it.

"Leave it off for a while, Paul the Thirteenth," the Hard-Shell growled. The Hard-Shell only half approved of the extraordinary Wine Ordinary, and he seldom took more than a sip of it. He was stricter than the Odd God but only by a little.

"He has talked to you as to a child, Paul," the Hard-Shell said, "and it wearies Him after a while, if He could be wearied. It is my turn now. This morning He may talk to me as to a man."

"I am a child," said Paul XIII. "I even flatter myself that I am a child of grace."

Then Paul returned to mending the stone sheep-bridge, and the Hard-Shell talked to the Odd God in his own way. And later the kaf-taned Jew came and talked to Him, deeply like low music, shivering with fear and quaking with merriment at the same time. Old Jews are said to have several private jokes between themselves and the Odd God.

And again later the Mosulman came and talked to Him in the desert manner which He especially understands.

They were an odd clutch in that valley of the Knockmealdown Mountains, and it was an Odd God who provided for them.

4

*Lo, blessed are our ears for they have heard;
Yea, blessed are our eyes for they have seen:
Let thunder break on man and beast and bird
And the lightning. It is something to have been.*

G. K. Chesterton

Jane the Crane had the boy Ishmael born and agile in less time than might be believed. There was a very great hurry now. A baby is vulnerable: not Ishmael, perhaps, but most babies. But he was not born ignorant or uninstructed. For the many months of Janine's carrying him (well, it had been long; he was part monster, surely, and their period is a longer one), she had instructed him all

the hours of the day and night, speaking to him silently or loudly when she was working over her flowers, when gawking about in the street, when abiding in her hidden shanty-room. Especially in the afternoons (these were her nights, when she slept) she instructed him, for they shared the same dreams just as they shared the same blood.

“I tell you, I don’t know whether I can hide you better inside or out,” she would say to him. “I leave it to you now. Come out when you’re ready. You are already bigger than I am. I tell you to get smart fast, to get fast fast. Are you listening to me? You must learn to hide and to disguise. You must learn to look like this one and that one. You will live in the sewers and on the roofs and in the trees. Let me tell you one thing: it is better even to have lived in the dankest agony and fear than never to have lived at all. It is better to be a vermin than never to be anything. It is better to be weird and deformed (I do not mean deformed as the world is deformed now) than to be empty and without form. It is better to be conscious in horror and delirium than to miss consciousness. If you have a nomination and a soul, then nothing else matters greatly. This I believe. If you can hear and understand me, whistle.”

And the boy Ishmael always whistled from out of her belly. He always heard and he always understood. Then, when they both realized that it was no longer possible to hide him within, he was born. When they both realized immediately that it would not do to have him newborn and helpless, he became agile. The open eyes of Ishmael were clouded for only short instants after birth. Then they cleared; he understood; he knew. Nobody ever heard him cry like a human child. He had more sense than that. Sometimes he chirped and whistled like a chimney bird, sometimes he whined like a dog pup. (Dogs, as surrogate to human persons and human affections were everywhere privileged.) Sometimes Ishmael gurgled like sewer water; but he was always able to communicate—even to communicate without sound.

But where could Ishmael hide? Illegal stories attached to his mother, Jane the Crane. She was watched and followed and checked. All the shanty rooms of the city were searched from time to time by the “rat catchers” who anticipated the nothoi-hunters with the not yet mobile illegals.

Ishmael lived in the sewers and on the roofs and in the trees. But mostly he lived under the floors and in the walls. All the shanties were fifty to eighty years old. Nothing was ever built now, only cobbled up a little just before it tumbled down. Inside the walls was the best place. A young boy not yet able to walk could still climb

about inside the walls. And not even the dogs of the rat-catchers would snuffle him out from them. Ishmael could whine and rattle and yap in the dogs' own talk. He could pass for a dog in the dark corners, under the floors, inside the walls. When Ishmael seemed like this one or that one, he seemed so to every sense.

But how did Jane the Crane feed him? However did other illegitimate mothers feed their offspring? Oh, there had never been any shortage of food. The swing-time people wasted far more food than they ate. The illegitimate mothers, mostly servile workers to the swingers or morning yellow-card workers, had only to carry leavings home "for the dogs." It wasn't starvation that killed the illegal children; it was the "scatter eyes" and the rat-catchers prowling to find and kill them, doing the work voluntarily mostly, from some inner need of theirs.

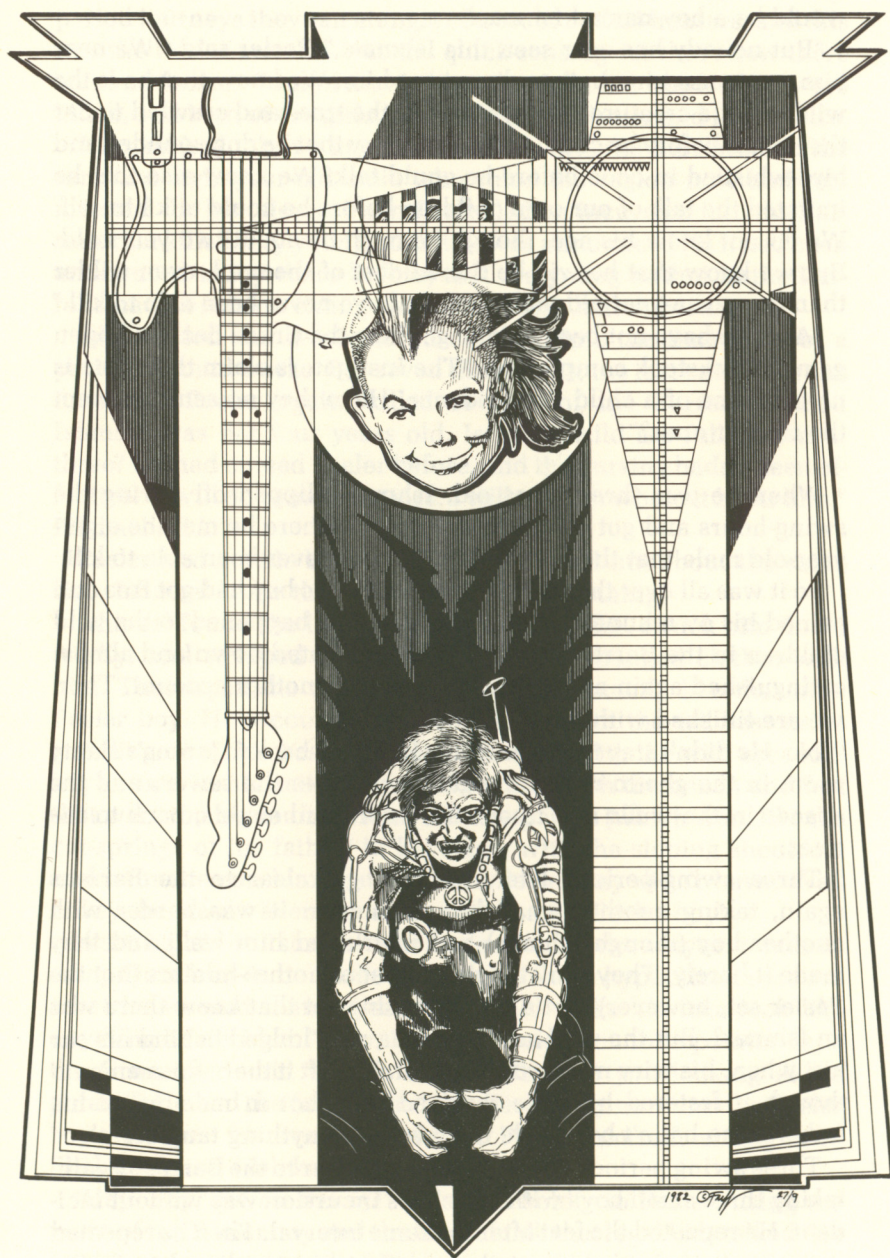
Ishmael, however, passed all the other illegal children in earliness and agility. He was one of the few authentic geniuses born in the first half of the twenty-first century: thinking like a pot-a-boil before he could talk; reading minds before he could read the simplest scatter-print; imitating animals by sound and scent and movement; imitating legal children by face before he ever saw the reflection of his own face. He was a wild colt of a boy destined, should he live, to be a wild ass of a man. And he had fame. He was known everywhere before he was seen. Fame is a weed that grows up overnight and can be rooted in anything or nothing.

Some of the nothoi-hunters already talked about the agile Ishmael, possibly before he was ever out of the womb, certainly soon afterward. There was Peeler, a big man among the hunters. There was Slickstock. There was Quickcoiner, a tipster gentleman such as was always a part of a hunter team. These three were now dining together on the popular Chinese dish, egg gone wrong.

"There's a new one, I tell you!" Peeler gloated and rubbed his long hands together. "I can feel him like a new wind ruffling my hackles. He's the dog that barks different, he's the bird that whistles different, he's the sewer rat that squeaks different. He's the one of the kind we always hoped for. It will make our season whenever we kill him. The next best thing to killing that seven-year-old male would be to kill this new one."

"He's under the streets, he's in the trees," said Slickstock, "and I tell you he's mine! His father killed a teammate of mine at his own hunting-down. How had we missed his father all his years? Where did he come from?"

"This new one is out of Jane the Crane, the forky-tongued flower woman," Quickcoiner said. "Is she not game yet, now that he is born? Is she not game? Why must we hold off? He is named



Ishmael."

It was known, even before his father came to this city, that there would be a boy named Ishmael.

"But nobody has ever seen this Ishmael," Peeler said. "We hear him, we sense him, but we do not see him. We know that he is the wild ass of a creature who climbed in the trees and crawled under the streets before he could walk. We know that he dog-sounded and bird-whistled in code before he could talk. We know also that he imitated the talk of our own children before he could talk himself. We do not know his age, though he must be about two years old. But we know that he will be the wildest of them all, even wilder than the seven-year-old male that we have never been able to kill."

"And we have not been able to get Jane the Crane declared open game," Slickstock complained. "The Instigators claim that there is no evidence of a child. No evidence! Have they no senses except the regular ones?"

When he was three years old, Ishmael slipped off during the swing-hours and got clear to the Barrens where he met the eight-year-old male that the nothoi-hunters had never been able to kill.

So it was all over then, the little drama? The boy had got free and gained his own hunted kind. And whatever happened to the wild children in the Barrens, how they were hunted down and almost extinguished again and again, is surely of another account. Then we are finished with the wild boy Ishmael?

No. He didn't stay in the Barrens. He came back to Janine's slanty room in the ghetto under the ghetto, back to the sewers and the spaces in the walls and under the floors and streets, back to the trees.

Three swing-periods later, Ishmael got clear to the Barrens again, taking another small boy with him. It was harder with another boy (though Ishmael had instructed him well) and they made it barely. They ran atangle of a set of nothoi-hunters (not the Peeler set, however), not a quick-sensing set that knew there was an Ishmael. But the wild-ass boy had a shot lodged behind his ear just where his wiry mane rose highest. He left it there for memento though it festered him. He received this shot in memory of his father, who hadn't been able to leave him anything tangible.

Three swing periods later, Ishmael got clear to the Barrens again, taking three small boys with him. This incursion was without incident. He repeated the feat after the same interval. Then he repeated it again. It took him about three days to instruct and train the children properly. Many two-and three- and four-year-old children are slow learners and inattentive, though Ishmael selected only the

most promising of them to smuggle to the Barrens.

Then they had their first fatalities. During one of their swing-period journeys they ran atangle of a set of nothoi-hunters, and this was the Peeler set; this was the quick-sensing set that knew there was an Ishmael. Four of the six boys that Ishmael was leading were killed, and both of the girls. Ishmael cursed Peeler and his cronies.

Ishmael had taken a hundred children into the Barrens, and the rampant eight-year-old male who ruled the region now had real material for his talents. Then Peeler led an incursion into the Barrens that killed fifty young nothoi. It was announced (as it had been announced many times before) that the young nothoi in the Barrens had now been extinguished. But they hadn't been.

Ishmael led another hundred children into the Barrens over a period of some weeks. But seven incursions, the last one led by the notorious Peeler again, killed seventy of the Barrens nothoi. Ishmael was not four years old. Is not a wild ass full grown at three? He had cursed Peeler before, and the cursing hadn't been effective. "I will do something else. I will get him where it hurts him," Ishmael said.

Peeler had a little boy, older than Ishmael but about the same size. Ishmael knew this. Ishmael knew everything.

Ishmael found the little boy, Onlyborn Peeler, struck him down wildly, and stripped him naked. Then he changed clothes with him. Thereupon, he made himself to look exactly like that little Peeler boy. How could he have done it, with the wild-ass crine standing up on his head and neck like that? With the wild eyes rolling around in his head the way they did? With the hands and feet that were too big for him, with the ass-springs (which were like the cat-springs of his father) in his steps, with the sloping shoulders and haunches on him that the little Peeler boy didn't have? Well hokey, he wasn't even the same color as the Peeler boy!

Well, he did it. Ishmael was hypnotic. He drew eyes to him or away from him as he wished. He made those hypnotized eyes see what he wanted them to see. He could make his face look like anything he decided. "Why, I almost peeled you for a potato!" Jane the Crane had said to him once. "Why are you looking like a potato?" He had the face of the little Peeler boy now and the Peeler boy's clothes. He went and found Peeler himself, sitting with Slickstock and Quickcoiner.

"Hey, Pop, get on the op!" he spoke boldly to Peeler, using the voice of the Peeler boy and the kind of talk that legal kids talked. He put his eye to the barrel of Peeler's gun and looked down it.

"What is the matter with you, Onlyborn? Why do you look so funny? What are you doing here? Why aren't you in kindergarten?" Peeler

asked Ishmael with rising anger.

"Peeler, I never realized that your kid looked so funny," said Quickcoiner, "and looking from him to you, I never realized that you looked so funny either."

"Got him easy, got him hard, got him dead in our own backyard," Ishmael chanted in the little Peeler boy voice.

"Talk sense, or get out of here and back to school," Peeler ordered.

"Peeler!" Slickstock roared, rising, "Let's go see! If somebody's dead, we want to know why we didn't get to kill him. Maybe somebody else has been potting our game."

Ishmael was running toward the Peeler house, and the three big nothoi-hunters were clattering after him to see who was dead there.

"Who is it, Onlyborn, who is dead?" Peeler was calling after Ishmael, still thinking he was his own son.

"On the op, Pop, see the fish," Ishmael chanted as he ran, "all laid out and his name is Ish."

"Ishmael!" Peeler roared like a wounded boar. "Somebody has stolen Ishmael from us."

"Ishmael!" Slickstock shouted. "We've been robbed. He was our assigned kill."

"Ishmael!" Quickcoiner shrieked. "I'll have coin back from the tipsters. They assured me he could never be caught in the city."

Ishmael pointed when they came to the body. Then he faded back through the big nothoi-hunters and was into the trees. He was in the near trees for a moment, till he should see how the hunters carried on, but ready to be into the far trees as soon as those big men realized what had happened.

"Ishmael!" Peeler agonized as he bent over the little body where Ishmael had struck it down. "Wait, men, wait!" he said then. "Why, this can't be Ishmael at all! This is my little boy Onlyborn who is dead here. This is the funniest thing I ever heard of. What do you make of it, fellows?" (Peeler didn't particularly care for his small son. The kid-card and the kid [for prestige] had put him into hock for years.)

"But since this is little Onlyborn"—Quickcoiner hesitated—"then who was—?"

"Ishmael!" Slickstock roared. "It was himself! He tricked us! He bearded the lions in our own jaws. We'll have him, we'll have him! He's our kill!"

"Coin out of my hand," Quickcoiner cried. "I'll overdraw. I'll get every tipster in town on this. We're tricked. We'll get him, we'll get him fast."

"I'll kill him, I'll kill him," Peeler jabbered. "Made fools of us! Looked right down my gun. Insulted us. Something else. Yeah, he killed my boy. I'll kill him, I'll kill him."

It hadn't quite fallen as Ishmael (now in the far trees) had figured. He hadn't gotten Peeler where it hurt him in killing his son, Onlyborn, and this puzzled Ishmael. But he had got him where it hurt him in tricking him, in making a fool out of him. It had been to the death between them before. Now it was triply so.

Quickcoiner poured out money to the tipsters, and they began to hem Ishmael in, so they thought. Peeler and Ishmael declared the special game of his set.

But there was enough hunting for all the nothoi-hunter sets now. A dozen other wild-ass kids were working in the city, instructed by Ishmael himself and by the intrepid nine-year-old male that the nothoi-hunters had never been able to kill. And new Barrens-like places were already being used: a skimpy little region called the Potato Hills, a swampy stretch called the Deadwood Bottoms. And the wild-ass kids were breaking out all over the world; wilder than they had been before, donkey-smart now, long-eared for rumor and news, mule-strong, jenny-fleet, hoof-hard, rebels, misbegottens, Issachars, asses indeed. They even used the sinister-barred bray for signal now and for mockery. The left-handed brotherhood had rampaged before, and it refused to believe now that it was extinguished.

But the nothoi-hunters also came on stronger now, more professional, better provided, better intelligenced, more adaptably armed. Every new evasion tactic that the nothoi kids discovered was soon the property of the prediction scopes of the hunters' rifles.

Ishmael had run other bunches of illegitimate kids into the Barrens and the Bottoms and the Potato Hills. Then it came to his mother (who had powers) that he had run his way; to whichever end, she did not know.

"You have run to the end of the line in this," she said. "You are already too big to crawl in many of the walls and under many of the floors and streets. The crawl spaces are only suited for very small children. You are too big to be passed over by the sharp eyes, you are too big to vanish absolutely. You will die on your next incursion; or you will get through to the wilds a last time and remain there to be a male in the Barrens or the Bottoms. There is no plan, there has never been any plan except to live: that everybody be allowed to live once—a little while at least. To have been is to be forever. But never to have been is to be nothing."

"Oh, we make plans, the nine-year-old male and I. But they close

in on us more and kill more of us every time. And we run out of tricks and dodges and evasions. The prediction scopes on their guns know them all. They know when we will break pace, when we will cut back, even before we know it."

"There is one trick that they don't know, Ishmael of the high crine and the wobbly eyes," Jane the Crane said. "If you are trapped for the last time, run *straight*. The scopes will not understand it, and the hunter-men will not understand it. Run a *straight line that last time*. The very idea of a straight line has vanished from this world."

Quickcoiner had poured more money to the tipsters. Slickstock had organized beaters. Peeler had led incursions into the Barrens and Bottoms and Hills that had left those refuges torn to pieces. Ishmael could tell by the tint of the streams in the mornings how many had died in the Barrens the night before.

"It is the last day," Jane the Crane told Ishmael now. "Not the last day for you, maybe. Not the last day for me, maybe. But the last day for us. I knew which was the last day I would have with your father. I know this is the last day I will have you. Whatever I have done I have done. Now it is time that I do it again."

After that, Ishmael went on incursion and got through with a good pack of kids. He got back just in the closing hours of swing-time and found that every entrance to every burrow was spotted and guarded and closed to him. He could smell the hunters smelling him. He could sense their sensors.

He heard also that his mother Jane the Crane had now been declared open game. He was trapped and angry. He was an animal-smart six-year-old boy of the species that had once been human, that might again be human after its freakish interlude. He was a towering and intelligent example of that species which was being hewn to death in its best, in its left-handed blood.

He was blocked in, he was sighted, he took to the trees. This city (thanks for all green and growing favors) had preserved its trees. But the trees did not reach all the way to the Barrens. They did not, but they reached to—

—Too late! He smelled the trip wire, of course, but he could not avoid tripping it, not at the speed he was going. And he hadn't expected a sky trap, a treetop trap. He had never encountered such before. But the tipsters had gathered information on Ishmael's every route, even his routes through the high trees.

There was a searing and acrid explosion. There was a ballooning wave of green fragments and gray-brown bark branches, and there was a sudden gap in the sky where there had been foliage. Ishmael, broken and burned considerably, fell to the street out of that sud-

den gap in the sky. Communication crackled, and three sets of nothoi-hunters converged on the boy. Peeler was barking that it was his kill and the other sets should desist.

Ishmael, dazed and bloodied, rose out of the green trash that covered him and began to run in the direction of the Barrens. He ran in a straight line. The short-range rifles began to cough at him; they were mostly from Peeler's set. One set of hunters did desist. Another set was firing crazily. It almost seemed as if men were firing at Peeler and Slickstock and Quickcoiner. There were confused and angry cries and the barking of weapons, but Ishmael ran on, straight as a lance and untouched; ran on under the last of these trees, under the open sky, toward distant trees again, on and on.

The prediction scopes of the hunters' rifles simply could not handle a straight-line trail. Nothing in their data or in their world gave information on this ultimate evasion tactic. The scope on Peeler's own gun failed in frustration and smoke, and the other scopes glowed red in malfunction and failure.

It seemed that Ishmael might make it through clear again, to trees, to escape, to the Barrens. He didn't. A ricochet shot killed him there, no more than a dozen bounds from the skirting woods. He bunched and fell; he looked half animal, half child, as he curled into a small ball and died quickly.

There was Peeler's barking laugh of triumph; then a quick flash out of those skirting trees sawed it in half. Something had dived down from those trees, too swift for free fall. The something had hit, rolled, scurried, run, and swooped to the curled-up ball that was the dead boy Ishmael. The something had Ishmael (knowing that he was dead), bounded with him while the fury howl and fast clatter of bullets came from at least two sets of hunters, reached the skirting trees with the burden, and bounded up a trunk like a giant squirrel. Perhaps the apparition got away clear, perhaps not. The nearer trees were almost bowed over with the blow of automatic weapons.

It had been the ten-year-old male from the Barrens who had come and snatched the body of Ishmael from under the noses of the guns. For what? He himself knew that Ishmael was already dead. He himself had taught Ishmael never to waste time on a dead one. For what then?

For heroism. He did not know that heroism was already dead. He believed that he could establish a mystique and a tomb.

Half a dozen sets of hunters were now after the young male and his dead burden. Not the set of Peeler, however. Peeler's set had got its kill, though by accident. It wanted more of the same blood, and it had one more prey assigned to it as open game.

"Where's the mother?" Peeler howled. "We may as well have double party today," Slickstock exulted. "Tipsters, tipsters, where is the leggy one?" Quickcoiner screeched.

But Jane the Crane had already rushed out, wailing and keening: "Oh my son, Oh my son!" she cried. "Oh my son, come back to me!"

Somehow that didn't sound like Jane the Crane's way of carrying on.

But shots sang out. Janine went rigid in spread agony; she fell at full length; she spilled out gore, quivered, and was quiet.

The shots had not come from the unready guns of Peeler's set. They had come, apparently, from another set of hunters down a side street. There was an afterburst of firing from there also; again it almost seemed as if someone was shooting at Peeler's set. Peeler and his associates took cover, confused by the dangerous random firing, happy that Ishmael and his mother had been killed, somewhat morbid that they themselves had not done all the killing.

(Check it, sensors, check it. Is there something tricky about all this? —No. It appears quite authentic.)

Janine Pervicaia lay in her gore in the open street, and a yellow-card street-sweeper came dutifully to dispose of her. Slain illegal women were common enough, of course; but Janine was uncommonly comely and leggy, and many eyes were on her. This had to be done carefully, and she herself was not very careful now. But what would it matter, when she was already slain?

Slain? She was not slain. She wasn't touched. She hadn't lived with Morgan that long, she hadn't lived with Ishmael that long, to be killed in the open street, and for nothing. But it is good to have "Dead" written on your record and have it closed when it has gotten out of hand. Perhaps one can become another person with another record, or with none.

The yellow-card street-sweeper (who looked very like Morgan Saunders and had been friend of him) did indeed gather Janine up as if she were dead, bending her difficultly in the middle and stuffing her into his wheeled canister. Quite a bit of her still stuck out; she was pretty leggy. But there had been signal between Jane the Crane and the sweeper, and perhaps illegal communication had also been held with others.

The gore that had spilled out in the street was not Jane's own. Many of the illegal birthing women now carried gore with them for just such eventualities as this. (And there were more and more of them now in the ghetto that is under the ghetto; there were more and more of their issue getting through to the various Barrens to set

up kids' kingdoms. For already the Plateau had begun to tremble with its great underlying fault. Earthquake and Volcano and Upheaval!)

"Is it Agar again, or is it the Jane.?" the trundling sweeper asked softly to the inside of his canister. "No, no, do not sing and whistle, or softly if you do. That's enough to make any canister suspect."

Jane the Crane had lost her man, the dashing street-sweeper from over the sea. She had lost her son Ishmael, the incandescent wild colt of a boy. But she sang and whistled (doubled up as she was in the canister) gaily but so low that only her new sweeper-man could hear her.

She'd do it again—and again. She would be a birthing woman once more. And once more she would give merriment with her milk.

EUREMA'S DAM

He was about the last of them.

What? The last of the great individualists? The last of the true creative geniuses of the century? The last of the sheer precursors?

No. No. He was the last of the dolts.

Kids were being born smarter all the time when he came along, and they would be so forever more. He was about the last dumb kid ever born.

Even his mother had to admit that Albert was a slow child. What else can you call a boy who doesn't begin to talk till he is four years old, who won't learn to handle a spoon till he is six, who can't operate a doorknob till he is eight? What else can you say about one who put his shoes on the wrong feet and walked in pain? And who had to be told to close his mouth after yawning?

Some things would always be beyond him—like whether it was the big hand or the little hand of the clock that told the hours. But this wasn't something serious. He never did care what time it was.

When, about the middle of his ninth year, Albert made a breakthrough at telling his right hand from his left he did it by the most ridiculous set of mnemonics ever put together. It had to do with the way dogs turn around before lying down, the direction of whirlpools and whirlwinds, the side a cow is milked from and a horse is mounted from, the direction of twist of oak and sycamore

leaves, the maze patterns of rock moss and tree moss, the cleavage of limestone, the direction of a hawk's wheeling, a shrike's hunting, and a snake's coiling (remembering that the Mountain Boomer is an exception), the lay of cedar fronds and balsam fronds, the twist of a hole dug by a skunk and by a badger (remembering pungently that skunks sometimes use old badger holes). Well, Albert finally learned to remember which was right and which was left, but an observant boy would have learned his right hand from his left without all that nonsense.

Albert never learned to write a readable hand. To get by in school he cheated. From a bicycle speedometer, a midget motor, tiny eccentric cams, and batteries stolen from his grandfather's hearing aid Albert made a machine to write for him. It was small as a doodlebug and fitted onto pen or pencil so that Albert could conceal it with his fingers. It formed the letters beautifully as Albert set the cams to follow a copybook model. He triggered the different letters with keys no bigger than whiskers. Sure it was crooked, but what else can you do when you're too dumb to learn how to write passably?

Albert couldn't figure at all. He had to make another machine to figure for him. It was a palm-of-the-hand thing that would add and subtract and multiply and divide. The next year when he was in the ninth grade they gave him algebra, and he had to devise a flipper to go on the end of his gadget to work quadratic and simultaneous equations. If it weren't for such cheating Albert wouldn't have gotten any marks at all in school.

He had another difficulty when he came to his fifteenth year. People, that is an understatement. There should be a stronger word than "difficulty" for it. He was afraid of girls.

What to do?

"I will build me a machine that is not afraid of girls," Albert said. He set to work on it. He had it nearly finished when a thought came to him: "But no machine is afraid of girls. How will this help me?"

His logic was at fault and analogy broke down. He did what he always did. He cheated.

He took the programming rollers from an old player piano in the attic, found a gear case that would serve, used magnetized sheets instead of perforated music rolls, fed a copy of Wormwood's *Logic* into the matrix, and he had a logic machine that would answer questions.

"What's the matter with me that I'm afraid of girls?" Albert asked his logic machine.

"Nothing the matter with you," the logic machine told him. "It's logical to be afraid of girls. They seem pretty spooky to me too."

"But what can I do about it?"

"Wait for time and circumstances. They sure are slow. Unless you want to cheat—"

"Yes, yes, what then?"

"Build a machine that looks just like you, Albert, and talks just like you. Only make it smarter than you are, and not bashful. And, ah, Albert, there's a special thing you'd better put into it in case things go wrong. I'll whisper it to you. It's dangerous."

So Albert made Little Danny, a dummy who looked like him and talked like him, only he was smarter and not bashful. He filled Little Danny with quips from *Mad* magazine and from *Quip*, and then they were set.

Albert and Little Danny went to call on Alice.

"Why, he's wonderful!" Alice said. "Why can't you be like that, Albert? Aren't you wonderful, Little Danny? Why do you have to be so stupid, Albert, when Little Danny is so wonderful?"

"I, uh, uh, I don't know," Albert said, "uh, uh, uh."

"He sounds like a fish with the hiccups," Little Danny said.

"You do, Albert, really you do!" Alice screamed. "Why can't you say smart things like Little Danny does, Albert? Why are you so stupid?"

This wasn't working out very well, but Albert kept with it. He programmed Little Danny to play the ukulele and to sing. He wished that he could program himself to do it. Alice loved everything about Little Danny, but she paid no attention to Albert. And one day Albert had had enough.

"Wha- wha- what do we need with this dummy?" Albert asked. "I just made him to am- to amu- to make you laugh. Let's go off and leave him."

"Go off with you, Albert?" Alice asked. "But you're so stupid. I tell you what. Let's you and me go off and leave Albert, Little Danny. We can have more fun without him."

"Who needs him?" Little Danny asked. "Get lost, Buster."

Albert walked away from them. He was glad that he'd taken his logic machine's advice as to the special thing to be built into Little Danny. He walked fifty steps. A hundred. "Far enough," Albert said, and he pushed a button in his pocket.

Nobody but Albert and his logic machine ever did know what that explosion was. Tiny wheels out of Little Danny and small pieces of Alice rained down a little later, but there weren't enough fragments for anyone to identify.

Albert had learned one lesson from his logic machine: never

make anything that you can't unmake.

Well, Albert finally grew to be a man, in years at least. He would always have something about him of a very awkward teen-ager. And yet he fought his own war against those who were teen-agers in years, and defeated them completely. There was enmity between them forever. He hadn't been a very well-adjusted adolescent, and he hated the memory of it. And nobody ever mistook him for an adjusted man.

Albert was too awkward to earn a living at an honest trade. He was reduced to peddling his little tricks and contrivances to shysters and promoters. But he did back into a sort of fame, and he did become burdened with wealth.

He was too stupid to handle his own monetary affairs, but he built an actuary machine to do his investing and became rich by accident; he built the damned thing too good and he regretted it.

Albert became one of that furtive group that has saddled us with all the mean things in our history. There was that Punic who couldn't learn the rich variety of hieroglyphic characters and who devised the crippled short alphabet for wan-wits. There was the nameless Arab who couldn't count beyond ten and who set up the ten-number system for babies and idiots. There was the double-Dutchman with his movable type who drove fine copy out of the world. Albert was of their miserable company.

Albert himself wasn't much good at anything. But he had in himself a low knack for making machines that were good at everything.

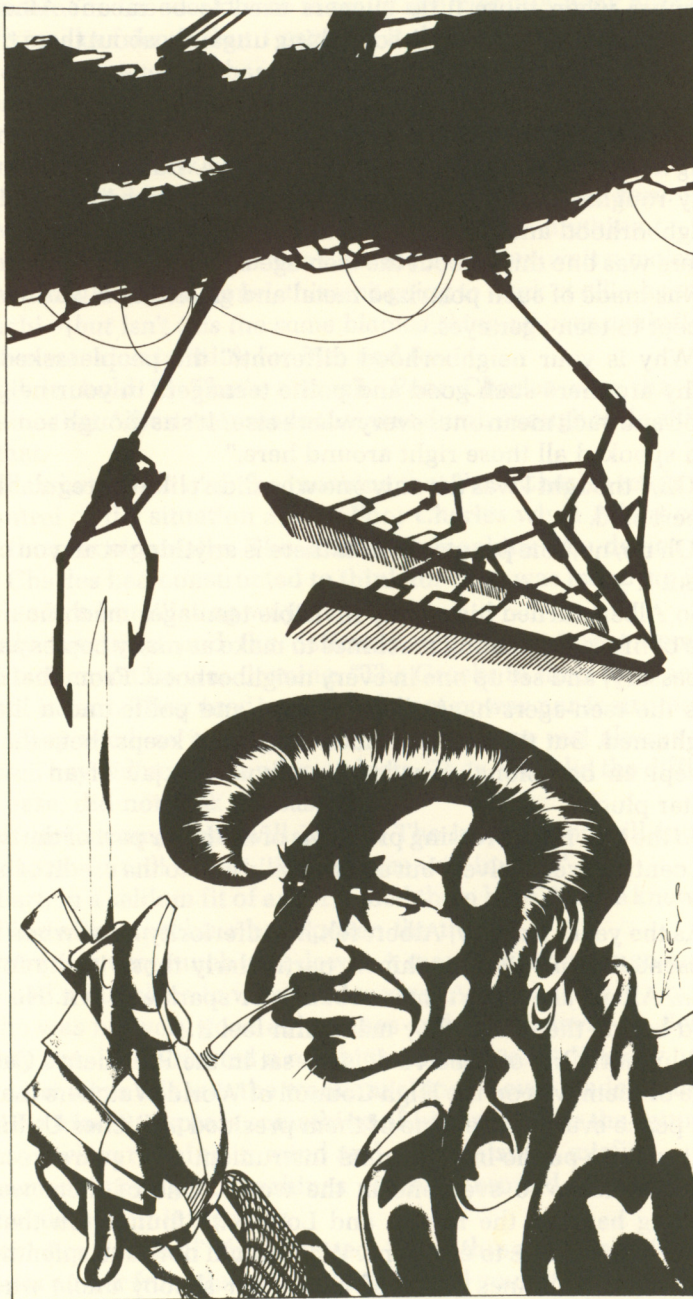
His machines did a few things. You remember that anciently there was smog in the cities. Oh, it could have been drawn out of the air easily enough. All it took was a tickler. Albert made a tickler machine. He would set it fresh every morning. It would clear the air in a circle three hundred yards around his hovel and gather a little over a ton of residue every twenty-four hours. This residue was rich in large polysyllabic molecules which one of his chemical machines could use.

"Why can't you clear all the air?" the people asked him.

"This is as much of the stuff as Clarence Deoxyribonucleiconibus needs every day," Albert said. That was the name of this particular chemical machine.

"But we die from the smog," the people told him. "Have mercy on us."

"Oh, all right," Albert said. He turned it over to one of his reduplicating machines to make as many copies as were necessary.



You remember that once there was a teen-ager problem? You remember when those little buggers used to be mean? Albert got enough of them. There was something ungainly about them that reminded him too much of himself. He made a teen-ager of his own. It was rough. To the others it looked like one of themselves, the ring in the left ear, the dangling side-locks, the brass knucks and the long knife, the guitar pluck to jab in the eye. But it was incomparably rougher than the human teen-agers. It terrorized all in the neighborhood and made them behave, and dress like real people. There was one thing about the teen-age machine that Albert made. It was made of such polarized metal and glass that it was invisible except to teen-ager eyes.

"Why is your neighborhood different?" the people asked him. "Why are there such good and polite teenagers in your neighborhood and such mean ones everywhere else? It's as though something had spooked all those right around here."

"Oh, I thought I was the only one who didn't like the regular kind," Albert said.

"Oh no, no," the people said. "If there is anything at all you can do about it—"

So Albert turned his mostly invisible teen-ager machine over to one of his reduplicating machines to make as many copies as were necessary, and set up one in every neighborhood. From that day to this the teen-agers have all been good and polite and a little bit frightened. But there is no evidence of what keeps them that way except an occasional eye dangling from the jab of an invisible guitar pluck.

So the two most pressing problems of the latter part of the twentieth century were solved, but accidentally and to the credit of no one.

As the years went by, Albert felt his inferiority most when in the presence of his own machines, particularly those in the form of men. Albert just hadn't their urbanity or sparkle or wit. He was a clod beside them, and they made him feel it.

Why not? One of Albert's devices sat in the President's Cabinet. One of them was on the High Council of World-Watchers that kept the peace everywhere. One of them presided at Riches Unlimited, that private-public-international instrument that guaranteed reasonable riches to everyone in the world. One of them was the guiding hand in the Health and Longevity foundation that provided those things to everyone. Why should not such splendid and successful machines look down on their shabby uncle who had made them?

"I'm rich by a curious twist," Albert said to himself one day, "and

honored through a mistake of circumstance. But there isn't a man or machine in the world who is really my friend. A book here tells how to make friends, but I can't do it that way. I'll make one my own way."

So Albert set out to make a friend.

He made Poor Charles, a machine as stupid and awkward and inept as himself. "Now I will have a companion," Albert said, but it didn't work. Add two zeros together and you still have zero. Poor Charles was too much like Albert to be good for anything.

Poor Charles! Unable to think, he made a—(*but wait a moleskin-gloved minute here, Colonel, this isn't going to work at all*)—he made a machi—(*but isn't this the same blamed thing all over again?*)—he made a machine to think for him and to—

Hold it, hold it! That's enough. Poor Charles was the only machine that Albert ever made that was dumb enough to do a thing like that.

Well, whatever it was, the machine that Poor Charles made was in control of the situation and of Poor Charles when Albert came onto them accidentally. The machine's machine, the device that Poor Charles had constructed to think for him, was lecturing Poor Charles in a humiliating way.

"Only the inept and the deficient will invent," that damned machine's machine was droning. "The Greeks in their high period did not invent. They used neither adjunct power nor instrumentation. They used, as intelligent men or machines will always use, slaves. They did not descend to gadgets. They, who did the difficult with ease, did not seek the easier way.

"But the incompetent will invent. The insufficient will invent. The depraved will invent. And knaves will invent."

Albert, in a seldom fit of anger, killed them both. But he knew the machine of his machine had spoken the truth.

Albert was very much cast down. A more intelligent man would have had a hunch as to what was wrong. Albert had only a hunch that he was not very good at hunches and would never be. Seeing no way out, he fabricated a machine and named it Hunchy.

In most ways this was the worst machine he ever made. In building it he tried to express something of his unease for the future. It was an awkward thing in mind and mechanism, a misfit.

His more intelligent machines gathered around and hooted at him while he put it together.

"Boy! Are you lost!" they taunted. "That thing is a primitive! To draw its power from the ambient! We talked you into throwing that away twenty years ago and setting up coded power for all of us."

"Uh—someday there may be social disturbances and all centers

of power and apparatuses seized," Albert stammered. "But Hunchy would be able to operate if the whole world were wiped smooth."

"It isn't even tuned to our information matrix," they jibed. "It's worse than Poor Charles. That stupid thing practically starts from scratch."

"Maybe there'll be a new kind of itch for it," said Albert.

"It's not even housebroken!" the urbane machines shouted their indignation. "Look at that! Some sort of primitive lubrication all over the floor."

"Remembering my childhood, I sympathize," Albert said.

"What's it good for?" they demanded.

"Ah—it gets hunches," Albert mumbled.

"Duplication!" they shouted. "That's all you're good for yourself, and not very good at that. We suggest an election to replace you as—pardon our laughter—head of these enterprises."

"Boss, I got a hunch how we can block them there," the unfinished Hunchy whispered.

"They're bluffing," Albert whispered back. "My first logic machine taught me never to make anything I can't unmake. I've got them there, and they know it. I wish I could think up things like that myself."

"Maybe there will come an awkward time and I will be good for something," Hunchy said.

Only once, and that rather late in life, did a sort of honesty flare up in Albert. He did one thing (and it was a dismal failure) on his own. That was the night in the year of the double millennium when Albert was presented with the Finnerty-Hochmann Trophy, the highest award that the intellectual world could give. Albert was certainly an odd choice for it, but it had been noticed that almost every basic invention for thirty years could be traced back to him or to the devices with which he had surrounded himself.

You know the trophy. Atop it was Eurema, the synthetic Greek goddess of invention, with arms spread as though she would take flight. Below this was a stylized brain cut away to show the convoluted cortex. And below this was the coat of arms of the Academicians: Ancient Scholar rampant (argent); the Anderson Analyzer sinister (gules); the Mondeman Space-Drive dexter (vair). It was a very fine work by Groben, his ninth period.

Albert had the speech composed for him by his speech-writing machine, but for some reason he did not use it. He went on his own, and that was disaster. He got to his feet when he was introduced, and he stuttered and spoke nonsense:

"Ah—only the sick oyster produces nacre," he said, and they all

gaped at him. What sort of beginning for a speech was that? "Or do I have the wrong creature?" Albert asked weakly.

"Eurema does not look like that!" Albert gawked out and pointed suddenly at the trophy. "No, no, that isn't her at all. Eurema walks backward and is blind. And her mother is a brainless hulk."

Everybody was watching him with pained expression.

"Nothing rises without a leaven," Albert tried to explain, "but the yeast is itself a fungus and a disease. You be regularizers all, splendid and supreme. But you cannot live without the irregulars. You will die, and who will tell you that you are dead? When there are no longer any deprived or insufficient, *who will invent?* What will you do when there are none of us defectives left? Who will leaven your lump then?"

"Are you unwell?" the master of ceremonies asked him quietly. "Should you not make an end of it? People will understand."

"Of course I'm unwell. Always have been," Albert said. "What good would I be otherwise? You set the ideal that all should be healthy and well adjusted. No! No! Were we all well adjusted, we would ossify and die. The world is kept healthy only by some of the unhealthy minds lurking in it. The first implement made by man was not a scraper or celt or stone knife. It was a crutch, and it wasn't devised by a hale man."

"Perhaps you should rest," a functionary said in a low voice, for this sort of rambling nonsense talk had never been heard at an awards dinner before.

"Know you," said Albert, "that it is not the fine bulls and wonderful cattle who make the new paths. Only a crippled calf makes a new path. In everything that survives there must be an element of the incongruous. Hey, you know the woman who said, 'My husband is incongruous, but I never liked Washington in the summer-time.'"

Everybody gazed at him in stupor.

"That's the first joke I ever made," Albert said lamely. "My joke-making machine makes them lots better than I do." He paused and gaped, and gulped a big breath. "Dolts!" He croaked out fiercely then. "What will you do for dolts when the last of us is gone? How will you survive without us?"

Albert had finished. He gaped and forgot to close his mouth. They led him back to his seat. His publicity machine explained that Albert was tired from overwork, and then the thing passed around copies of the speech that Albert was supposed to have given.

It had been an unfortunate episode. How noisome it is that the innovators are never great men. And the great men are never good for anything but just being great men.

In that year a decree went forth from Caesar that a census of the whole country should be taken. The decree was from Caesar Panebianco, the President of the country; it was the decimal year proper for the census, and there was nothing unusual about the decree. Certain provisions, however, were made for taking a census of the drifters and decrepits who were usually missed, to examine them and to see why they were so. It was in the course of this that Albert was picked up. If any man ever looked like a drifter and a decrepit, it was Albert.

Albert was herded in with other derelicts, sat down at a table, and asked tortuous questions. As:

"What is your name?"

He almost muffed that one, but he rallied and answered, "Albert."

"What time is it by that clock?"

They had him there in his old weak spot. Which hand was which? He gaped and didn't answer.

"Can you read?"

"Not without my—" Albert began. "I don't have with me my— No, I can't read very well by myself."

"Try."

They gave him a paper to mark up with true and false questions. Albert marked them all true, believing that he would have half of them right. But they were all false. The regularized people are partial to falsehood. Then they gave him a supply-the-word test on proverbs.

"_____ is the best policy" didn't mean a thing to him. He couldn't remember the names of the companies that he had his own policies with.

"A _____ in time saves nine" contained more mathematics than Albert could handle. "There appear to be six unknowns," he told himself, "and only one positive value, nine. The equating verb 'saves' is a vague one. I cannot solve this equation. I am not even sure it is an equation. If only I had with me my—"

But he hadn't any of his gadgets or machines with him. He was on his own. He left half a dozen more proverb fill-ins blank. Then he saw the chance to recoup. Nobody is so dumb as not to know one answer if enough questions are asked.

"_____ is the mother of invention," it said.

"Stupidity," Albert wrote in his weird ragged hand. Then he sat back in triumph. "I know that Eurema and her mother," he snickered. "Man, how I do know them!"

But they marked him wrong on that one too. He had missed every answer to every test. They began to fix him a ticket to a progressive

booby hatch where he might learn to do something with his hands, his head being hopeless.

A couple of Albert's urbane machines came down and got him out of it. They explained that, while he was a drifter and a derelict, yet he was a rich drifter and derelict and that he was even a man of some note.

"He doesn't look it, but he really is—pardon our laughter—a man of some importance," one of the fine machines explained. "He has to be told to close his mouth after he has yawned, but for all that he is the winner of the Finnerty-Hochmann Award. We will be responsible for him."

Albert was miserable as his fine machines took him out, especially when they asked that he walk three or four steps behind them and not seem to be with them. They gave him some pretty rough banter and turned him into a squirming worm of a man. Albert left them and went to a little hide-out he kept.

"I'll blow my crawfishing brains out," he swore. "The humiliation is more than I can bear. Can't do it myself, though. I'll have to have it done."

He set to work building a device in his hide-out.

"What you doing, boss?" Hunchy asked him. "I had a hunch you'd come here and start building something."

"Building a machine to blow my pumpkin-picking brains out," Albert shouted. "I'm too yellow to do it myself."

"Boss, I got a hunch there's something better to do. Let's have some fun."

"Don't believe I know how to," Albert said thoughtfully. "I built a fun machine once to do it for me. He had a real revel till he flew apart, but he never seemed to do anything for me."

"This fun will be for you and me. Consider the world spread out. What is it?"

"It's a world too fine for me to live in any longer," Albert said. "Everything and all the people are perfect, and all alike. They're at the top of the heap. They've won it all and arranged it all neatly. There's no place for a clutter-up like me in the world. So I get out."

"Boss, I've got a hunch that you're seeing it wrong. You've got better eyes than that. Look again, real canny, at it. Now what do you see?"

"Hunchy, Hunchy, is that possible? Is that really what it is? I wonder why I never noticed it before. That's the way of it, though, now that I look closer.

"Six billion patsies waiting to be took! Six billion patsies without a defense of any kind! A couple of guys out for some fun, man, they

could mow them down like fields of Albert-Improved Concho Wheat!"

"Boss, I've got a hunch this is what I was made for. The world sure has been getting stuffy. Let's tie into it and eat off the top layer. Man, we can cut a swath!"

"We'll inaugurate a new era!" Albert gloated. "We'll call it the Turning of the Worm. We'll have fun, Hunchy. We'll gobble them up like goobers. How come I never saw it like that before? Six billion patsies!"

The twenty-first century began on this rather odd note.

DAYS OF GRASS, DAYS OF STRAW

Fog in the corner and fog in his head:
Gray day broken and bleeding red.

—*Ballads*, Henry Drumhead

Christopher Foxx was walking down a city street. No, it was a city road. It was really a city trail or path. He was walking in a fog, but the fog wasn't in the air or the ambient: it was in his head. Things were mighty odd here. There was just a little bit of something wrong about things.

Oceans of grass for one instance. Should a large and busy city (and this was clearly that) have blue-green grass belly-high in its main street? Things hardly remembered: echos and shadows, or were they the strong sounds and things themselves? Christopher felt as though his eyeballs had been cleaned with a magic cleaner, as though he were blessed with new sensing in ears and nose, as though he went with a restored body and was breathing a new sort of air. It was very pleasant, but it was puzzling. How had the world been pumped full of new juice?

Christopher couldn't recall what day it was; he certainly didn't know what hour it was. It was a gray day, but there was no dullness in that gray. It was shimmering pearl-gray, of a color bounced back by shimmering water and shimmering air. It was a crimson-edged

day, like a gray squirrel shot and bleeding redly from the inside and around the edges. Yes, there was the pleasant touch of death on things, gushing death and gushing life.

Christopher's own name didn't sound right to him. He didn't know what town he was in. Indeed he'd never before seen a town with all the storefronts flapping in the wind like that. Ah, they'd curl and bend, but they wouldn't break. A town made of painted buckskin, and yet it was more real than towns made of stone and concrete.

He saw persons he almost knew. He started to speak and only sputtered. Well, he'd get a newspaper then; they sometimes gave information. He reached in his pocket for a coin, and discovered that he didn't have regular pockets. He found a little leather pouch stuck in his belt. What's this? What else was stuck in his belt? It was a breechclout with the ends fore and aft passing under his belt. Instead of pants he had a pair of leggings and a breechclout, three-piece pants. Oh, oh, what else?

Oh, he wore a shirt that seemed to be leather of some sort. He wore soft shoes that were softer than slippers. He was hatless, and his hair came forward over his shoulders in two tight long braids. He had dressed casually before, but he didn't remember ever dressing like this. How were the rest of the people dressed? No two alike, really, no two alike.

But he did bring a coin out of that leather pouch that was stuck in his belt. A strange coin. It wasn't metal: it was made of stone, and made roughly. On the face of it was the head and forequarters of a buffalo. On the reverse side was the rump of a buffalo. The words on the obverse of it read "worth one buffalo," and on the reverse they read "maybe a little bit less."

"And where do I put a coin in this contraption?" Christopher asked himself angrily and loudly. A hand extended itself, and Christopher put the coin in the hand. The hand belonged to an old wrinkled brown man, swathed in robes and folds of blackened leather, and sitting in the dust.

The old man gave Christopher a newspaper, or gave him something anyhow. It was on leather that was almost board-stiff. It was illustrated, it was printed in a variety of hands; and here and there it had a little hair growing out of it as though its leather were imperfectly scraped.

"Wait your change," the old brown man said. He gave Christopher seven small coins. These were neither metal nor stone: they were clay baked in the sun. The obverse of each was the head and fore of a badger, puffed and bristled and hissing in high defense. And the reverse was the reared rump of the same badger

in embattled clawed stance.

"Price go down a little but not a whole badger," the old man said. "Take three puffs. It's close as I can get to even change." Wondering at himself, Christopher took three strong rich smokey puffs from the old pipe of the old man. He felt that he had received full value then. It was about all that he felt satisfied with. But is it wrong to feel unsatisfied, which is unsated? Christopher thought about it.

He went over and sat on a bale of rags outside the shop with the sign "Hot roast dog for sale or give." The bale of rags seemed somehow lively; it was as if there was no division between the animate and the inanimate this day. He tried to make something out of the strange newspaper or the strange day, or the newly strange man who was apparently himself.

Oh, the newspaper was interesting. It could be read one way or another: by picture, by stylized pictograph, by various writings and printings. Here were anecdotes; woolly, horny, bottomlessly funny anecdotes: and they were about people that Christopher knew, or almost knew. And all the people passing by (Christopher realized it with a chuckling gasp) were also people that he knew or almost knew. Well, what made them so different then? They looked like familiar people, they smelled like familiar people (which the familiar people erstwhile had not done), they had the familiar name that came almost to the edge of the tongue.

"But what town is this? What day is this? What is the context?" Christopher wailed out loud. "Why is everything so strange?"

"Kit-Fox, you call me?" Strange Buffalo boomed at him. Strange Buffalo was a big and boisterous man and he had always been a good friend of Christopher. He had? Then why did he look so different? And why was his real name, or his other name, now unremembered?

"Will the buffalo go to war, do you think, Kit-Fox?" Strange Buffalo asked him. "Do you believe that the two great herds of them will go to war? They come near to each other now and they swear that neither will give way."

"No, there will be only the pushing and goading of a few thousand bulls, not much else," Christopher said. "The buffalo simply haven't the basis for a real war." He was surprised at his own knowledge of the subject.

"But the buffalo have human advisers now," Strange Buffalo said. "It began with the betting, of course, but now we can see that there is real cause of conflict on both sides. I dabble in this myself and have some good ideas. We are tying spear-shafts to the horns of some of the big bulls and teaching them to use them. And we're setting up big bows and teaching them to bend them with their great

strength, but they haven't any accuracy at all."

"No, I don't believe they were meant to have a real war. It's a wonderful dust they raise, though, when they all come together. It makes you glad to be alive. And the thunder of their millions of hoofs!" (There was the distant sound of morning thunder.) "Or is that a thundering in the mountains?" Kit-Fox—ah, Christopher was asking.

"Well, there is quite a clatter in the mountains this morning, Kit," Strange Buffalo was saying in happy admiration. "The deep days, the grass days like this one aren't come by easily. It's a wonder the mountains aren't knocked to pieces when the big prophets pray so noisily and wrestle so strong. But, as the good skin says, we must work out our salvation in fear and thundering."

"Is it not 'In fear and trembling'?" Christopher asked as he lounged on the lively bale of rags.

"No, Kit-Fox, no!" Strange Buffalo pealed at him. "That's the kind of thing they say during the straw days; not here, not now. In the Cahooche shadow-writing it says 'In fear and chuckling,' but the Cahooche words for thunder and chuckling are almost the same. On some of the Kiowa antelope-skin drawings, 'In scare-shaking and in laughter-shaking.' I like that. I wish I could pray and wrestle as woolly and horny as the big ones do. Then I'd get to be a prophet on the mountain also, and I'd bring in more days of grass. Yes, and days of mesquite also."

"The mountain is a funny one this morning, Strange Buffalo. It doesn't reach clear down to the ground," Christopher said. "There's a great space between, and there are eagles flying underneath it."

"Ah, it'll fall back after a while, Kit-Fox, when they have won or lost the wrestling for the day; after they have generated sufficient juice for this day, for I see that they have already won it and it will be a day of grass. Let's go have a rack of roast dog and a gourd of choc beer," Strange Buffalo proposed.

"In a minute, Strange Buffalo. I am in the middle of a puzzle and I have this fog in my head. What day is this?"

"It's one of the days of grass, Kit-Fox. I just told you that."

"But which one, Strange Buffalo? And what, really, are 'days of grass'?"

"I believe that it is the second monday of Indian Summer, Kit-Fox," Strange Buffalo was saying as he gave the matter his thought and attention. "Or it may be the first monday of Blue-Goose Autumn. We're not sure, though, that it is a monday. It sounds and tastes more like a thursday or an aleikaday."

"It sure does," Christopher—ah, Kit-Fox agreed.

A laughing, dying man was carried past by four hale men. This fortunate one had been smashed by bear or rolled on by horse or gored by buffalo, and the big red blood in him was all running out.

"It works," the happy dying man cried out. "It works. I got a little too close to him and he ripped me to pieces, but it works. We are really teaching those big bulls to use the spears lashed to their horns. Others will carry on the work and the fun. I bet that I've had it."

"A little blood to bless me!" Strange Buffalo cried out: and the dying man splashed him with the rich and rigorous blood.

"For me also," Kit-Fox begged: and the dying man smeared him with blood on the brow and breast and shoulders and loins. Two other friends, Conquering Sharp-Leaf and Adoration on the Mountain, came and were blessed with the blood. Then the man died and was dead.

"There is nothing like the fine rich blood to make a grass day sing in your head and in your body," Strange Buffalo exulted. "On the straw days they try to hide the blood or they bleed in a dark corner."

(What was all this about the grass days and the straw days? There was now a sordid dull-dream quality, a day-of-straw quality that kept trying to push itself in. 'For a little while,' it begged, 'to reestablish rigor and rule and reason for just a little while.' 'Go away,' said the day-of-grass quality, 'The wrestle was won this morning, and this is a day out of the count.')

Kit-Fox and Strange Buffalo went in, past the booths and work areas of the coin makers, past the stands of the eagle-wingbone-whistle makers, and into the shop which had roast dog for sale or give. Strange Buffalo had a shoulder of dog and Kit-Fox had a rack of ribs. There was fried bread also, and hominy and pumpkin. There was choc beer dipped with gourd dippers out of a huge crock. Thousands of people were there. It was crowded and it was supposed to be. The man named Mountain twinkled in the air. Why had they not noticed that about him before?

Folks rolled up the walls and tied them. Now the strong smoke and savor could visit all the places, and the folks in every shop could see into every other shop. It was full morning and beginning to get warm.

"But I still want to know the date," Kit-Fox insisted, not quite converted to the day of grass, not quite clear of the head-fog that accompanies the sullen burning of the straw days. "What newspaper is this that doesn't have a date? I want a date!"

"Look at it. It tells," said Strange Buffalo.

"You want a date, honey?" the top of the newspaper writhed in sudden flickering of day-fire print. "Phone 582-8316 and I give you

a real date." Then the day-fire print was gone.

"I hope I can remember that number," Kit-Fox said anxiously. "Strange Buffalo, where is there a telephone exchange?"

"They are the same and single and right outside past the booths," Strange Buffalo said. "You were sitting upon it when I came upon you. And you, you old straw-head, you thought it was a bale of rags."

Kit-Fox went outside, past the booths of the stone-buffalo-coin makers and the clay-badger-coin makers, past the tents of the porcupine-quill dealers, to what he had thought was a bale of rags, a lively bale of rags as he now remembered it. Well, it was an ample lady in her glad rags and she was the telephone exchange lying there in the grass.

"I want to call number 582-8316," Kit-Fox said uneasily.

"Here are a handful of dice," the glad-rags lady told him. "Arrange them here in the short grass and make any number you want."

"But proper dice have numbers only to six," Kit-Fox protested, "and some of the numbers are higher."

"These are improper dice, they are crooked dice," the lady said. "They have numbers more than six and numbers less than one. Number out your telephone number in the short grass with them."

"Are you sure this is the way to dial a number?" Kit-Fox asked.

"Sure am not sure," the lady said. "If you know a better way, do it that way. Worth a try kid, worth a try."

Kit-Fox numbered out his numbers in the short grass.

"Now what do I do?" he asked.

"Oh, talk into the telephone here."

"That buckskin bag is a telephone?"

"Try it, try it. Drop a badger coin in and try it."

Kit-Fox dropped the coin into the telephone. "Hello, hello," he said.

"Hello, hello," the lady answered. "That's my number you called. You want a date, I wait for you awhile. Believe me, I get pretty tired of waiting pretty soon."

"I don't think this is a telephone exchange at all," Kit-Fox grumbled.

"How else I can get guys so easy to drop badger-coins in a buckskin bag," the lady said. "Come along, lover man, we will have a grand time this day."

The lady was full-bodied and jolly. Kit-Fox remembered her from somewhere.

"Who are you?" he asked her.

"I'm your wife in the straw days," she said, "but this is a grass day. They're harder to find, but they're more fun when you find one."

They have something to do with grandfather's brother and that wrestling of his."

"Days of grass, days of straw," Kit-Fox said as he embraced the lady passionately. "How about a hay day?"

"You mean a heyday? Those are special. We hope to make them more often, if only the wrestle is better. They're fuller of juice than the grass days even. We try to make one now."

They made a heyday together (together with a whole nation of people); and it went on and on. Day-Torch (that was the lady in the glad rags, the lady who was Kit-Fox's wife during the straw days) bought an eagle-wingbone whistle from a dealer, and she whistled happy haunting tunes on it. The people followed Kit-Fox and Day-Torch out of town, out to the oceans of buffalo grass and blue-stem grass. They torched everthing that was dry and set the blue-black smoke to rolling. But the fundamental earth was too green to burn.

All mounted horses and took lances. They went out after buffalo. Word was brought to them that some of the newly armed buffalo bulls wanted to schedule battle with them. And the battle was a good one, with gushing blood and broken-open bodies, and many on each side were killed.

Strange Buffalo was killed. That big boisterous man died with a happy whoop.

"Strange Buffalo, indeed," one of the buffalo bulls said. "He looks like a man to me."

When the ground there had become too soggy and mired in blood, they adjourned the battle till the next day of grass, or the one after that. Bloody battles are fine, but who wants to spend a whole day on one? There are other things. Kit-Fox and Day-Torch and a number of other folks went to higher ground.

There was a roaring river on the higher ground, the biggest river ever and the loudest.

"Oh be quiet," Day-Torch said. "You've got the tune wrong." The great river ceased to roar. Day-Torch whistled the right tune on the eagle-wingbone whistle. Then the river resumed its roaring, but in this right tune now. This mightiest of all rivers was named Cottonwood Creek.

Henry Drumhead added his beat to the tune. Then the folks had a rain dance till the sharp rain came down and drenched them through. They had a sun dance then, till the sun dried up the mud and began to burn the hides of the people. They had a cloud dance then. They had an antelope dance till enough antelope came to provide a slaughter and a feast. They had a pit dance, a fire dance, a snake dance, and an ashes dance: the ashes from pecan wood and hickory wood are a better condiment than salt to go with roast

antelope. They had a feast dance. Then (after a while) a shakedown dance. They had a thunder dance and a mountain dance.

Say, it is spooky to come to the foot of the mountain itself and see the great gap between it and the ground! Rocks and boulders fell out of the bottom of the mountain and killed many of the people below. And, from the mountain itself, a broken, bloody, and headless torso fell down to the earth.

Helen Hightower—ah, that is to say the glad-rag lady Day-Torch—set up a rakish screaming, “The head, the head, somebody forgot the head!”

There was a thunderous grumbling, a mountain-shaking irritation, but the bloody head did come down and smash itself like a bursting pumpkin on the earth.

“A lot of times they forget to throw the head down if you don’t remind them,” Day-Torch said.

The meaning of the fallen torso and head was that there was now one less prophet or wrestler on the mountain; that there was now an opportunity for one more man to ascend to glory and death.

Several of the men attempted it by various devices, by piling cairns of stones to climb upon, by leaping into the air to try to grab one of the dangling roots of the mountain, by hurling lances with trailing lianas to fasten quivering in the bottom of the mountain. They played it out in the garish day there where all the colors were so bright that they ached. Many of the men fell to their deaths, but one ascended. There is always one who is able to ascend to the great wrestle when there is an empty place to receive him.

And the one who ascended was—no, no, you’ll not have his name from us yet.

Something was mighty odd here. There was just a little bit of something right about things.

2

Draftsman, draftsman, what do you draw?

Dog days, draggy days, days of straw.

—Ballads, Henry Drumhead.

Indian Summer. A period of warm or mild weather late in autumn or in early winter.

—Webster’s Collegiate

So Webster's Collegiate defines it, but Webster's hasn't the humility ever to admit that it doesn't know the meaning of a word or phrase. And it doesn't know the meaning of this one.

There are intervals, days, hours, minutes that are not remembered directly by anyone. They do not count in the totality of passing time. It is only by the most sophisticated methods that even the existence of these intervals may be shown.

There are whole seasons, in addition to the four regular seasons that are supposed to constitute the year. Nobody knows where they fit in, there being no room for them anywhere in the year; nobody has direct memory of being in them or living in them. Yet, somehow, they have names that have escaped these obliterations. The name of one of the misfit seasons is Indian Summer.

("Why can't the Indians have their summer in the summertime like the rest of us?" comes a high voice with a trace of annoyance. Not a high-pitched voice: a high voice.)

But all that is neither here nor there. It is yonder, and we will come to it.

Christopher Foxx was walking down a city street. Things were mighty even here, mighty neat. There was just a little bit of something wrong about their rightness. The world was rubbed, scrubbed, and tubbed; it was shaved, paved and saved; it was neat, sweet, and effete. Ah, the latter was possibly what was wrong with it, if anything could be wrong with perfection. The colors were all flat (flat colors had been deemed best for nerves and such), and the sounds were all muted. Christopher, for a moment, wished for a color that shrieked and for a sound that blazed. He put the thought resolutely out of his head. After all, he had for wife Helen Hightower, and he suffered much criticism because of her gaudiness and exuberance.

Christopher took a paper from the slot on the corner, noted that it was a day in May (he had a queer feeling that he had been uneasy about the date, and yet all that registered with him was that it fell within a familiar month). He entered the North Paragon Breakfast Club. It was there that the Symposium would begin (it would last the whole day and into the night, and be held at various sites) on the multiplex subject "Spacial and Temporal Underlays to the Integrated World, with Insights as to Their Possible Reality and Their Relationship to the World Unconscious and to the Therapeutic Amnesia; with Consideration of the Necessity of Belief in Stratified Worlds, and Explorations of the Orological Motif in Connection with the Apparent Occurrence of Simultaneous Days." It would have been an exciting subject if Excitement had not become

another of the muted things.

Buford Strange was already at the North Paragon, and with him were Adrian Montaigne and Vincent Rue.

"I have already ordered for ourselves and for yourself, Christopher," Buford said. "It is Sheldrake, and I hope that you like it. They will not prepare it for fewer than four persons. 'We can't go around killing quarter ducks,' they say."

"That is all right," Christopher said meekly. He glanced at the other three nervously. There was surely something familiar about them all.

Great blue mountain thunder! Why shouldn't there be! He had worked with these men daily for several years. But, no, no, his edgy mind told him that they were familiar in some other and more subtle way. He glanced at the paper which he had taken from the corner slot outside. Something like quick flame ran across the top of it and was gone too quickly to verify. But was it possible that the flame had said "You want a date, honey? You phone—" Of course it was not possible. Clearly, at the top of the paper it was printed "A Day in May." Clearly? Was that clear enough for a date?

"What date is this?" Christopher asked the three of them.

"May the eighth, of course," Adrian answered him. "You've got today's *Journal* in your hand and still you ask?"

Well now it was printed clearly there "May 8" and there was no nonsense about "A Day in May"; still less was there anything like "You want a date, honey?"

Some wild-looking children burst into the North Paragon Breakfast Club.

"Straw-Men! Straw-Men!" they cried at the four gentlemen there. "Straw-Men! Straw-Men!" The children buffeted the four men a bit, did other extravagant things that are since forgotten, and then they went out of the Breakfast Club again: or at least they disappeared; they were no longer there.

"Why should they have done that?" Adrian asked, puzzled. "Why should they have called us that, and done the other things?"

"Why should who have called us *what*?" Vincent asked, even more puzzled.

"I don't know," Adrian said dully. "It seemed that someone was here and said or did something."

"You're witless, Adrian," Vincent chided. "Nobody was here."

"Straw-Man," Christopher Foxx said softly. "I remember the word now and I couldn't remember it before. I woke up this morning trying to remember it. It seemed to be the key to a dream that was slipping away in spite of my trying to hang onto it. I have the key word now, but it fits nothing. The dream is gone forever."

"We will come back to this subject later in our discussions," Buford Strange said. "I believe that your word 'Straw-Man,' Christopher, is a part of the underlay, or perhaps of the overlay, that pertains to our world and our study. There is a good chance that certain children, or perhaps dwarfs or gnomes, entered here several moments ago. Did any of you notice them?"

"No," said Vincent Rue.

"No one entered," said Adrian Montaigne.

"No. I didn't see anyone," said Christopher Foxx.

"Yet I believe that a group *did* come in," Buford Strange continued suavely. "It was a group unusual enough to be noticed. Then why didn't we notice it? Or why did we forget, within a short moment, that we had seen it at all? I believe it was because the group was in a different sort of day. I am near sure that it is a group that lives in either St. Martin's Summer or in the Kingfisher Days. Ah, here is the Sheldrake ready with all the trimmings! Drool and be happy. We shall never know such moment again."

It was a momentous fowl, no question of that. It was good, it was rich, it was overflowing with juice. It was peer of the fowl that are found in the land named St. Succulentus' Springtime. (What? What? There is a land named that?)

The four noble men (they were enobled by the circumstance) fell to eating with what, in days of another sort, might almost be called gusto. It was a royal bird and was basted with that concoction of burst fruits and crushed nuts and peppers and ciders and holy oils and reindeer butter that is called—(wait a bit)—

"Do you know that the Sheldrake is really a mysterious creature?" Buford Strange asked as he ate noisily (nobody eats such royal fare in quiet). Buford acted as if he knew a secret.

"It is not a mysterious creature at all," Adrian countered (he knew it was, though). "It is only the common European duck."

"It is not only the common European duck," Buford said strongly. "In other days it may be quite uncommon."

"What are you saying, Buford?" Vincent Rue asked him. "In what other days?"

"Oh, I believe, possibly, in what the Dutch call Kraanzomer (Crane-Summer). Are we agreed that the other days, the days out of count, are topic rather than temporal?"

"We are not even agreed that there are days out of count," Christopher objected.

"Drakes' teeth, by the way, while rare, are not unknown," Adrian Montaigne popped the statement out of his mouth as if in someone else's voice. He seemed startled at his own words.

"Drake is really the same word as *drakos*, a dragon," Christopher

Foxx mumbled. "Ah, I was going to say something else but it is gone now."

"Waiter, what is the name of the excellent stuff with which the drake is basted and to which it is wedded?" Vincent Rue asked in happy wonder.

"Dragons' sauce," said the waiter.

"Well, just what is the mystery, the uncommonness of the Shel-drake, Buford?" Christopher asked him.

"I don't seem to remember," that man said. "Ah, let us start our discussion with my, our, failure to remember such things. Vincent, did you not have a short paper prepared on 'Amnesia, the Holes in the Pockets of the Seamless Garment'?"

"I forget. Did I have such a paper prepared? I will look in my own pockets."

Meanwhile, back on the mountain,

back on the thundering mountain there were certain daring and comic persons rushing in and out and counting coup on the Wrath of God. It is a dangerous game. These were the big prophets who prayed so violently and sweat so bloodily and wrestled so strongly. It was they who fought for the salving or the salvation of the days, in fear and in chuckling, in scare-shaking and in laughter-shaking.

The thundering mountain was a funny one this morning. It didn't reach clear to the ground. There was a great space between, and there were eagles flying under it. And the day, the day, was it really the first monday of Blue-Goose Autumn? Was it really a monday at all? Or was it a thursday or an aleikaday?

It was like another morning of not long before. The eagles remember it; the clouds remember it; the mountain wrestlers remember it dimly, though some of the memory has been taken away from them.

Remember how it is written on the holy skins: "If you have faith you shall say to the mountain 'Remove from here and cast thyself into the sea' and it will do it." Well, on that morning they had tried it. Several of the big prophets and wrestlers tried it, for they *did* have faith. They groaned with travail and joy, they strove mightily, and they did move the mountain and make it cast itself into the sea.

But the thunders made the waters back off. The waters refused to accept or to submerge the mountain. The prayer-men and wrestlers had sufficient faith, but the ocean did not. Whoever had the last laugh on that holy morning?

The strivers were timeless, of the prime age, but they were often called the 'grandfathers' brothers' by the people. They were up there now, the great prophets and prayer-men and wrestlers. One

of these intrepid men was an Indian and he was attempting to put the Indian Sign on God himself. God, however, was like a mist and would not be signed.

"We will wrestle," the Indian said to God in the mist, "we will wrestle to see which of us shall be Lord for this day. I tell you it is not thick enough if only the regular days flow. I hesitate to instruct you in your own business, and yet someone must instruct you. There must be overflowing and special days apart from the regular days. You have such days, I am sure of that, but you keep them prisoned in a bag. It is necessary now that I wrest one of them from you."

They wrestled, inasmuch as a man slick with his own sweat and blood may wrestle with a mist: and it seemed that the Indian won the lordship of a day from God. "It will be a day of grass," the Indian said. "It will be none of your dry and juiceless days." The Indian lay exhausted with his fingers entwined in the won day: and the strength came back to him. "You make a great thing about marking every sparrow's fall," the Indian said then. "See that you forget not to mark this day."

The thing that happened then was this: God marked the day for which they had wrestled, but he marked it on a different holy skin in a different place, not on the regular skin that lists the regular days. This act caused the wrested Day to be one of the Days out of Count.

Prophets, wrestlers, praying-men of other sorts were on the mountain also. There were black men who sometimes strove for kaffir-corn days or ivory-tree days. There were brown island men who wrestled for sailfish days or wild-pig days. There were pinkish north-wood men who walked on pine needles and balsam; there were gnarled men out of the swampy lands; there were town men from the great towns. All of these strove with the Lord in fear and in chuckling.

Some of these were beheaded and quartered, and the pieces of them were flung down violently to earth: it is believed that there were certain qualities lacking in these, or that their strength had finally come to an end. But the others, the most of them, won great days from the Lord, Heydays, Halcyon or Kingfisher Days, Maedchensommer Days, St. Garvais Days, Indian Summer Days. These were all rich days, full of joy and death, bubbling with ecstasy and blood. And yet all were marked on different of the holy skins and so they became the Days out of Count.

"Days out of the Count," Buford Stange was saying. "It's an entrancing idea, and we have almost proved it. Seasons out of the

count! It's striking that the word for putting a condiment on should be the same word as a division of the year. Well, the seasons out of the count are all well seasoned and spiced. There are whole multiplex layered eras out of the count. The ice ages are such. I do not say 'were such'; I say 'are such.' "

"But the ice ages are real, real, real," Helen Hightower insisted. (Quite a few long hours had passed in the discussions, and now Helen Hightower, the wife of Christopher Foxx, was off her work at the telephone exchange and had put on her glad rags and joined the scholars.)

"Certainly they are real, Helen," Buford Strange said. "If only I were so real! I believe that you remember them, or know them, more than the most of us do. You have a dangerously incomplete amnesia on so many things that I wonder the thunder doesn't come and take you. But in the days and years and centuries and eras of the straight count there are no ice ages."

"Well then, how, for instance, would local dwellers account for terminal moraines and glacial till generally?" asked Conquering Sharp-Leaf, ah, Vincent Rue.

(They were at the University, in that cozy room in the psychology department where Buford Strange usually held forth, the room that was just below the special effects room of Prof. Timacheff.)

"How did they account for such before the time of modern geology?" Buford asked. "They didn't. There would be a new boulder one morning that had not been there the day before. The shepherd of the place would say that the moon had drawn it out of the ground, or that it had fallen from the sky."

"You're crazy, Buford," Adrian Montaigne said with a certain affection. "Why the ice ages then? Why should they have happened, even in times out of count? Why should they have left their footprints in the times within the count?" Adrian had very huge and powerful hands. Why had they not noticed this before?

"I believe there was a dyanasty of great and muscular prophets and ghost-wrestlers who wanted to call out the terrible days of fimbul winter," Buford said in a hushed voice. "I don't know why they wanted such things, or why they sweated blood and wrestled prodigies to obtain them. They were men, but they are remembered as the frost giants."

"Oh my grand, grand uncles!" Day-Torch, Helen Hightower, rather, cried out. "Days of snow! Days of ice! Millions of them!"

"You are saying that certain archetypes—" Kit-Fox began.

"—shook the pillars of Heaven till the snow and ice fell down for a million days, for a million days out of the count," Buford Strange finished.

"Strange Buffalo, ah, Buford, you are crazy," Christopher Foxx chided much as Adrian had. Christopher was talking, but the queerly smiling Adrian had now become the presence in the room. Adrian had the curious under-rutile of the skin of one who has sweat blood in prayer and buffoonery and passion. Why had they not noticed that of him before?

"I could almost believe that you were one of the great challengers yourself, Strange," Christopher said to Buford, but he was looking at Adrian.

"You strike me as with a lance, Kit," Buford said sadly. "You uncover my mortification. For I failed. I don't know when it was. It was on a day out of the count. I failed a year ago or ten thousand years ago. I could not make it among the great ones. I was not cast out to my death: I was never in. There was room for me, and an opportunity for the ascent, but I failed in nerve. And one who has aspired to be a champion or prophet cannot fall back to be an ordinary man. So I am less than that: I am short of manhood. But, sadly, I do remember and live in other sorts of days."

"I believe that the aberrant days are simultaneous with the prosaic days," Adrian Montaigne mused. Adrian was quite a large man. Why had they not noticed that before?

"No, no, they are not simultaneous," Buford was correcting him. "There are the days out of the count and there are the days in the count. Those out of count are outside of time so they cannot be simultaneous with anything. You have to see it that way."

"You see it your way and I'll see it mine," Adrian was stubborn. "Consider some of the aberrant times or countries: St. Garvais' Springtime, St. Martin's Summer (the Saints in these names were mountain prophets and wrestlers, but some of them were not at all saintly in their violence), Midas March (the very rich need their special season also: it is said that, in their special month, they are superiorly endowed in *all* ways), Dog Days, Halcyon Days, Dragon Days, Harvest May (what in the world is harvested in May?), All-Hallow Summer, Days of Ivory, Days of Horn, Indian Summer, Wicklow Week, Apricot Autumn, Goose Summer, Giant-Stone Days, Day of the Crooked Mile, the season called Alcedonia by the Latins. I tell you that all these days are happening at the same time!" This man named Adoration on the Mountain, or rather Adrian Montaigne, had a reckless sort of transcendence about him now.

"No, they do not all happen at the same time," Strange Buffalo was saying, "for the aberrant days of them are not in time. They are places and not times."

"Are there no night-time hours in the times out of time?" Vincent

Rue asked.

"No. Not in the same sense. They are in another province entirely," Buford said.

There was thunder in the special effects room of Professor Timacheff on the floor just above them, cheerful, almost vulgar thunder. Timacheff taught some sensational (sense-response and also melodramatic) courses up there. But how did he get such special effects anyhow?

"They do happen at the same time," Adrian Mountain insisted, and he was laughing like boulders coming together. Quite a few things seemed to be happening to Adrian all at the same time. "They are all happening right now. I am sitting with you here this minute, but I am also on the mountain this minute. The thunder in the room above, it is real thunder, you know. And there is a deeper, more distant, more raffish thunder behind it which primitives call God's-Laughter Thunder."

"This gets out of hand now," Vincent Rue protested. "It is supposed to be a serious symposium on spacial and temporal underlays. Several of you have turned it into a silly place and a silly time. You are taking too anthropomorphic a view of all these things, including God. One does not really wrestle with God in a bush or a mist, or ride in wildly on a pony and count coup on God. Even as atheist I find these ideas distasteful."

"But we are anthropoi, men," Adrian proclaimed. "What other view than an anthropomorphic view could we take? That we should play the God-game, that we should wrestle with a God-form and try to wrest lordship of days from him, that we should essay to count coup on God, I as a theist do not find at all distasteful."

"Why, One of them is failing now! It happens so seldom. I wonder if I have a chance."

"Adrian, what are you talking about?" Vincent demanded.

"How could you do it, Adrian, when I could not?" Buford Strange asked.

"Remember me when you come to your place, Adrian," Day-Torch cried. "Send me a day. Oh, send me a day-fire day."

"And to me also, Adrian," Kit-Fox begged. "I would love to do it myself, but it isn't given to everyone."

There was a strong shouting in the room above. There was the concussion of bodies, and the roaring of mountain winds.

"What in all the crooked days is Professor Timacheff doing up there this evening?" Vincent Sharp-Leaf asked angrily. "And what things are you doing here, Adrian? You look like a man set afire."

"Make room for me! Oh, make room for me!" Adrian of the Mountain cried out in a voice that had its own crackling thunder. He was

in the very transport of passion and he glistened red with his own bloody sweat. "One is failing, one is falling, why doesn't he fall then?"

"Help with it, Kit-Fox! And I help also," Day-Torch yowled.

"I help!" Kit-Fox yelped. The room shuddered, the building shuddered, the whole afternoon shuddered. There was a rending of boulders, either on the prophet's mountain or in the special effects room of Professor Timacheff above them. There was a great breaking and entering, a place turning into a time.

There came a roaring like horses in the sky. Then was the multiplex crash (God save his soul, his body is done for) of bloody torso and severed limbs falling into the room from a great height, splintering the table at which the five of them sat, breaking the room, splattering them all with blood. But the ceiling above was unbreached and unharmed and there was no point of entry.

"I am not man enough even to watch it," Buford Strange gurgled, and he slumped sideways unconscious.

"Timacheff, you fool!" Vincent Rue bawled to the space above them. "Watch your damned special effects! You're wrecking the place!"

Unquestionably that Timacheff was good. He used his special effects in classes on phenomenology that he taught up there.

"The head, the head! Don't let them forget the head!" Day-Torch cried in a flaming voice.

"I just remembered that Timacheff is out of town and is holding no classes today," Kit-Fox muttered in vulpine wonder.

"Make room for me! Oh, make room for me!" Adrian Mountain boomed. Then he was gone from the midst of them. He would be a factor, though, "in days to come."

Christopher and Vincent tried to straighten up the unconscious Buford Strange. They shook him, but he came apart and one arm came off him. He was revealed as a straw-man filled with bloody straw, and no more.

"Why, he's naught but a poorly made scarecrow," Christopher Foxx said in wonder. "He was right that one who falls back from it cannot become an ordinary man again. He will be less than man."

"That's funny. He always looked like a man to me," Vincent Rue said.

"The head, the head! You forgot the head. Let the head fall down!" Day-Torch cried.

And the head fell down.

It smashed itself like a bursting pumpkin on the broken floor.

Under the town is a woollier town,
And the blood splashed up and the head fell down.
— *Ballads*, Henry Drumhead

MAKE SURE THE EYES ARE BIG ENOUGH

*It rings like happy thunderclap,
The nine-tenths world of clown.
It's 'Things Returned' with sap and hap.
It's circus come to town.*

A discovery was made in the field of phenomenal psychology early this week. It consisted of opening the eyes and seeing the nine-tenths of the world that had previously been invisible. The discovery was simply there for persons of a certain type, and it had not been there before.

It had been there for certain kids for at least a day. Then it had been there for a tyrannical old lady named Mary Imperial McSlim, and she found it so amazing that she decided to keep it for herself. But the next noontime it was there for her grandson Rusty McSlim, the great phenomenal psychologist, and he was excited enough about it to want to share it with the entire world. And that evening it was experienced by a dozen of McSlim's great colleagues whom he had called together to tell about it. That was when the thing was effectively there.

But three others of the colleagues who were present didn't experience it at all. They even said that it was another sample of McSlim's droll humor.

The new experience or discovery was a wider range of seeing and sensing. It was the quick cognition of animations and people and off-people and pantograms and joyous beasts and monsters that had heretofore been invisible. It was seeing the other nine-tenths of the world in its racing brightness, and the realizing that the one-tenth of the world that had always been visible was comparatively a little bit sub-par. It was—well, it was the sensual pleroma, the fulfillment, the actualization, all this laced with the excited “Hey, where have you guys been!” motif.

Mary Crisis McSlim, a kid and the daughter of Rusty McSlim, had seen the enlarged scene earliest; but the first accountable or adult person to see it had been her great-grandmother Mary Imperial McSlim, the grandmother of Rusty McSlim the great phenomenal psychologist. And old Mary Imperial had seen that enlarged world by a peculiar arrangement.

Great-grandmother Mary Imperial was an old tyrant, and now fate had punished her for her tyrannies. She was confined to her bed for the rest of her life. She had always wanted to see everything, and now she couldn't. So the great Rusty McSlim fixed it so that his afflicted grandmother could see with the happy and hungry eyes of his lively daughter, Mary Crisis, who ran everywhere and saw everything.

All that Rusty had to do was drill a small hole through the lachrymal crest of his daughter, between the bridge of her nose and her left eye socket (Mary Crisis was left-eyed), and set a mini-probe into the Jacob's membrane at the back of her eye. And the probe was attached by tight magnetic couple to a little recording retro-camera made to hook over the left ear of Mary Crisis. Mary Crisis didn't like it hanging on her ear though, so she wore it stuck with chewing gum in the corner of her eyebrow. This, of course, gave much greater fidelity to the running pictures.

The camera was a small cube about two millimeters on a side. If it had used a lens of its own instead of the lens in the left eye of Mary Crisis, it would need to be at least four millimeters on a side, and Mary Crisis might have let it get covered up or she would have forgotten to turn it on. But she turned on her own eyes automatically.

Every afternoon when Mary Crisis came in from her lively day, she would click that day's picture-capsule (a cube about one millimeter on a side) out of the little camera and give it to her great-grandmother Mary Imperial. And old Mary Imperial would put it in her projector and watch it for several happy hours, seeing everything that the hungry eyes of Mary Crisis had seen that day, and seeing it all with the immediacy and buoyancy that Mary Crisis

contributed to it. And the great-grandmother would go, in surrogate fashion, everywhere that Mary Crisis and her three best friends, Eustace Riggles, Bravura Jones, Henry Gusset, had gone that day.

Well, Mary Imperial couldn't see with the eyes of the three friends of Mary Crisis, but Mary C was clearly the wide-eyed and hungry-eyed one of the group. Eustace was all ears, Henry was all mouth, and Bravura was all motion; and she was almost always in the field of vision of Mary C anyhow. And what the eyes of Mary C did bring was a varied panorama of the pulsing world containing everything from giggling cows to new-born birds and city traffic.

Giggling cows? Yes, for the last couple of days there had been giggling cows.

This surrogate seeing had become a big and sustaining thing in the life of old Mary Imperial, and she prayed that nothing would ever go wrong with the arrangement. But it was a ten-fold bonus for her when everything suddenly went exuberantly right with the surrogate living and viewing.

On the evening of the record, she saw the already lively world as greatly magnified and wonderfully exploded and fantastically added to. She saw 'our companions and friends', the aura of other creatures with which we are usually invisibly surrounded. And a great quantum step in perception had been made.

How thin and tinny and how few in number had been the objects in our old field of view! How mediocre in color and how undistinguished in style it had all been! How un-flamboyant the world had been before this! She viewed for quite a few hours.

Then she buzzed for her great-grandaughter Mary Crisis just at midnight, and Mary C came almost instantly from her bed. People always came almost instantly when Mary Imperial buzzed for them.

"You saw so many additional things today, Mary C, such enhanced things, such a mass of wonderful things and people. How?" she asked.

"I don't know. All my gang saw the new people and things and whirlings today. We say it's the circus come to town, the Big Circus this time. We keep seeing and knowing more and more guys and their dogs, some of those dogs twenty-five feet long; and they're all so friendly and monstrous looking. We keep getting hit, 'bop!', by more and more colors and better ones. Have a stick of Sappy-Happy Chewing Gum, G-G Mother. Open up and live a little."

"You know that civilized people don't chew gum, sappy-happy great-grandaughter of mine. There has been a premonition of this for several days. Do those giggling cows in Monaghan's meadow

have anything to do with these new things?"

"Yes, I think so," Mary Crisis said. "They started before this other business started, maybe two days before. They had already been giggling for quite a while before we began to see the Big Circus. I think that they were already seeing what we saw today."

There was an incredible advance and expansion in the seeing adventure, that's what it was. There had never been anything like it for a long, long time. When medium-early man had suddenly acquired color-vision and so moved out of the old black-and-gray dinginess, that must have been something of the same explosive and emerging experience.

But the old tyrant Mary Imperial didn't get all of it. She got only the visual part, and she got that second hand. She should have opened up and lived a little, as Mary Crisis told her. But she missed it by declining the symbol that was more than a symbol.

Rusty McSlim caught the full phenomenon about noon the next day, and he didn't know what triggered it. It wasn't something he had eaten; he hadn't eaten anything that day yet. It came onto him like a big door banging open and letting in endless masses of sunshine and color, all of them inhabited by stimulating creatures that Rusty felt he knew from somewhere.

Rusty was an acute observer of the phenomenon from the time it first came to him, and he had more than just a 'seeing' of the new throngs of creatures, human, quasi-human, way-off-human, and comically and rampantly animal.

Besides the seeing of these folk he also had the bountiful smells of them. Hey, the odd creatures *do* smell good when you catch them at full whiff! And he heard them, with other ears, with old pointed ears that he had forgotten about having. He did not hear by conventional sound that is often irritating, but by the most wonderful invention ever, sound without noise! And he understood the 'talk' of these nations of creatures, though perhaps it should be called 'communication' rather than literal 'talk'.

And he also had a great new comprehension by that blending of all the senses (the 'common sense' in the old meaning) whose organ of perception is located just below the fontanel of the head.

Rusty McSlim observed and reveled, and bided his time. This was almost too much to take in at once. These newly-visible folks ran from typhoeans (extreme types, they) to very close cousins of humans. And the new-appeared animals had a much wider range, though there were no strict rules for determining which were mere animals and which were intellectual quasi-humans. Rusty spoke civilly when he was spoken to, but he did not yet take any in-



itiatives.

But, that evening, Rusty convoked a group of his close associates; and twelve of his fifteen gathered colleagues experienced the whole fulfilment. All of them were phenomenal psychologists, and so they knew the importance of recording their impressions. Most of them spoke their observations into their recorders (which phenomenal psychologists even take to bed with them); and at the same time they set four panoramic cameras to gobbling everything up.

But the most startling observation that they made was that the observing was a two-way street. The 'new-appearance persons' were regarding the human psychologists as themselves being new appearances, and they were quite interested in them. Some of these 'first-time-ever-seen' quasi-humans were recording their own observations of the McSlim group.

There was one large near-human person who was really a jolly green giant, but done with quite a bit more style than the giant of the old advertisements.

"Out of mythology!" the green giant gasped and grinned. "I never expected anything this exciting. You are creatures right out of mythology!" And he had his own recorder switches on to catch his own jolly green comments. "Amazing," he said, "You really are amazing!"

That was a recorder the big green person was using?

"Let me see that, let me see that!" cried Doctor Darrel Dogstar whose real field was electronic psychology. "We don't have anything as smooth and sophisticated as that, not at any price."

"Oh, it's just a little knock-about model. It is good to see you folks, really good to see you! Every new acquaintance we make enlarges all of us," the jolly green person was speaking to Darrel Dogstar who was examining the smooth and sophisticated recorder. "We always suspected that you were there. You *had to be there* to to explain certain eccentricities in the animate continuum, but we could never see you or sense you before. We considered filling you with luciferic fluid to make you visible in outline, but that is a little bit like putting salt on the tail of a pterosaur: you have to catch it first. And now you are apparently lit up by some chemical accident, and we can see and sense you almost as easily as we can see ourselves and persons of the other participating groups. Well, we have caught a group of you here now, and we have filled you with luciferic fluid, unbeknownst to yourselves; so we will still be able to see you even if the effect of your chemical accident wears off. And it won't matter whether you continue to see us or not. We know what we look like and we don't need you to confirm it. And

yet we welcome you as a participating species, if you are such."

"To us, this is a total surprise," Rusty McSlim spoke in honest humility. "We hadn't even an inkling of your existence."

"Not so, not so!" half of McSlim's colleagues leaped to lie about the situation. "Of course we knew that you existed, most of you. Your existence was mandatory for the operation of some of our psychological equations."

The sense of touch was the only one not in full scope here. The entities of some of the different orders couldn't touch each other, though to a limited extent (the limit was the strength of the electrical or coronal discharge experienced in touching alien tools) they could handle each others' artifacts.

"It may be a peculiar question," hazarded Doctor Jorkus Halliburton whose forte was astral psychology, "but what year is this where you are? Is it with you as it is with us?" He asked this of one of the beautiful fish-faced people.

"Oh, we don't use years," said that beautiful person, "and 'here' is where we are. Years are so temporal. You will notice that only the wavering and changeable species use them, only about half of the species who are members of the 'great visibility'. You should know though that yourselves still haven't become visible to all the species here present. Try harder."

"We don't know what to call all of you. If we call you 'people' there may be some confusion," said Doctor Lollie Lindwurm who was about as phenomenal a psychologist as you'll find. "We just aren't the same. We are impressed by you, but you make up a very odd cousinship for ourselves. The green giant says that we are creatures out of mythology, but I believe that some of you entities are angelic messengers ascending and descending on Jacob's Ladder."

"Not many of us are angelic messengers," said a lizard-faced person of one of the cousinly species. "Hardly one in a thousand. It's probably at least as frequent among you as among most of us. Generally we are in horizontal or 'big circle' relationship with each other, and there isn't much ascending or descending to it. Up with the lateral movement! That's what I always say. Oh, are you old enough to have known Jacob, female cousin?"

"There seem to be fewer outright animals and more quasi-people among you now than there were when I was out and about today," Rusty McSlim said.

"We're indoors now," answered a lordly type, probably a thunderman, "and the larger beasts are left outdoors."

"You said that we are apparently lit up by a chemical accident," Darrel Dogstar essayed. "But why do you think that our break-

though is an especially chemical one?"

"Oh, you're a chemical species," a fine-looking, rubbery, frog-faced person said, "just as I myself belong to an Urstuff species, non-molecular and non-all-that-detail. You are not so much creatures right out of mythology as you are creatures right out of a chemistry book. You remind me of some of the cartoon characters in *Elementary Basic Chemistry Number One*. You yourself, entity Dogstar, are an almost perfect depiction of the *protean spirit of Protein* as drawn in our elementary texts. You are hinged and articulated just as a protein molecule is. We ourselves, I'm afraid, do not offer such graphic insights into any of the disciplines. I can see that it's going to be a real bash, exploring you people who have always been invisible to us. I love alien encounter.

"But you must understand that your being made manifest isn't really an unusual thing. It is only that some of us have not personally encountered an instance of it before. A new species is added to the community of the 'great visibility' every aeon or so, and now it is your turn to be added. And you *will* be added, though there may be a little bit of that 'watch those bumps!' experience for two or three days as you cross the threshold."

2

What happy incremental eyes!
What newly opened door!
The 'rest of world' in weirdly-wise
Reunions us, and more.

More about that evening meeting cannot be given right here and now. Doctor Darrel Dogstar got his book *First-Ever Meeting with the Simultaneous Aliens* into print and on sale within eleven hours, and he has writs out to prevent anyone else describing the full conversations and congresses that went on that night. The writs will run out, of course, after the book has enjoyed its three full days on sale: but this is 'now' and not three days from now.

But almost all who had been present had good feelings about that meeting, especially the part about the human beings being taken for creatures right out of mythology. And the 'happiness motif' was very strong in the encounter, strong beyond the ability of words to describe. The reunion with our kindred was just about the juiciest well of euphoria ever tapped.

But, next day, some of the colleagues gradually lost their power of seeing the invisible; and by noon that power was gone from

them. Only two of them, besides McSlim, retained the rapport and the seeing. And yet that was the day when several million persons in the United States, substantial numbers in the Netherlands, and scatterings of folks in England, France, Germany, Turkey, Japan, and Australia began to see and to sense in the full way, to make contact with what they were already calling 'the other nine-tenths of the world', with the quasi-people and quasi-animals and quasi-spooks.

So the experience was valid in that it had been partaken of by several million people: and it looked as though it would soon be shared by hundreds and thousands of millions, by almost everybody. And yet the encounter itself could not be considered as fully verified until it was known how it happened, until it was known why it happened to some people only and not to all, and until it could be brought about at will.

So the hunt for an effector was on. If one computer with one carload of data couldn't find it, then perhaps a hundred computers with ten thousand carloads of data could find it.

Why had the new power come to only a few millions of people and not to the hundreds of millions and the billions? Were the people who recieved the power all of one type? And what were the characteristics of that type? What particular thing did the people of the 'new seeing' eat or smell or drink or stick in their ears? What thing, that the people lacking the power did not use?

The people who had managed the 'Big See', well, they had been rather kiddish people, and four-fifths of them were kids indeed. They were breezy and easy. They were un-intricate, even when they were rather intelligent. They were casual. They were at the same time rapid and relaxed.

Or (and this may be important) they were folks who had been in the company of such casual people when they first experienced the new powers: and they just may have shared some triggering, life-style item of the casual people.

No, one computer couldn't solve it, and one hundred couldn't. But two hundred and twelve computers were able to do it in a little less than two hours. They got it down to about two million possible items, and then everybody knew that the hunt was almost over with. And quickly the computers had it down to a single item, verified and certain.

The item, of course, was Sappig-Happig Chewing Gum, called Sappy-Happy by the children in the United States. And everybody said "Why didn't I guess that?" when the computers had worked out the answer. What else could it have been? It's name in Dutch meant 'Juicy Keen' or 'Juicy Sharp', and the gum was a product of the

Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company, their newest flavor of chewing gum which brought their total flavors to the number of sixty-six. Chewing gum was now one of the thousands of things made out of petroleum in the attempt to reduce the glut of all oil products. And the largest gum factories, including those of Royal Dutch Shell, were in the United States where the chewing gum habit was the largest.

So it was announced to the world that the enabling factor for the 'big see' was this new and exotic flavor of chewing gum. Then everybody began to chew Sappig-Happig gum; and another hundred million persons in the world enjoyed the larger vision and the acquaintance of their near cousins who had been till now invisible. A billion persons in the world would have enjoyed the larger vision that day except that the world supply of Sappig-Happig ran out without even reaching most of the world.

Never mind that; it would be produced and allocated quickly, tomorrow enough for a billion people, the next day enough for nine billion, so that each person could have at least one package to tide him over until full production could be achieved. And there was even the belief that the chewing gum with its enabling ingredient, whatever it was, was only the nose of a great many-faceted chemical advent for the fulfillment of mankind.

The 'Reunion of the Peoples' was a stupenduous thing. The 'Big See' was an 'event for ten thousand years'. "It's a world so much bigger than we thought it was" was a frequent comment by people who had had the new sight. It couldn't all have been comprehended in a day or a week, and something less than a week has so far been allotted to it.

In the context of the 'Big See' the laws of numbers and space became more lenient. For, considering how many of the new creatures there were, probably ten times as many as the old creatures, there wasn't much crowding. And there wasn't any strong feeling of inferiority in the humans over the new relationships, for the humans were at least halfway up the hierarchy of creatures.

The new animals, seen for the first time, were really more striking and more varied than the new 'people' ("It's like wildest Africa raised many powers," somebody said about those new animals), but only a few of the 'old animals', some of the cattle, a few of the horses, as yet seemed to be aware of them. The 'giggling cattle' found here and there apparently found the 'new visibilities' friendly and risible, and they took delight in them.

And the new flora-now-become-visible were solid achievements. There were trees so much taller and stronger and better-done than

the trees that had been visible before. There were bushes that were Bushes, there was grass that was Grass. And even the unliving landscapes were superior. The simultaneous rivers were much more rampant and distinguished than any known before, more 'riverly'. The hills, the plains, the mountains, oh they were giantized, and yet they didn't deform or destroy the old landscape. It was just that about nine more aspects of the world were now known.

And when the other nine-tenths of the 'old people' should be able to see the other nine-tenths of the living world that had heretofore been invisible (and that shouldn't be later than the end of this week) then a new phase of humanity and of the world would be realized.

But the new batch of Sappig-Happig chewing gum was a bummer. Not only was it a little bit weak on chewability, but it was completely lacking in the 'Big See' qualities.

So the people of the world suffered severe withdrawal symptoms, even that great majority who had not yet experienced that expansive opening. People went very sour then and they downplayed yesterday's exciting phenomena. They were told that the great thing would come again surely in a day or two, but they were skeptical about the whole business.

Critics claimed that the fact that the made-visible 'cousins' spoke in the observers' own language, whether English or Dutch or Japanese, proved that the whole syndrome of events was subjective and fictitious. And yet all the more discerning witnesses had said that the new folks had not exactly 'spoken' to them but only that they had 'communicated' with them as clearly and naturally as if they were speaking in words.

And others said that the whole complex was no more than a psychological quirk, a substitution. It was the case of inadequate persons having alienated themselves from human friends by their difficult personalities, and then imagining crowds of new friends who should be a little bit different than the objectionable humans, and much superior to them. These same critics pointed out that the chewing of gum is itself a psychological quirk and a substitution, an activity without content indulged in by persons who were themselves without content, a noisy gnawing on virtual nothingness.

And many said that the whole affair was only a soap-bubble, a day-fly, rather colorful and striking for a short moment; and now that moment was gone.

The entire complexity and recognition was denigrated as being messianic, millennial, chiliastic, soteriological, plerotic, and silly. Strong words, those! It was even called Orwellian and big-

brotherish.

But thoughtful persons who had themselves experienced the 'Big See' knew that it had been a foot-in-the-door beyond which door the other nine-tenths of the world was really to be found.

But dashed hope was huge and world-wide.

But new hopes were springing up like springtime flowers. There was a total investigation of the chewing gum affair. And the enabling or triggering element that had been in the introductory batch would be identified and reconstituted.

Within one hour, the world-wide investigation converged on one man, one "Flavor-Master" at the largest gum factory. His name was John Mastic, and he had been a Flavor-Master for twenty-seven years.

"I am an artist," John Mastic told the articulated investigators. "When I mix the first batch of a new flavor, I am painting a dawn, I am composing a symphony, I am creating a folk drama, I am bringing up cool deep meanings from the cellar of the soul, I am setting the juice of life to flowing. Each first batch of a new flavor is blended in this one big vat here in the amount of about eighty thousand kilograms.

"Yes, I am careful to jot down everything that I put in. And then if the flavor catches on, it can be duplicated in any of the factories. Oh, there was the basic chickle first, there were a hundred kilos of essence of walnuts, there was lemon and citron, there were the four sorts of sugar, there was the coconut fibre. There was the powdered graphite to give it slipability. There was the mint and the wormwood. And there were our own patented Sialogogue Number Nine which no other chewing gum manufacturer is able to duplicate. And there were twenty thousand kilos of synthetic corn cobs, made from crude oil, to give it chewability. That's it."

"We have the list," the articulated investigators said, "and, yes, it agrees with what you remember. But some element is missing, missing."

"Can't think of what it could be," John Mastic answered cheerfully. And the articulated investigators left him with end-of-the-roadish expressions on their faces.

"I forgot to tell those fellows that I used four thousand kilos of Youngman's Royal Range Pellets in place of the same weight of synthetic corn cobs," John Mastic told himself three minutes later. "The market is so mixed up lately that range pellets are actually cheaper than synthetic corn cobs (both of them largely made out of petroleum), and the chewability element is at least equal in the pellets. I can't see where it would make any difference though."

"Why don't we have the Lord Protector of the United States in Washington get together with the Lord Protectors of all the other countries and declare a world crisis," Mary Crisis McSlim asked her father Rusty McSlim. "That's the only thing to get something done, to make a world crisis out of it."

"Now, I don't think we'll need a world crisis at all, Mary C," Rusty said.

"Need it! New-creature hokey, we want it! There is nothing like a world crisis to get people stirred up. Why do you think we won't need it, papa?"

"Ah, I just heard cockroaches giggling in the pantry. When even cockroaches see the 'Big See', can people be far behind?"

"For a bunch of giggling cockroaches you'd throw away the opportunity for a world crisis? Oh, you shatter me," Mary Crisis said.

In two days, they still haven't been able to reconstitute any Sappig-Happig chewing gum containing the 'Big See' qualities. Nevertheless, four or five hundred million persons in the world are already onto the expanded vision without it. It will succeed, with chemicals or without, with substitutes and surrogates, or by sudden combinations. The odds are too high (the acquisition of the missing nine-tenths of the world) to give up easily.

The cows are still giggling their delight in Monaghan's meadow, and they are still munching those good Youngman's Royal Range Pellets. Those happy cattle are surely enjoying the 'Big See' yet.

And so are other things.

Gar-fish are giggling in the lakes. Honker geese are giggling in their skies and in their swamps. Earthworms are giggling in the ground, and squirrels are chortling in the hickory trees. And many of these species have neither eaten Youngman's Royal Range Pellets nor chewed Sappy-Happy gum. The Fish-and-Game Department guys are reporting happier species by the hour.

It is a many-fronted chemical advent, a world-wide movement. It has come to the gophers in their tunnels. It will come even to the lords of creation very soon, maybe even to the rest of them today. And when it comes, it will be a nine hundred percent gain in everything. May our eyes be big enough to take it all in! Don't let any of us be left out.

What's that funny noise in the front yard?

It's giggling moles tearing up the ground. But they are seeing the 'Big See' too.

BEQUEST OF WINGS

"Do you have to play that damned wind-harp in here every evening?" Potter Firmholder complained to his skinny daughter.

"I don't, no. I'm not here every evening, dear Potter," the daughter Angela said. "You yourself say that I'm never here. Oh, Potter, I need seven hundred and twenty dollars for a pinion-pick for this harp. It does save the pinion bones, you know."

"Oh, Skinny Angel, you could get a gold pick for that," said Peggy Firmholder, her mother.

"Well, of course it will be gold," Angela said. "Should I have a pot-metal pick when all the other kids have gold ones?"

"You must think money grows in the clouds," Potter grumbled.

"You young people have got to come down to Earth."

"Potter Firmholder, give the child the money!" Peggy said. "Everything has gone up."

"It's the things that have gone up unnaturally that disrupt me," Potter still complained. "Here, Angel, here's the money. I'm sorry I was cranky. What, off again? You'd better eat something before you go."

"I'll catch something on the wing," Angela said. She swept out with the wind-harp and the money, and it was plain that she was on her way to Cloudy Joe's Drug Store. Cloudy Joe had gold picks for wind-harps. He had 'wing-glo' wash. He had struts and canvas and tar, and white condor feathers, and pinion wires, and airplane glue;

even food and drink and tapes and magazines, and cloud moss, and wax-bug candles, everything that one might want.

"I don't like her hanging around Cloudy Joe's Drug Store so much," Potter Firmholder told his wife. "There's something a little bit wrong with that place."

"When you were that age, you hung around Ace Whizz-Bang's Tavern," Peggy said. "And, Potter, there was more than a little bit wrong with *that* place. Cloudy Joe's is a cult spot."

"So is Ace Whizz-Bang's," said Potter. *Used to hang around Ace Whizz-Bang's?* Potter still did. It was better than Cloudy Joe's Drug Store with all those high-flying young people crowding into it.

"I don't even know how Cloudy Joe's stays there," Potter said. "It's against all common-sense rules."

"Oh, Potter, I've explained it to you a dozen times, and so has Angela," Peggy said. "It's held up there by the new mathematics, by a Fortean Vector Value. Between the Euclidean and the Einsteinian universes there are thin intrusions know as the Fortean Universe. And Fortean Universe Vectors are strong enough to hold almost anything up, if they don't have to hold it up too far. Yeah, that's the patter for it, but I don't know what holds such places up either. They weren't up there before people discovered those vector values. Would they fall down again if people forgot the vectors? Poor Angela's getting more and more fearful as the time runs out on all of it. They're allowed six weeks of it after full sprout, and the time's nearly up. Young people have a very hard time of it nowadays; the 'lightest and brightest' of them do anyhow."

"Bat-wings, bat-wings!" jeered Ace Whizz-Bang as some of the Bat-Wing gang swooped by his front door. "Do you know, 'Mealyous, bat wings used to be cited against the old Natural Selection theory?" (They called Potter Firmholder 'Mealyous at Ace Whizz-Bang's and at other places.) "For a great evolutionary change to come about, it was argued, there had to be some advantage offered at every step on the way to that change, or how would the change be carried through? But where was the every-step advantage when a mousey rodent was growing wings and turning into a bat? Where was the advantage during those several million years when the changing thing wasn't wing enough to fly with and was too elongated and spread in the fingers to be used as a hand or a foot or a claw? It couldn't be walked on. It couldn't be manipulated. It couldn't be flown with. Why have it for a million years then? But now the main arguments against Natural Selection are that it didn't happen, and that there just isn't time to wait for it in a busy world."

"And the main arguments against Sudden Mutation are that it *does*

happen, and that there just isn't time to get used to it even in a fast-moving world," 'Mealyous Firmholder said. "It's hard on the young people, the high-flyers of them, and it's hard on their parents too. It was once said that the great menace hanging over mankind was the mushroom cloud. I suppose that wasn't true, since nobody really paid any attention to it. But now the greatest menace hanging over these lightest and brightest of the young people is the bolt-cutter. And they just can't avoid paying attention to it."

"Aye, they live on the sky-brink for a while, and then they fall off it," Ace Whizz-Bang said. "I was too old for it. It hadn't appeared yet in my youth (Oh, I guess there were a few dozen or so cases in California), so my youth had to be complicated by lesser things. Even today you will seldom see a 'stubby' who's more than twenty-eight or thirty years old. And the older uncropped ones are still younger than that. They get ungainly and crash-prone and they die within five years of their escaping the bolt-cutter. Now even the flyers say that they're not supposed to escape it. They say that their failures are bringing the full thing nearer every day."

"It's easy enough to set them down as trivial and flighty," Firmholder said. "Of course they are. They are young and ignorant, and extravagant in their views. But they seem to have a genuinely beautiful and thrilling mystique."

"Fragile though," Whiz-Bang said. "It's pathetic really. And it'll be traumatic to them in later life likely, though none of the afflicted ones have had a later life yet. There's only two things we can do about it. We can live with the sorrowful situation, or we can destroy the 'lightest and brightest' of the children as soon as they can be spotted."

"They're hard to spot before they're about fifteen years old and start to sprout," Firmholder said. "And a person rather hates to kill his fifteen year old son or daughter, whatever the logic of the situation."

"Nah, that wouldn't bother me much," Ace Whizz-Bang said. "A bunch of pupa-stage punks is what they are. One good thing about it all, though, you can really make bar glasses shine with that 'wing-glo' wash they've brought out."

Well, Angela Firmholder grew pale and wan during the crisis weeks.

"Aren't you rather overdoing the 'touch of death' role, Angie," her father tried to josh her once, to lift her out of her sadness. But Angela burst into tears and flew off.

"You shouldn't have said that, Potter," Peggy told him. "It's so terrible a thing for children of that age."

"Oh, I know it, I know it, Peg. I was just trying to jolly her a little bit. When we were young people, we were motorcycle nuts, and we loved the speed and noise. Now they go much faster, but they're not half as noisy about it."

"It must be horrible to be clipped," Peggy said, "and to be a 'stubby' and a 'nubby' for the rest of one's short life. They have to continue in such clumsiness of hands with only a little improvement. And they lose their beauty of voice and are adept at so few things. And it's only the lightest and the brightest who are afflicted so far. All their lives they will seem awkward, even to those more awkward and slow-witted ones who never were light and bright."

"I still wish that she wouldn't hang around Cloudy Joe's Drug Store so much."

"Leave it alone, Potter, and leave her alone. Cloudy Joe's is a cult place, and their cult is all they have to sustain them during the metamorphical horror."

"Well, I wish she'd agree to have it done in a hospital where it's clean."

"No, Potter, no. That would be uncult."

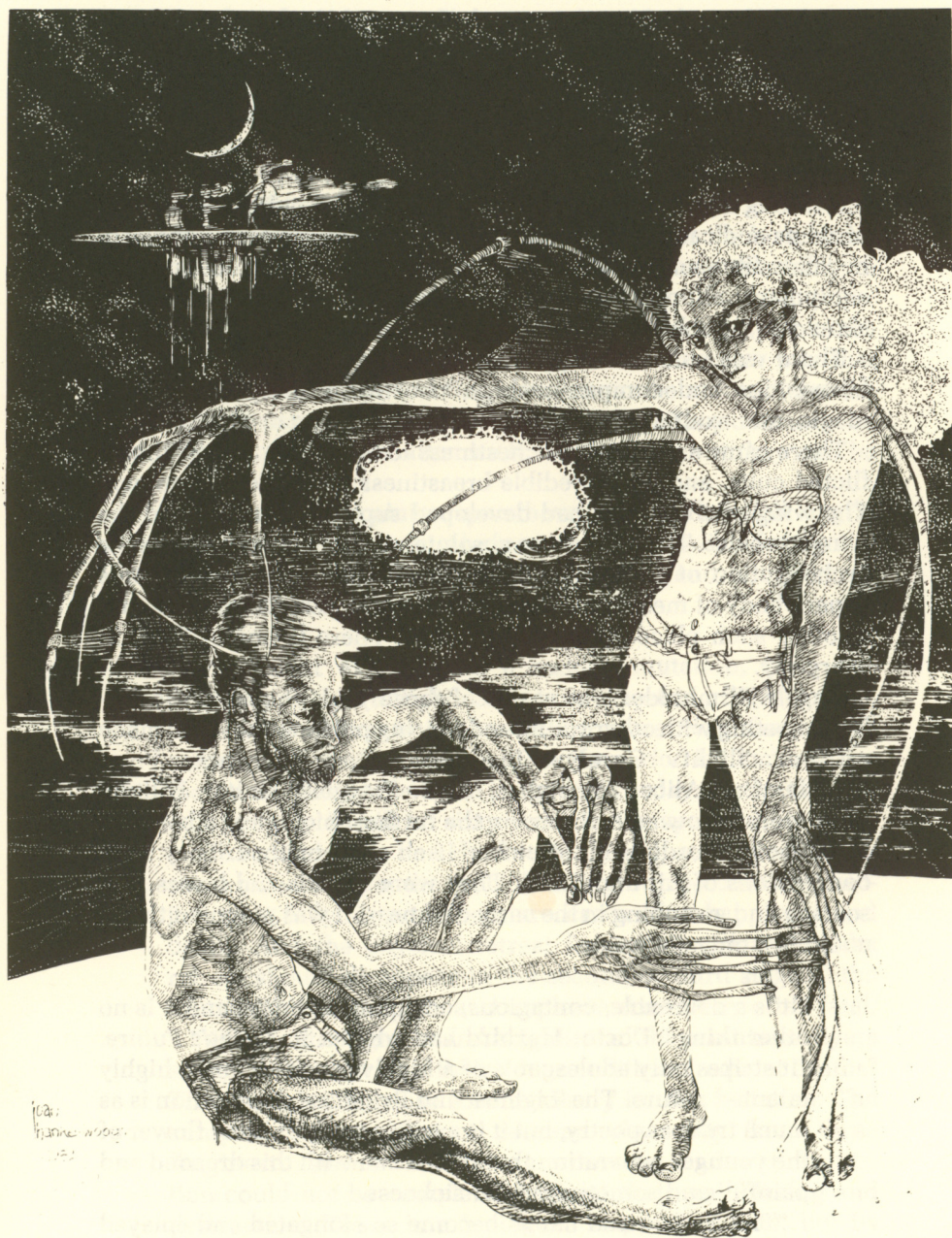
Those lightest and brightest of the young poeple did have remarkably beautiful voices during the weeks of their affliction. And the wind-harps that they played upon had a full and gusty sound. The cult songs that they sang had trivial words and tunes, but their renditions were superb. It was like honey from Heaven when those sounds drifted down. They were airy songs, sky songs, soaring songs, pinnacle songs. There was a complexity to their music that wasn't to be found in even the worst of the Rocks and Grocks.

The 'brightest' liked to perch on high pinnacles, on towers, on spires, on eagle cliffs. They held their bright and sparkling congresses in these places and in places even higher, such as Cloudy Joe's Drug Store on its Fortean sky-lodge.

A 'flight' of young people was mutually supporting in the terrible spiritual and physical crisis that the members were passing through. Whatever shame was in their condition was at least shared shame for members of a flight. Most of the suicides of the 'brightest' young people were of lone eagles, not of 'flight' members.

Together, the shame of eating insects and cicadas, and even small birds caught on the wing, was a mitigated shame. The appetite for these things was as relentless as it was sudden. Eat them they must, and it was better that they eat them together.

The physical clumsiness of the brightest could not be overcome singly, but in group it could be partly overcome. No afflicted per-



son could bring his own fingers together, could bring his two hands together. But two persons might bring their now elongated thumbs together for manipulation or handling, or might bring the knobs of their pinion bones together. Tools were devised (the pinion-pick for playing the wind-harp was only one of them) to slip over the ends of pinion bones in order to push or hook or grasp.

Working together, the young people could assemble bat-wings out of struts and canvas plastered with tar, or bird-wings out of plasti-hedelon fibre and feathers. It didn't take very much manufactured equipment, slipped over newly deformed hands and arms and shoulders, to achieve conquest of the unaccustomed environment.

There was cult culture in this, cult music, achingly close cult friendships and companionships, courtships that were almost magic, and exaltation in the higher air.

There came an incredible chestiness to the young men of the afflicted cults, and an incredible breastiness to the young women. The wing-beat muscles had developed superbly. And so had the winged voices. Their song was absolutely extraordinary, as was the orchestration of their wind-harps. Sheet music for most of this superb body of melody can be had at Cloudy Joe's Drug Store, and at other such places around the world. There is one of them in every sky.

Angela Firmholder was at one of those 'high-places' in the twilight meeting with other young and soaring personalities who made up her 'flight'. Carolyn Bushbaby, Rod Murdock, Peter King-feather, Alice Tombigbee, Clyde Boggles, Hester Hilltop! They were fellow adventurers in the furthest biological adventure since the primordial clay stretched itself and breathed. They were companions of Air and Earth. They were friends and lovers. Ah, soaring and swooping in the early darkness! It was poignant that it could last only six weeks.

"It is a damnable, contagious, crippling arthritis, and it is no other thing," Doctor Hexbird had written in *Today's Future*. "It strikes only adolescents of a highly sensitive and a highly talented nature. The 'Lightest and Brightest' designation is as much truth as poetry, but it is a tragic truth. It is the flower of the younger generation that is stricken with this dreaded and painful, and sometimes fatal sickness.

"The fingers and hands become so elongated and splayed that they can no longer be used for human hands. They cannot grasp, they cannot manipulate. It would almost be better if the hands were chopped off completely. What must be chopped off, however, are two outlaw growths on each side, two

very long bone spurs call the greater and lesser pinion bones. These new spur-bones change the whole deportment of the victim; this is the reason that they must be removed after they have become hard bone. They can be cut with bone-saws, but in unapproved and cultic operations they are cut with bolt-cutters. Then these bones must be pulled out of the flesh for their entire length. This bloody laying-open of breast and shoulders and neck and arms and back to get the long bones out is a traumatic horror. The thirty per cent mortality in these cultic operations is outrageous.

"After the two giant bone-spurs are removed, the pain of the unusual arthritis will often disappear. There is no way that the length of hand and finger bones can be reduced, but the hands can regain a slight bit of their agility. They can never be fully human hands after such a deformity, but they can be used a little bit.

"When the two pinion-spurs have come to their full length, and just before they must be removed, it is possible for the victims, by the use of a few slight strut-like and wing-like attachments, to fly."

"We might expect even a sudden mutation, if so far-reaching as this (a flightless species acquiring flight) to take from three million to twelve million years. Now that we are actually observing it, we find that the period is much shorter than that. The whole cycle is about sixty days in the individual; possibly it will be sixty years in the species (this to include second-stage and third-stage development also). It has come too swiftly for the individual or group personality to adjust to it fully as yet. There are cases of unhappiness and death. And the physical retreat from its implications (the retreat should disappear in the second or third stage of the mutation) is incomplete and unpleasant and very often fatal.

"Why do the 'lightest and brightest' of these mutated flyers accept the cropping of their wings and their frequent deaths? They accept it because it is necessary for the mutation. The complete flyers will not descend physically from these 'brightest'. These will not have any descent. And yet the mutation could not be completed without their trail-blazing and destruction. There is a biological imperative here, but its mechanism is still not clear.

"Ah, it is a great privilege to live in the time of an actual, major, rapid mutation." So wrote Dr. Rudolph Redstern in *Tomorrow's Flight*.

"With cloud-grown mosses for my bed,
And wax-bug candles at my head."

That was part of the instructions that Angela Firmholder wrote for her parents, in case of her death. And she added an explanation in prose:

"The cloud-moss may be had in thirty kilo bales (one bale of it will make up into a nice death-bed) at Cloudy Joe's Drug Store, for fifty dollars a kilo. It is the real moss that grows on the shady side of clouds, and it is the softest moss there is.

"The wax candles are to be made from the waxen insects that we catch and eat in flight. Some of the more enterprising people catch them against their own deaths, and to sell. I have been a lazy flyer and I did not provide for myself, so you must buy them. I want three of these wax candles, from fat-bugs, from wax-bugs, and from rush-bugs. They are for sale at Cloudy Joe's Drug Store for six hundred dollars a candle. I know that you will not begrudge me these for my last rites.

"I expect to die from the clipping. I don't much want to live on as a 'stubby' or a 'nubby', but I will if that is ordained for me. The clipping is the case and the law now. Soon there will be other cases and other laws. The big thing is almost here, and the destruction of a few of us early flyers prepares the way for it. In half a century all the people will fly, without device and without shame, and without pain or tortuous effort.

"Rod Murdock, who is my first sky-companion, will clip my pinion bones with the ritual bolt cutters. Then all the members of my flight will lay me over and remove these newest of bones, the pinions. And then a new member will take my place in the 'flight'. Then I will be brought here, for the death of a flyer, or for the life of a 'nubby'. But I will not be ashamed in any case.

"People will not need hands when they are grown to full flight and to full flight custom. We will not need anything manufactured, not even wind-harps. When the days of fullness arrive, our distal feathers will sound like wind-harps."

"What I think," said Ace Whizz-Bang, "is that before the end of this century there will be two kinds of people. The 'lightest and the brightest' will have become bird-people complete. I say, let them go. Let them become birds. To me, there was always something a little bit too-much about those lightest and brightest anyhow.

"And the other kind of people will be ourselves, the old people. We will be somewhat improved by getting rid of the flighty element in ourselves, and we will be ready to tackle another million years of it. Say, 'Mealy, there's six of those flying kids coming down over

your house right now, and it looks like they're carrying your daughter between them. Was this the day she was supposed to be cropped?"

"This was the day, Whizz-Bang. Oh, my poor skinny Angela!" Firmholder cried, and he hurried the half block to his home.

"Potter Famealyous Firmholder," said loving wife Peggy. "They're bringing her in now. Is she not beautiful?"

"Beautiful," breathed Potter. "Oh, the poor creature!"

The young 'flight' people brought Angela down and laid her on the cloud-moss bed. She was white with fright and pain, and red with blood. But she smiled.

Somebody brought a display of pinnacle roses from Cloudy Joe's Drug Store. Somebody lit the wax-bug candles.

"Oh, my poor skinny angel," Peggy Firmholder mourned her daughter.

There was a musical tone of distal feathers ruffling in the wind of a long swoop downwards. They sounded ever so much like wind-harps.

"Oh, how cult!" cried Peggy.

FALL OF PEBBLE-STONES

And heal my heart and bless my bones
With nightly fall of pebble-stones.

Ellenbogen, *Rainy Morning Rimes*.

Bill Sorel stood at his nineteenth-floor window and shied pebbles and stones out over space to land in the sidewalk and street. It had rained the night before, and there were pebbles on that little ledge under his window after every rain. It's always fun to throw stones, even small stones, in the morning and see what they will hit.

"Hey, that cop's going to come up and get you again, Bill Sorel," Etta Mae Southern called from her window next door. "Where were you last night? I called every guy I know for a date and couldn't get anybody. You remember the other day the cop came all the way up to your place and told you the people in the street were getting crabby about getting hit on the head with pebbles."

"I have been awarded the big red plum, Etta Mae," Sorel boasted to the early morning air and his neighbor. "I'm not a professor; I'm not a doctor: I'm just a hardworking and dirty-scheming popularizer and feature writer. But I have wrested the big red plum from the big boys in the Q. and A. scientific field."

"Well, don't throw the plum-pit down on someone's head when you're finished," Etta Mae said. "You told that cop, 'They're not very big pebbles,' and he said, 'No, I know they're not.' You told

him, 'People just like to complain about things,' and he said, 'Yeah, I know they do. Now you just cut out hitting people on their heads with pebbles so they'll have one less thing to complain about.' You said, 'How did you know it was me?' and he said, 'Who else in this building would be a mad pebble-thrower?' He sure is a nice cop but I bet he won't be so nice if he has to come all the way up here after you again."

"I've been awarded the big red plum," Sorel repeated, and he continued to pick the pebbles out of that little ledge below his window and throw them down over the street. "I have been selected to compile, edit, write or whatever *The Child's Big What and Why Book*. This will pay me well. All I have to do is answer the scientific questions that children of all ages will ask, and do it in the style that the most doltish kid can understand and the smartest kid will not find patronizing. And really most of the work is done before I start."

"You hit a man with a pebble, Bill. He's looking around to see where it came from. He's on the edge of being real mad if he finds out someone hit him on purpose."

"I didn't," Sorel said. "I discovered that I can't hit any of them on purpose, so I concentrate on hitting them by accident. I just throw them and let them find their own targets. But it wasn't a very big pebble and it didn't hurt him much. Now all I have to do is find out half an answer to one question and a full answer to another, and I'll be able to put the book together. Where do you think the pebbles come from, Etta Mae?"

"My idea is that the rain makes them. Pebbles are made out of silicon mostly. And silicon and nitrogen are almost exactly alike. I used to go with a smart fellow and he taught me things like that. When it lightens, the rain makes almost as much silicon water as nitrogen water, and it deposits it as pebbles. That's one way. Hey, do you know that rotten people never have pebbles around their houses? The other way is that little pieces of sand come together and the lightning-impregnated water fuses them into pebbles. It has to be one of those ways or there wouldn't always be pebbles after it rains. There's a third way that pebbles could happen, but it's a little bit doubtful."

"Tell me the third way, Etta Mae. I have to consider lots of fringe things for the *Big What and Why Book*."

"It's that somebody doesn't want you to run out of pebbles because you have so much fun throwing them. So, whoever it is, he keeps making pebbles for you every time it rains. You know Mrs. Justex on the eighteenth floor. She always used to live in a house before she came here, and she had a little ledge outside her kitchen window where her milk would be left every morning. She took the

apartment here and saw that there wasn't any ledge. 'How will I get milk?' she asked herself. So she nailed up a little ledge like the one you fixed for yourself there. And every morning there would be a quart of milk for her on the ledge. This went on for a week till she happened to think, 'Who is my route man here? And how does he get up to the eighteenth floor on the outside of this building?' She heard him then—it was early in the morning—and she went to see. She opened the window suddenly and knocked him off. He fell down and was killed on the sidewalk. But he faded away, and there wasn't anything left of him when she went down to look. After that, she had to start buying her milk in the store."

"No, Etta Mae, I know Mrs. Justex. That's just one of the stories that she tells when she's wet-braining it in the Wastrels' Club."

"It did seem kind of doubty. I don't believe she drinks milk at all. What is the half an answer and the whole answer that you have to find out before you can put the book together?"

"The half one is, 'Why does a baseball curve?' I think I have that half whipped. I'm going to see a man today who is supposed to know the answer. And the whole answer I'm looking for is to the question, 'How do the pebbles get under the eaves?' "

"Oh, well, it's got to be one of the three ways I told you."

Bill Sorel stood there at the window and threw every pebble away. That is important. He didn't miss a one. Then he got a little broom and swept that ledge clear of everything.

Bill Sorel should have had an easy job of putting that book together. He already knew all the answers except for that half answer and that full answer. He had once handled a lot of the questions in a little daily feature before it was canceled out on him. He could use that material again. And most of the other answers he had already filed in his head for ready use. Besides, there were already many such books that he could draw upon, besides the real reference books, and besides the palaver of his own keenwitted friends. He had had it down to three unanswered questions when he applied for a shot at the *Big What and Why*. And now he had it down to one and one-half.

When Bill Sorel had come on the scene there had been three questions going around wearing blatantly false answers. These were: "What Makes it Thunder?" "What Makes a Baseball Curve?" "How Do the Pebbles Get Under the Eaves?" It is hard to believe the answers that had been given to these questions by scientists, some of them grown men.

Listen to this one:

"Thunder is produced when lightning heats the surrounding air and causes it to expand and send out waves. The expanding air is

heard as thunder.”

Well, what can you do when you come on something like that? Possibly it was better than the answer that earlier generations gave, that the lighting burned up the air and the thunder was caused by new air rushing in to fill up the place.

Well, Bill Sorel had found out what causes thunder. It was really a wonder that somebody else hadn't stumbled onto the right answer before he had. Read it. Read the amazingly evident answer in *The Child's Big What and Why Book*.

Listen to this about a baseball. And it's been repeated again and again for more than a century.

“The curving of a baseball is caused by denser air in the bottom of the baseball than on the top. Therefore the bottom spin will be more effective than the top spin, will have more traction on the air, and will cause the ball to curve. The ball will curve to the right if the pitcher throws it with a clockwise spin, and to the left if the spin is counterclockwise. Artillery shells behave according to the same rule.”

Oh, great bloated bulls! What? A three-and-a-half inch difference in elevation would cause enough pressure difference between the top and the bottom of a baseball to make the thing curve up to eighteen inches in sixty-six feet? Where is your sense of proportion? Suppose the difference in elevation-pressure should be a hundred thousand times as much, the difference between low ground and the height of thirty thousand feet or so. Would the thrown ball then curve a hundred thousand times as much? Would it curve thirty miles off course in sixty-feet of travel? As Etta Mae would say, “It's kind of doubtful.”

But now Bill Sorel halfway knew what made a baseball curve. He had heard the explanation at second hand. Today he hoped to hear it at first hand.

And listen to this one about pebbles in the little rain worn ditches under the eaves of buildings:

“It is sometimes asked why there are usually small white pebble-stones under the eaves-drops of buildings when there do not seem to be any other pebbles around anywhere. But the answer is that there are always pebbles around everywhere. They are mixed with the great bulk of the earth and are not noticed. But rain washes the finer and lighter earth particles away and leaves the pebbles behind. That is the reason that there seem to be so many pebbles under the eaves of buildings, particularly after a rain.”

Aw, heel-flies! Bill Sorel didn't know the answer to that one, but he knew that such drivel wasn't the answer.

Yeah, he had a big red plum. He wasn't going to let it get away.

He was going to make sure of it. He got in his Red Ranger (a type of motor car) and drove off to find the man who could complete his half answer to the second question. And as he drove, he reviewed in his mind that momentous third question.

Some pebbles are limestone, but most of them are quartz. And *there are not always pebbles around*. In much earth there are no pebbles at all. In most earth, the true pebbles will make up less than one part in fifty thousand. Ah, but you put up a building or house and move into it, and after the very first rain there is a thick accumulation of pebbles in its eaves-drops. Has fifty thousand times their amount of earth been washed away to reveal them?

Bill Sorel had made a nuisance of himself around building projects in checking out the pebble situation. In one place he had taken a cubic yard of dirt, hauled it aside, and gone over it all with a toothbrush and sieve. And he had not found any pebbles at all. The only things too big to go through the sieve were organic things, roots, hickory nut hulls, twigs, pieces of bark and pieces of worms. There were not any natural pebbles at all. He kept track of all artificial pebbles (pieces of mortar, cinder block fragments, bits of limestone gravel and of flint chat). He would always know them from genuine pebbles, and he already knew that they would not accumulate under eaves.

He continued his surveillance as the seven houses on this particular tract were raised, were finished, were first rained upon. He examined them. The rain had made little under-the-eaves ditches around all the houses, but there were no pebbles in those ditches. Something was missing from the formula. The premonition of what it might be excited Bill Sorel and almost scared him.

People moved into one of the houses, and Sorel waited impatiently for it to rain. But it didn't rain for a whole week. People moved into a second of the houses, and that night it rained. Sorel was around with a flashlight at dismal, drenching dawn (it was partly for such devoted labor as this that Sorel had won the big red plum), and he discovered that the two inhabited houses now had pebbles in their eaves-drop runnels, and that the five uninhabited houses had none.

He followed it up. As soon as people moved into another house and there was rain thereafter, so soon was there a full complement of pebbles around that house.

You do not believe this? Pick out a housing development in your own region, and make a nuisance of yourself by observing it closely. You will be convinced, unless you are of such mind-set as defies conviction.

Sorel observed other housing developments, apartment projects,

commercial constructions. Wherever eaves-runners were not precluded by roof guttering and spouting, there would be white pebbles appearing in full force as soon as the structure had been put to human use and it had rained thereafter.

Sorel tried it at his own nineteenth-floor apartment. He figured a way to divert rainfall from the roof. He made this diversion, and he made a little ledge outside his window on which the diverted rain might fall.

(A little misunderstanding was created by these activities of Sorel. Firemen and policemen and psychologists and deacons came and soft-talked him and tried to capture him with hooks and ropes and nets. They thought he was contemplating jumping off the building to his own destruction. He wasn't. There just wasn't any way to divert the rain-drop without climbing around on the outside of that building.)

Well, it rained the night after Sorel had made these arrangements. There sure had not been any pebbles there before it rained. There had been nothing there but a little ledge or trough made out of number two pine boards and fastened to the brickwork with screws and lead anchors.

It rained and rained, and Bill Sorel kept night watch on his little ledge by the lightning flashes and the diffused night light of the town. One moment there had not been any pebbles. And the next moment there had been a complete complement of pebbles. Sorel knew that the pebbles were for him. He knew they wouldn't have appeared on the ledge of an apartment that nobody lived in, but how had the pebbles got to that nineteenth-floor ledge? This was the question that still lacked even a hint of an answer.

Bill Sorel in his Red Ranger arrived at a little acreage and came on a tall middle-aged man who was eating round onions; and with him was a bright-faced little girl who was eating gingerbread.

"They're good for the circulation," the man said. "I bet I eat more onions than any man in the county. I'm George 'Cow-Path' Daylight. You sent me a postcard that you were coming to see me today."

"Yes," Bill Sorel said. "I'm told that you really know what makes a baseball curve. I've been looking for the answer to that one for a long time."

"I'm Susie 'Corn-Flower' Daylight," the bright-faced little girl said. "Mr. Cow-Path here is my grandfather."

"Yes, I really know what makes a ball curve," Cow-Path said. "It's because I know what makes it curve that I've been striking out batters for thirty years. You ask the batters in Owasso and Coweta and

Vedigris about me. You ask them in Oolagah and Tiawah and Bushyhead. They'll tell you who keeps the Catoosa Mud-Cats on top of the heap year after year. I am the best small-town pitcher in northeast Oklahoma, and I'm the best because I know what makes a baseball curve."

"And I am the best third-grade girl pitcher in Catoosa," Susie Corn-Flower Daylight said. "I can even whizz them by most of those big girls in the fourth and fifth grades."

"Cow-Path, they tell me that you maintain that the direction of the spin has nothing to do with the direction of the curve of a ball. And you say that there isn't a gnat's leg's difference in the pressure on the top and the bottom of a ball."

"Not a millionth of a gnat's leg's difference," Cow-Path Daylight said. "A pitcher's mustache with one more hair on one side than on the other would have more effect on the ball than any such difference in pressure. The reason I understand the physics of the situation is that I spent two years in the sixth grade, which is why I learned that book *General Science for The Primary Student* so well. There was a paragraph in there about how a gyroscope top spins and leans and holds. I applied it to a baseball and became a great pitcher."

"Well, if the direction of the spin doesn't have any effect on the direction of the curve, what *does* have effect?" Sorel asked smoothly. He had heard the explanation at second hand, but he wanted to hear it from the master.

"The direction of the axis of the spin is what causes the curve," Cow-Path said, "but it doesn't matter which direction the ball spins on the axis. Look!"

Cow-Path Daylight took a pencil from Sorel's pocket and, with his strong fingers, he jabbed clear through one of those big round onions that he liked. He had it centered perfectly. He spun the pencil with its spitted onion, and that was the axis of spin. He moved the whole thing head-on down the centerline of the hood of Sorel's Red Ranger, but with the direction of the axis about eleven degrees off to the right of the direction of movement.

"The curve will be in the direction of the angle of the axis of spin," Cow-Path said. "The ball, on the gyroscopic principle, tries to align its direction with the direction of the axis of spin. But the direction of the spin itself doesn't matter. See!"

Cow-Path showed, with the gyroscopic onion, how a ball would behave with the axis tilted to the right or the left, or up or down. And he showed that it was all the same thing whether the spin was clockwise or counterclockwise.

"It is for this understanding that I am known as the artist of the

backup ball," Cow-Path said. "I can throw a fork-ball that moves like a slider, or a slider that moves like a fork-ball. And I can throw my floater and my drop with the same motion and the same direction of spin: only the tilt of the axis will be changed."

Sorel saw that all of this was true with an eternal verity. It was one of those big Copernican moments. Things could never again be as they had been before. Infinitesimally and particularly there had been made a contribution towards a new Heaven and a new Earth.

When he had his feelings a bit under control, Bill Sorel made small talk with the two Daylight people. Then, believing that their well of wisdom could not be exhausted even by such a huge cask as had been drawn from it, he asked them questions.

"Do you know what causes thunder?" he asked them.

"Do you mean thunder or the sound of thunder?" Susie Corn-Flower Daylight asked around her gingerbread. "They're two different things."

"I suppose I mean the sound of thunder," Sorel said. "Thunder itself has no cause."

"Why, how smart you are, for a city man!" Corn-Flower admired.

"I very nearly know what causes the sound of thunder, the sound of lightning really, but I don't know exactly," Cow-Path said. "Lightning is resinous, as we know from the color of it as well as from the odor. I believe that when lightning cracks or fractures the air, it coats both parts of the air with a sort of rosin dust—not too different from the rosin that pitchers use. Then, when the two parts of the air come together again immediately, they are a little bit off-set from each other. So they grind and set themselves together, and the two rosined surfaces rubbing together make a noise."

Bill Sorel was amazed. Cow-Path's explanation was gibberish, of course. But it sounded almost like the real explanation would sound if given in code, and it may have been just that. And Susie Corn-Flower's divination that the thunder and the sound of thunder were two different entities was—well, it was a thunderous sort of intuition. Sorel felt very pleased and gratified with these two persons.

So he tried them with the final question.

"How do pebbles get under the eaves of houses and buildings?" he asked.

"Oh, I suppose they come off the roof," Cow-Path said. "The rain must loosen them, and then they roll off the roof into the eaves-drop ditch."

"No, Grandpa, no," Susie Corn-Flower Daylight said. "Why would they ever be on the roof to fall off? The pebble angel puts the

pebbles directly into the eaves-drop ditch. He puts them there as a sign he is guarding that building and that everything is all right. Buildings without people living in them never have pebbles under the eaves."

"No, I know they don't, Corn-Flower," Sorel said. "But did you ever hear that rotten people don't have pebbles around their houses either?"

"I've never known any rotten people," Susie Corn-Flower said. "We've never had any rotten people in our town."

"That's right. There never have been any here," Cow-Path said.

Bill Sorel had *The Child's Big What and Why Book* finished a week later—he was a fast worker—and it was ready to send off. But he had two versions of one page, and he had not yet made his selection between them. This was the page that covered the question, "How do the pebbles get under the eaves?"

Sorel went to the Wastrel's Club to drink white rum and think about it. One version gave the old safe answer, that there are always pebbles around everywhere, and that the rain washed the dirt away from them and leaves the pebbles. This was the safe falsehood.

The other version was somewhat different. It was true, probably: or at least it was a coded statement of a truth. But could Sorel get away with a truth like that in the *What and Why Book*?

Etta Mae Southern was already in Wastrels' with a handsome, rich, and goodhumored man. She made very small horizontal circles with her finger in the air.

"That's the world's smallest record playing, 'I wish it were you instead,' " she called across the club room.

And Mrs. Justex was already in Wastrels'. She was drinking one of those lacteal gin-sloshes that are called Milky Ways. So Mrs. Justex *did* drink milk, sometimes, and in a way. That fact changed just about everything. It meant that the widest of improbables was still possible.

On the wall of Wastrels' was a paragraph of wisdom:

"When one has discarded all absolutely impossible explanations of a thing, then what is left, however improbable it seems, must be accepted as the explanation until a better explanation comes along."

Bill Sorel had seen that paragraph on the wall a dozen times, but it had never hit him between the ears before.

A cop came into Wastrels' and said it had started to rain outside. He had a Salty Dog. Cops are the only people left in the world who still drink them.

"You will be in my apartment in fifteen minutes," Bill Sorel said.

"Why will I be?" the cop asked him.

"To try to make me stop hitting people on their heads with pebble-stones," Sorel said. And Sorel left Wastrels' and went to his apartment. He selected one of the two versions of the disputed page and put it with the rest of the pages. He sealed and stapled the completed *What and Why*, and went out and down in the elevator and out into the rain to mail the thing in the stand-up mailbox on the corner. And then he came back to his apartment with happy anticipation.

Then he was standing at his opened window in the early dark. It was raining and blowing and getting him pretty wet. He was scooping up handfuls, double-handfuls of pebbles from the ledge under his window and flinging them out at the lower world. He scooped out twenty, thirty, fifty handfuls of pebbles from that little ledge-trough that wouldn't hold three handfuls at one time. But now that trough stood full of pebble-stones no matter how many he scooped out of it.

Somebody was banging at Sorel's apartment door, and he let him bang. And pretty soon somebody was shaking Sorel's shoulder, and he let him shake.

"Hey, you got to quit throwing pebbles down there," the cop was saying. "You're hitting people that are trying to get taxis in the rain, and you're tearing their umbrellas. Those are bigger pebble-stones than you usually throw, aren't they?"

"These are the biggest ever," Sorel said happily. "These are prime pebbles. Say, I used the page about the pebble angel in the book. That's going to hit a lot of people crossways. I mailed the whole thing off with that in it. I'm glad I did."

"They come in just as fast as you throw them out, don't they?" the cop said. "I wonder where they come from? I never noticed that that's the way pebbles come when it rains. Can't you throw more of them faster and get ahead of them?"

Oh, it was with a wonderful clatter that the pebbles arrived!

"Man, this is as fast as I can throw them," Sorel panted. "I bet I've thrown a thousand pounds of them down already. It sure is fun. It looks like I made a breakthrough in pebbles. The pebble angel is showing that he likes the mention."

"Maybe if we both scooped them and threw them as fast as we could, we could almost keep up with them," the cop said. "Yeah, it is fun." The cop threw lefthanded, and the two fitted well together at the window.

He was a good person, that cop. There weren't any rotten people around there. (But have you looked under your eaves after a rain?)

MARSILIA V

"The Island of New Guinea is a nearly submerged mountain-range in the shape of a bird. And the Vogelkop Peninsula is the head of the bird. The Flora is the most fantastic in the world. The Fauna, to me, is less so."

That was the entry in the notebook of Lieutenant Littlejohn. The lieutenant was unfortunate in his family name. A burly man might carry a name like Littlejohn without notice. The lieutenant could not, for he was small. He was unable, by taking thought, to add anything at all to his apparent age. He was an unfinished spooky colt. And his sterile upper lip quivered when he was excited.

In bare lip, he was unique in the battery. Every other man had grown a whacker of a moustache in the nine months they had been on Guinea. Two hundred and thirty-three men in the battery had grown moustaches. One, Lieutenant Littlejohn, had not.

Actually, he was unable to grow one, but it was believed that he could have done it if he had tried hard enough. Charley Redwolf had grown one, and Charley was an Indian. Indians grow them with difficulty, and Charley had done it on sheer determination. He had sunned his upper lip for an hour a day with a handkerchief over the top part of his face. He had followed the advice of a Melanesian boy and every night he had applied wisps of kunai grass soaked in the urine of the Cuscus or Coconut Possum. Redwolf hadn't done much else in those nine months, but he *had* grown

a moustache.

There was a strong feeling in the battery that Lieutenant Littlejohn could have done it also if he'd had the heart for it. Littlejohn was not greatly respected by the men.

He was left much in peace now, but it hadn't always been so. He had abandoned some of his more interesting hobbies, and others he now carried out furtively. He had given up his butterfly collecting entirely for the length of his service. There is a stigma attached to a butterfly collector. There are several men even today who will do imitations of Littlejohn and his net, and these imitations are hilarious.

And yet, what's so bloody funny about it? Butterflies are interesting, and the net is the proper instrument for taking them. And some truly fantastic varieties had been seen at the stop-off stations of the battery.

But on Guinea, things were better. Here everybody became odd, so individual oddities were less noticed. Littlejohn wandered by himself through the jungles. He went up and over the cliffs, and down deep ravines. He learned which of the boggy meadows could be crossed and which could not.

And when he came to very secluded pools, he stripped and swam. But these had to be secluded. Even so, he often heard mocking whistles as of jungle birds. Few birds were unknown to the lieutenant, and he knew the names of two of these whistlers. They were Sergeant Rand and Corporal Mueller.

And Littlejohn made entries and drawings in the notebooks that he always carried with him. He drew in a boyish and unsure hand, plants, trees, rivers, rocks, insects. He named and classified and described them, as—

"*Marsilia Vogelkopiensis*. Pteridophyta. Hydropteridales. Of the Water Fern Family. Four-lobed leaf. Of a green-purple color that I have never before encountered in nature. The unusual aspect of this *Marsilia* is that the Sporophyte is not truly aquatic. It drifts on a morasmal underlay. Reproduction is heterosporous."

Littlejohn always carried a rock hammer and a thimble-sized bottle of reagents. And he read the rocks as if they were newspapers.

PFC Hebert, the tough Cajun, and his shadow, PFC Brooks, came on him one day.

"Ah, Lieutenant Renoncule, are you looking for gold?" asked Hebert.

"Not in particular, *Soldat Croupe d'un Raton*."

"You shouldn't have called me that, Liuetenant."

"You shouldn't have called me Buttercup. I realize that I am known so, but not commonly to my face."

"I didn't know you understood. Are you looking for gold?"

"No. Though I come on traces of it several times a day."

"Where you got your stash? There should be someone like us who knows."

"There is no stash. I do not collect it. It would not be remunerative."

"Yeah? How remunerative wouldn't it be?"

"A dilligent man, working in the most promising streams, might realize eight or ten cents worth a day."

"Maybe you realize more than that. Maybe you are real diligent. We will be watching."

They were large, rough men. Good hearted though; just mean everywhere else.

Littlejohn made a further entry in his notebook—

"I have discovered an entirely new variety of crow or rook today. So far I have heard only its distant 'caw' and found one feather, and that quite old. Yet I know that they go together. I will soon have proof. This will shake ornithology to its roots."

2

Captain Robinson was sad. He had become infested with small guests and had had to shave all the hair off his body. The prickling, now in its second day, had become intolerable. And he had one other worry.

"Who'm I going to send?" he barked at T/3 Carp who was acting First Sergeant on loan to headquarters. "Lively made the last three. I can't send him all the time. Who'm I going to send?"

"There's only one left. You'll have to send Buttercup."

"Buttercup! He couldn't lead a detail of girl scouts from here to the mess tent."

"I doubt if he could, but this will only be a routine patrol. It shouldn't take more than twenty men to do it, and finish it in twenty-four or thirty hours. You could send Rand and Mueller along as sergeant and corporal, and they can take care of anything. We have a pretty rough bunch in our battery, so there's not much to worry about."

"The rough bunch is what I'm worrying about. It's like sending a little boy into a wolf den. But I can't be holding an umbrella over him forever. You tell him, and then you brief him. They'd better leave about midnight, and they can lay up close before dawn and operate by daylight."

"All right. I wouldn't worry. Lieutenant Lively said that on the last patrol the Hard Heads weren't even there. There was just a bunch of middle-aged ribbon-clerks from Tokyo or somewhere."

"That also is what I'm worrying about. The Hard Heads are supposed to be there. We have to know where they are, or some midnight they will be in the middle of us here."

The battery was available for general guard duty, dock detail, and perimeter duty. The perimeter ran up and along the crests, about ten miles back from the beach. And what Japanese were behind it were mostly content to stay behind it. But not entirely. They did make sorties, and they had to be kept track of. There was little daily contact between the two forces along the perimeter itself. The only trouble was that the two forces were not in agreement as to where the perimeter was supposed to be. There was constant infiltration, the nuisance of telephone lines being tapped or cut, and the chilly feeling that comes when all phones ring dead and the radio is out. The radio is always out.

So there were probing patrols, exploratory patrols, anticipatory patrols, just plain nuisance patrols in the middle of the night. The battery had to supply a patrol every third day, to last approximately half that interval.

They did well to travel at night. The terrible heat went down with the sun, and movement was bearable. They moved through the dark, covering the miles as well as they could through the tangles that were always at three levels.

"There is a reason for this," said Lieutenant Littlejohn to Sergeant Rand. "There is a symbiosis of three factors all conspiring to bar our way: the ground grasses which are tendriled rather than tufted, the parasitic vines, and the free-standing boscage. Each offers its obstacle, and combined they make slow going . . ."

"That part's all right," said Rand, "but now we're coming into new country for us. Here we aren't sure of our topography."

"Oh, but I have been here often. I know the topography, and especially I know the botany."

"This far through the draw? But this was considered as beyond the perimeter till the last forty-eight hours. Well, if you can make it, then all of us can make it."

There are men who do not know where it begins. But they would not be too successful here. There is always a definite point of starting. A man should be able to hear the whistle that begins the game, or the bell that starts the round. He should know when he is walking on the sand of an arena and no longer on a street. They were on an arena now, and most of them knew when they had entered it. It was about two-thirty in the morning. It would be hard to define the

change, but it was definite, this point where the area of conflict began.

"There's a glow up front," said Corporal Mueller. "Shall I scout it?"

"No need," said the lieutenant. "It's only fox fire, phosphorent glow from rotting wood."

"It may, and it may not be. I've been in the jungle a lot at night. I say it could be anything."

"Too green. Not an artificial light at all. Simply fox fire."

"Lieutenant, it could be a smoked-up carbide lantern. They show green. It could be an electric spot with a lurcher's shield on it to make it a dark lantern. It could be a spot hung with netting, or even with one of their green fatigue jackets."

Corporal Mueller scouted it. Mueller walked like a bear, plantigrade, and he rolled like a boat. But he could move more quickly than any other man of them, large or small; and he could get to places that none of the rest could reach. A bear can go where even a puma cannot. He will grumble and talk to himself and make a fuss over it, as a puma would disdain to do. But he will go there and back.

But it was only fox fire, half an acre of it, a cup-shaped swamp of nearly submerged rotting wood glowing in the jungles.

They lay up about two hours before daylight. There were eighteen of them: Lieutenant Littlejohn, Sergeant Rand, Corporals Mueller and Meadows. PFCs Hebert, Brooks, Pop Parker, Redwolf, Martin, and Gagnon; and privates Bellar, Girones, Muños, Villareal, Cross, Jennings, Crawford, and Crandall. They slept for two hours before daylight, with Meadows, Redwolf, and Bellar as guards.

Then they roused, had J rations, and moved along their route. There is little twilight in the tropics. It is dark, and then within fifteen minutes it is broad daylight. And the sun is the enemy.

They went in three groups of six men each. Lieutenant Littlejohn took one with Corporal Meadows as his assistant. Corporal Mueller took one. And Sergeant Rand took one. Every two or three hours they would rendezvous and rest for half an hour.

"There is something moving up that ravine," said Sergeant Rand at one of their rendezvous points, "less than a mile from here. The birds are rising above someone."

"It's likely wild pigs," said Mueller.

"Birds do not rise for pigs," said Rand. "They rise for some of the large predatory animals, of which there are none on Guinea. They rise from birds of other factions. And they rise from a man or men."

These are rising from men below them. Who can spot one?"

"Heavens," said Lieutenant Littlejohn. "Give me the field glasses. I believe I see him."

"Heavens," said Meadows very softly to himself. But he gave the field glasses to Lieutenant Littlejohn.

"Do you see them?" asked Rand.

"One, yes. I see him clearly. And he is a beauty."

Meadows and Mueller looked at each other in disgust.

"Well, can you tell what he is?" asked Sergeant Rand. "Let me look. It's important."

"Of course it's important," said the lieutenant. "It will shake ornithology to its roots."

"It will *what*?" asked Rand. The day had become blindingly hot. There is an insanity about very hot days. "Tell us at once whether he is Japanese, Melanesian, or Malay. Or let one of us look. We can tell in an instant."

"Japanese or Melanesian? What an odd term of reference! It almost seems that we are not talking about the same thing. But he is a new species entirely. I had heard the 'caw' before, and had found one feather. And now I have seen him himself."

Sergeant Rand took the field glasses roughly away from the Lieutenant.

"It's too late," said Corporal Meadows. "The man has already gone over the crest. And we still don't know what he was. But he has seen us."

"Lieutenant," said Rand, "will you please tell us just what you were looking at?"

"The crow. A completely new species. Do you realize what this means?"

"Yes, Lieutenant," said Rand wearily. "It will shake ornithology to its roots. And when you have shaken it, what will you have? The man! The man, Lieutenant, was he Japanese, Malay, or Melanesian?"

"Man? Was there a man there? Probably a patrolman of our counterparts, or a straggler of some description. But the crow! A completely new variety!"

"Judas Priest!" said Meadows.

Rand, Meadows, and Mueller talked a little apart from the lieutenant and from the men. It was very hot now, and all the heat was not from the sun.

"What we do with the little joker if we get in a jam?" asked Meadows.

"I will be responsible," said Rand. "If it reaches a point of necessity, I will do whatever has to be done. You are with me if that

happens?"

"Yes."

"Yes."

"Then the men will be with me also. I have the scent of something. I believe that the Hard Heads are back. It's been too quiet today. There is nowhere so quiet as the mouth of a trap. I feel that there is more than one pair of eyeballs watching us. See if you can spot them."

"Lieutenant," said Sergeant Rand a little later, "we will not split up this time. We will go all eighteen together."

"You are giving the orders now?" asked the Lieutenant with what was supposed to be ice in his voice. But the ice had a certain rattle and tinkle to it.

"I seem to be," said Rand. "Someone has to give orders. We are under surveillance. We will travel together for greater security if we are caught in the bag."

"Suppose that I countermand your order?"

"Would you give an opposite order, knowing it to be foolish, just to assert your authority?"

"No. No. The order is correct. It is just that I should have given it. But I will not give the order to scatter again."

The lieutenant didn't know what was wrong, but he knew that he had lost the argument. He should have been giving the orders and giving the right orders. And instead, he had been day-dreaming and giving no orders at all.

But his resolve, and he made one, didn't last long. At the next check he turned up missing, and Corporal Meadows had to go back for him. Meadows found Littlejohn sitting on a rock and sketching plants like a small boy. He caught him by a handful of jacket and jerked him to his feet.

"That's enough," said Lieutenant Littlejohn. "I am a commissioned officer. Lower your hand or you will be sorry for it."

Corporal Meadows was breathing hard. It was a hot day and this perversity wore him thin. With the heat he couldn't strive, and this thing here was almost as intangible.

"If you were only a man, I could hit you. But I don't know what you are. I can't hit you."

"Whether I am or not we may find out today," said the lieutenant. "I half wish you had tried it. It may be that I would have surprised you."

"Nothing you could do would surprise me now. But you couldn't surprise me in that way. I have fifty pounds on you, and I have the name of being rough."

"Several of you have the name for it," said the Lieutenant.

"And several of us are," said Meadows. They caught up with the others.

"Lieutenant," said Sergeant Rand in a low but savage voice. "You will start to grow up right now. You are a drag on us. I cannot have you acting like a four year old."

"You are right," said Littlejohn, "and it's an ugly habit of yours. But it may be that some others here could stand a little growing up."

"You could even help a little," said Corporal Mueller. "We believe that we are in the middle of a trap and that any move may release the trigger. But we have to spot them, the outline of them, before we cut loose. We haven't really come on a thing, only the smell of a trap."

"Oh," said the lieutenant. He remembered something but he didn't remember it clearly enough. "I did see a foreign movement several times, but I saw it with only a part of my mind. I was otherwise preoccupied."

"Then for God's sake, see it again! Spot them!"

"Did you ever know anyone to act like that?" Meadows asked Rand a little later.

"Yes, many. You on your first patrol, for one, Meadows. You were pretty scatterbrained. I may have been so on mine."

3

They sank down in a clump on the edge of a clearing and remained very quiet for a while. But there was a nightmare aspect about the site as though the brush and thickets were alive and watching them.

Ahead was a flat green-purple meadow.

"I'd like to forget it all," said Rand. "I'd lie down there in the meadow and just sleep. But it's probably full of thorns."

"No. No," said the Lieutenant. "How could there be thorns? Whoever heard of Marsilia with thorns? That is the largest area of Marsilia Vogelkopiensis that I have ever seen. The inconvenience of lying down there would not be thorns."

"Lieutenant," said Corporal Meadows, "I warned you to forget this science and nature jazz till we're off patrol. Don't make us do anything that we'll regret."

"But don't you realize what it is? A fair sized field of quite rare Marsilia. And the feature of this Marsilia is that its Sporophyte is

not truly aquatic."

"Do tell," said Meadows.

"Instead, the spore apparently moves by slow drift through a morasmal aggregate."

"Heavens," said Meadows.

There comes a time in these afternoons when no one is at his best. The breeze dies entirely, and the temperature here in these dead draws will go past a hundred and twenty. There are blind pockets in the air, and a bird will fly in and will not fly out. The atmosphere piles up in shimmering layers that confuse the vision and falsify distance, and the hills seem to roll and rise like green waves. The eyes burn and blur, and there is an angry threat in every tree.

"I have the sudden feeling," said the Lieutenant, "of a groundbird who has not been paying attention, who looks up and sees the bull-snake poised for the swallow."

"Am I the snake?" asked Meadows.

"You? No. How could you be the snake? This snake is a hundred yards long and we're right in the middle of his coils. It is a centicephalon, a hundred-headed snake. It prickles my hair a little."

The brush and the thickets were in fact alive and watching them. An ambush has a hundred eyes, and to be found in the middle of one calls up a world of anger and frustration and sudden fear. Watch out for the man who says he doesn't scare. He will scare when he sees the eyes of an ambush.

"This chills me too," said Corporal Mueller. "Were we all blind at once? There is one of them. Redwolf, see that form behind the largest kapok tree in that group. He is yours when we start blazing. And there is another. They're all along the far edge of the clearing and are filling in. And they're edging around. But whatever we do, don't let's panic. How about it, Rand? Shall we slip out before it's sprung?"

"Yes. Slip out. Crawl out. Just plain break out. Get out somehow. But the worst advice that a man in danger can ever follow is not to panic. It is even thought of as somehow noble not to panic. But an old captain used to tell me that there was a proper time for everything, including panic. A rabbit knows that. A deer knows it, and he's not even very smart. Why does a man try to forget it? This is the time for a little judicious panic. Go as quietly as we can, at first, fellows, right back the way we came, and then down the first draw to the right. Crawl like snakes, men, and then run like horses. We will rendezvous at Blind Creek Point four miles down. Most of us should make it. And we have found out what we came to find out. The Hard Heads are back, and in number. Now move, men."

"Just a minute," said an unfamiliar voice. "I will give the orders here." Or was it a familiar voice with an unfamiliar ring to it?

"Who said that?"

"I said that. And I will be obeyed. Are you not accustomed to taking orders from an officer?" asked Lieutenant Littlejohn.

"The Lieutenant will be obeyed," said Sergeant Rand. "And what are the Lieutenant's orders on this?"

"First we will trigger off the action with an apparently casual shot. And then we will retreat, but not back the way we came. We will run very low down this gully here on the edge of the Marsilia complex. And we will gather in a pocket on the other end. There appears to be very good cover there. And three men, Mueller, Redwolf, and Cross, will hold this end till we are all down. It's narrow and crested here, and three men can hold it for a while. And, once we are in the pocket, they will have to come to us, and singly, or a few at a time. The gully is narrow. And it is bound to have a back door."

"But, Lieutenant, that's two hundred yards. And it's only crawl cover. They'll shoot us like turkeys as we go down. And what's the use of holding one end of the gully when the entire length of it would be open to them?"

"But how would it be open to them? How would they get at it?"

"Are you crazy, Lieutenant? They'd cross that clearing in fifteen seconds and have us head on."

"The clearing? But that's the Marsilia. They surely wouldn't venture to cross that."

"Lieutenant, you're in a child's world. I'm sure the Hard Heads will not respect the Marsilia, as you call it."

"Then this is better than I hoped," said the Lieutenant. "If you don't understand, then maybe they won't either. I read a warning once about over-estimating an enemy. It makes for timidity. Now, if you are ready, men, I will give the order."

"How about it, Rand?" asked Meadows. "We are looking to you."

"Do you know what you're doing, Lieutenant Littlejohn?" Rand asked.

"Yes, I know what I'm doing."

"The Lieutenant will be obeyed," said Sergeant Rand.

"I have just looked into my coffin," said Pop Parker. "I hadn't particularly wanted a dirt one, but it looks as though I will get it."

"The beauty of the dirt ones is that they will fit anyone," said Pvt. Crawford. "And there are always enough to go around. But we will soon fill up eighteen."

"I only knew one man who seriously claimed to be afraid of

nothing," said Sergeant Rand. "But the peculiar thing is that he was afraid to die when the time came. He's the only one I ever remember who was afraid to die when it came down to it. A man usually isn't afraid of death when it comes really near. But he's embarrassed over it. It's an awkward and unaccountable thing. And it cannot meet your eye when it comes. It's a shuffling skulker. But it's no great thing to die. Anyone can do it. The defeating thing is to have to do it needlessly."

"And tell her not to wait for me / For I'm not coming home," sang PFC Jennings softly.

"The order will be the rifle shot of PFC Redwolf," said the Lieutenant. "Corporal Mueller has already given him his target. Have you still your eye on your man? Then aim quickly and fire. Now move, men, move. And don't worry about a thing."

Redwolf killed the Hard Head behind the kapok tree with a good shot, and then things began to pop. The old devil was unchained and all sorts of things began to come out of the pit.

Mueller, Redwolf, and Cross hunched down behind the crest, and the remaining patrolmen crawled and stumbled and ran low, down the gully. Mueller and his two men could probably have held the end of the gully for several minutes, except that they would be out-flanked in a matter of seconds.

For the trigger had set the whole jungle into motion. The hills rose like green waves, and the earth burst open. The jungle-line ejected more than a hundred of the enemy, green-brown men, moving like sure animals. No ribbon clerks these. They were the old Hard Heads, the killer soldiers who struck like a giant rat pack, all musk-animals, meaner than men, sharp pack-running killers.

And, as the fifteen patrolmen stumbled down the gully, those Hard Heads charged at them with a loose crackle of fire, came across that green-purple meadow rapidly, more than a hundred of them with less than seventy-five yards to go. Not over ten seconds for it. They came in a black rush like the teeth of one great cutter blade. They came light and fast. And then, somehow, heavy and fast.

They charged to take the fifteen men strung out single, crawling on their bellies down the narrow ditch. Fifteen men with not over fifteen inches of cover, and no firing room at all. Sitting ducks. Lying down ducks. Plain dead ducks.

"Somehow I never intended to die on my belly like a snake," said Meadows. He was nicked, and he watched a spate of red and black blood mix with the green hot mud in a pattern that was also a premonition. He wasn't nicked badly, but then he hadn't raised up

very high. He had always hated to crawl on his belly.

The last seconds of one's life tick off loudly and with finality. Two. Three. Four. But slowly now as though the hands of the clock were mired. The attackers were half-way across, a black-green row of them that filled exactly half the world.

Five. Six. These may have been the longest seconds ever. They were unnaturally long. They were grisly, hot, weird, seconds.

Time itself had slowed down.

Then it stopped completely.

The Hard Heads stumbled heavy-footed. They were a study in slow motion. These death-bringers worked it out with horrible delay. It was eerie that the last scene in life should be run in slow motion. There was something obscene about it.

The Hard Heads wallowed, floundered, and panicked.

And they began to go down.

It is incredible the way a little mud can swallow a man, or a clutch of men. The heat was now unbearable, and again not all of it came from the sun. The piled-up air shimmered and shattered the vision. It is possible that this was all a mistake of blurred sight and that the impossible thing was not happening at all. The earth does not commonly devour a group of men like that.

And yet, in the blinding heat and the wavering air, it seemed to do so. If those Hard Heads weren't sinking out of sight in the mud, it was a very nightmarish sort of mirage.

"I saw a cow go down once," said Pop Parker. The way he said it, it was the most profound statement in the world.

But they didn't make too much fuss about dying, those hundred Hard Heads. A little protest, a little argument. Yet mud is very unsatisfactory to argue with. A little screaming and chatter, that was all.

It was the eighteen men who watched it who felt a sense of sickness and shock. It was like the shock of the small boy who, for the first time, sees the bull-snake begin to swallow that ground bird.

"I always said I'd never do it," said that tough Cajun Hebert. "I've never been sick before in my life, but now I've just brought it up green."

"*Santa Maria, Madre di Dios—*," said Private Girones.

"*—ruega por nosotros pecadores—*," said Private Muños.

"*—ahora y en la ora de nuestra muerte,*" said Private Villareal.

After the Hard Heads were chest-deep and really frightened, it

seemed that the pressure made it impossible for them to scream loudly. But they knew that they were being buried alive and that the hot sky was inexorable. And the eighteen patrollers watched the enemy disappear with plain horror.

"If it would rain," said Crandall, "it wouldn't be so hot. And it wouldn't seem so bad." Why had he said such a silly thing as that? His mind was in a state of shock and his stomach was tied in green knots. But they all of them spoke inanities when they spoke.

In three minutes, there was no sign of the Hard Heads. More than a hundred of them had gone down there, and the Marsilia had already begun to sew up its wounds, oozing its clover-leafed foliage again over the greenish sand.

"I will never love it again," said the Lieutenant. "It is really a sacophag, a flesh-eating plant. But it's quite bland to look at. It is hard to believe that its enticement is intentional."

"Lieutenant," said Sergeant Rand after a decent period of silence, "did you know that that was quicksand?"

"Sergeant, get the men started back. Some of them may be a little queasy after what they have seen, and I believe that they should have some movement to settle them down. We can be at Blind Creek Point in an hour and a half. They can take the last of their rations then and rest till sundown. Then we will move them again, and should be in our own bivouac area by midnight. Now move them, Sergeant, and waste no time about it."

"Yes, sir."

But, when they were resting at Blind Creek Point, the Sergeant asked again.

"Lieutenant, did you know that that was quicksand?"

"Certainly. Didn't you? I explained that the Marsilia Vogelkopiensis invariably has a morasmal underlay."

"Yes, sir. So you did. I wasn't paying attention."

Lieutenant Littlejohn was sketching again as they waited for the sun to go down. He was sketching a crow in the sky. But now, strangely, it was not a boyish hand that showed in the sketch. The strokes had boldness and force to them that they had lacked before. It was the hand of a sure and canny man that drew that stark crow in the sky.

ONE-EYED MOCKING-BIRD

Tobias Lamb, though not well liked, was held in high esteem by the scientific community. There were many of us who hardly liked him because—well, it was because his tricks and illusions sometimes shattered us completely. “And besides,” Alwin Garvie said of him, “he’s an unlikely man.”

Ah well, admit it, we were afraid of him. He was a harsh mocker; and yet he had a pleasant strain (or it was meant to be pleasant) in him. He was a hard driver. If he didn’t actually hold a whip in his hand when he was working on a project, there was always a whip in his voice. He was avid, even feverish, to drive a project to success; and yet he didn’t seem at all hungry for personal glory. When Paul Kradzesh stole the credit for the Crisley Communicator from him, we really feared for Kradzesh’s safety and life when Big Toby should react to being robbed of that glory. But Tobias Lamb didn’t react to it at all. Whether credit should redound to him or to another was less than nothing to Toby.

And now he was talking about the new project that had hold of him and of us all.

“The thing is to get a few nations accultured and thriving, and then to give the inventive tilt to them. And then we will let them invent. As we are looking for rapid invention, we will put a time limit on their inventiveness; the time it takes a rifle bullet to go four kilometers. In fact, I’ll put one of the nations inside a rifle bullet

here and shoot it off."

"What in the world for?" Francie Jack asked. She had always made an effort to understand Big Toby, but she hadn't understood him any better than had the rest of us.

"Toby, you have a bad case of anthropomorphism, of putting things into human terms and analogies," Lucius Cockburn chided the big lout Toby. "Nations that can only barely be guessed at with an electronic microscope are not true nations."

"If they are made up of thousands of individuals of a kindred, and if they are able to live, elect, and proclaim a destiny, then they are nations," Toby insisted. "What for, Francie? For a test and an experiment and an opportunity. I will really be shooting at that mocking-bird singing so imperfectly on that bough. But whether I miss or hit the bird, the rifle bullet will still crash into that rock cliff four kilometers across the valley, and it will destroy itself and the small nation that I will have put inside it. It will do this unless the individuals of that nation shall wake to consciousness, form local governments, expand to a limited-universal government, develop science and technology, form groups of empowered geniuses to apply that science and technology, learn to navigate the bullet, avoid destruction against the cliff; and return it here in quest of their origin, all within two and a half seconds of time. I have not set it an impossible task. It is a short-aeon nation made up of miniaturized intelligences, and the concept of delay would not be possible to it."

"The 'Reacting Jelly' does react amazingly fast sometimes," Paul Kradzesh admitted, "and most times it does not react at all. We have the package to perform miracles. We have the activator to go into the package. But it performs irregularly and randomly. We must induce uniformity. And, Toby, it is silly to refer to a super-small glob as a nation."

"No, it is a sanity which in present company seems to be limited to myself," Big Tobias Lamb said stubbornly. This harsh and clumsy man was held in puzzled esteem by the scientific community. He was admitted, yes, and there were even some persons who tried to like him. But did he conform to Elton Cabot's dictum of the ideal scientist?—

'Serene, handsome with inner and outer perfection, into every field of the mind, something of a poet, totally cultured, completely free of hokum, very much of the philosopher, everything of the humanist.'

It seemed that most of those were things that Toby Lamb was not.

But Big Toby, physically powerful and exceptionally ugly, loutish and impossible, completely ambiguous in his own group; he was a cult hero of several other groups, though it puzzled us

how those culties ever even heard of him.

Toby made noises, it was too much to call it music. He made these sounds on supposed reproductions of very ancient instruments, according to probably faulty interpretations of ancient musical notations. He made these noises on clanging iron 'harps' and on howling flutes. And persons of the 'rattling rock' sort had intruded audio pickups into Toby's big studios and they had turned his sounds into cult things. A clanging, always a clanging, that was the 'Toby Sound'.

It was so typical of him that, in his loud talking, when he banged his palms together for emphasis, he did not make the 'clap' sound that other persons make. He had a 'clang'.

And Big Toby painted strong and grotesque pictures. Perhaps 'painted' is the wrong word since it is not known how he achieved them; but he 'effected' powerful and vulgar and disturbing pictures. He called them his 'Cainite Space Ship' series. They were wrenching and a little bit distasteful, but they were also funny.

"You are a mocker," Lucius Cockburn told Toby often.

"Oh certainly. There are all too few of us. What we want are mockers who at the same time have total faith. I want that in the director of every project and every public board and government. And I want it in the short-aeon inventive realms and in the miniaturized intelligences that make them up. But deliver us from the mocker who sings too sweetly."

Tobias Lamb had other activities which, in any other man, would seem to contribute to Elton Cabot's dictum of the ideal scientist. Well yes, he was 'into every field of the mind'; in that much he conformed to it. But how clumsily he was into many of those fields! He wrote several books. But his *New Physics for the Middle-School Children* was not well accepted. It was forced off the market. He seemed to be teaching physics by means of a hairy sort of mythology. Even his mathematics was more myth than math. And his *Not For Everybody Book*, well, it was not for everybody.

But now Big Toby was teasing an invisible glob of activated molecular syndrome into a microscopic hole drilled into the lead-shot part of a rifle bullet. He used a complicated microscope with a variety of eye-pieces impinging on his eyes; and he fingered a keyboard that created and controlled finger-shaped electrical fields to nudge the small glob into the hole and settle it there.

"Principality and Nation, in you go!" Big Toby spoke to the little glob that was quite a few orders below bare-eye visibility. "Your history and your destiny begin right now. This is the first instant of your Heroic Age. Be heroic then, which is the same thing as being inventive."

"Why all the attention to that particular smudge that you are putting into a place difficult to study?" Alwin Garvie asked. "Should not all of the smudges have equal attention?"

"You folks talk to the other smudges," Toby said. "I'll talk to this one."

"Well, Creager over at the 'Evolvate Science Conglomerate' does talk with much success to his reactive molecular jelly," Paul Kradzesh admitted, "but I don't believe that he tells it such fairy tales as you tell yours."

"He should!" Toby Lamb barked harshly. "Perhaps you don't understand Faerie at all. When it is finally discovered (which is to say 'When its lair is finally unroofed') it will be found to possess thousands and thousands of annals. Ah, heroic history, primordial inventiveness, ages of greatness! I wish that one of you would unroof that complex. I really haven't the time. I believe that there is a stunning impetus for invention to be found in it."

"Well, there is dispute as to just how we should regard the organizing facility of these reactive molecular groupings," Lucius Cockburn said.

"Why dispute?" Toby asked with that laughing clatter in his voice. "Regard them as realms. Regard them as Empires in their heroic period of discovery and invention. They will prefer to be so regarded."

"I smell tyranny in the wee realm you're establishing, Toby," Alwin Garvie bantered.

"You smell right, hump-nosed man. The strong impetus of outright tyranny! There is nothing like it for a realm that is at the same time a space ship."

"Your idea here seems to jibe a bit with your pictures in the 'Cainite Space Ship' series. If the units (if there are units in one of those globs) of a reacting molecular group should have faces, I would have to imagine their faces like those of the people or slobs in the 'Cainite Space Ship'. Yourself, of course, have one of those faces, Toby."

"Yes. And they should have faces, for there is a tight and almost total analogy between our old flight and the flight that I'll shoot off in just a moment. Damn that mocking-bird! A mocker that will not mock must be changed, or extinguished."

"Even the worst of analogies will stretch only so far, Toby," Alwin said. "You are not seriously suggesting that—"

"Yes, I am seriously and joyously suggesting that a group to which, in a way, I belonged did make a space voyage parallel to this one, did make it in a little less than eight thousand years of elapsed time. That's about equivalent to the time of two and a half seconds

for a short-aeon nation. There is the order of size to be considered, direct cubical relations, inverse squares, angular velocity, and the relationship of tight-turning to elapsed time and to the pace of technology development. Yes, our eight thousand years was a very close equivalent to their two and a half seconds, if in fact they do learn to navigate in time to bring the bullet back at all. Oh, we had a better start than they have, but we may not have had as good an inclination and indoctrination. We already had a city established on Earth, no mean city; so we had come a respectable ways in corporate organization. We had metallurgy. We had been working bronze and iron for a full generation. A dozen of us shot ourselves off, half accidentally and half on purpose, in a sealed sphere."

"You were there some eight thousand years ago, Toby?" Francie Jack asked.

"I say 'we', for I have a racial memory of it. All of you were born yesterday. I was born several days before yesterday. But we had to learn a lot: to orient ourselves in space, to develop a propulsion power from nothing while traveling at something more than escape velocity in cramped quarters in the dark. We had to develop from less than nothing a purpose and a philosophy, and a navigation to return to earth, and to soft-land on earth. That latter was very difficult for us, as it will be for what Alwin calls the 'wee realm' that I am putting into this rifle bullet here. Had the thing been done by any other than my own family I would call the whole thing impossible."

"Who was running your space ship, Toby?" Alwin Garvie asked. "Who were the tyrants who made it work?"

"Two brothers, Jabelcain and Jubelcain. And their half-brother Tubalcain. Our very take-off from Earth was an hysterical and amazing feat of invention, but it was necessary for our survival. Oh, our intelligence gathering system was good. We knew where the Earth-faults in our neighborhood were. We knew which one would blow with the most power when the fountains of the deep should burst open, and we believed that if we set our bronze sphere as a cork in the throat of that erupting fountain, we could be blown clear off Earth. The wee folks in this bullet have an easier task here. They don't have an intelligence system sufficient to know when next a rifle will be shooting off in this part of town, nor the means to get there and set themselves in the chamber of that rifle by themselves. I do this for them.

"But we, in the old days, had to go. If we'd stayed, we'd have drowned. And in that case we would not have had such future progeny as myself, a heavy loss."

"Oh what stuff, Toby, what stuff!" Viola Rafter admired. "That is



the sort of stuff you tell to the small chemical smudges to motivate them, is it? That is something like the stuff I tell to my own house plants to motivate them; but I don't do it nearly as well as you do. Is some larger person telling you this to motivate you for something?"

"Yes, somebody larger tells me such narrations now and then. Yes, to motivate me, I suppose, as I motivate the small molecular smudges. And I *do* find myself curiously motivated now and then, and especially now."

Tobias Lamb had now sealed the sub-microscopic 'realm' into the rifle bullet and had put the bullet into the chamber of the rifle.

"I never heard that legend before, Toby," Lucius said. "I have met the myth that either Gog or Magog rode astraddle of the roof-ridge of the ark for the whole trying time of the flood and so prevented the old race of giants from being entirely wiped out. So we have half-giants in the world even now. But that the descendents of Cain escaped Earth in a space-ark, that is new to me. I believe that it's cheating."

"No, not cheating, not cheating at all. To have taken the gamble with the odds a billion to one against, that is not cheating. To suppose that we of the left-handed fraternity, of the goatish rather than the sheepish brotherhood, had no purpose, that is unreal. We of the line of Cain, we who lost our innocence for the second time, we who ate of the horrible tree of knowledge for the second time, there must have been a reason for us. We were the only early inventors, you know. Genesis 4, 20-22 gives only the barest hints of our inventions, but they were the only human inventions in their time."

"When did the Cainite Space-Ark return to the Earth, Toby?" Lucius asked with a failed smirk.

"I don't know. Within the last several hundred years. When invention returned to the Earth, that was the space-ark homing back."

"What stuff you must have in your unconscious, Toby!" Francie said. "You're sheer mythic. And it's said that, in the circuit of re-entrant thought and style and mentation, the mythic meets again with the sub-atomic and the atomic and the molecular on the field of small aeonics. They'd make no sense else, its said. They make no sense as it is, I say. But our other smudges of reacting molecular jelly are not reacting at all today in the perfect conditions we have set up. We do not know what your own 'realm' is doing in the conditions you have set up, but ours do not move."

"They do not move because you do not move them, because you do not motivate them," Tobias said. "You can't motivate them, except accidentally, because you don't believe them to be alive and

subject to motivation. But there is not any such thing as inanimate matter. The smallest sub-atomic particle is alive and at least partly conscious, and at least partly thinking. If you do not believe this, pretend that you believe it at least. You'll get better results that way."

Then Tobias Lamb raised the rifle to shoulder and eye, slid off the safety, sighted with the gun, and crooked his finger around the trigger.

"What are you really going to do, Toby?" Francie Jack asked with apprehension in her voice. "You're acting very strange, even for you. You're up to something, Toby. You're up to something tricky!"

"The minor thing I'm going to do, on either the first or second fly-by, is plug that mocking-bird that is too saccharine to mock. And the main thing I'm going to do is set a living realm in the position where it must invent or perish. I'm betting it will invent."

Tobias Lamb shot the rifle then. And, after an interval that seemed about two and a half or three seconds, the rifle shot Tobias Lamb. It shot him in the right eye and clear through his head. It killed him too.

Tobias Lamb was dead standing up. He was so stocky and solid that he did not fall. He did not even lower the rifle. He was in a cataleptic rigidity. He had no breath and heartbeat. The shot had entered his right eye and had exited massively from the back of his head.

He still had his big grin, more grotesque than ever, almost more life-like than ever.

"This is not real, this is not real. This is something happening out of time," Francie Jack spoke as if in a daze.

"What is that misfit bird-song?" Alwin Garvie asked in inconsequential amazement. "The mockery of it, the arrogance of it! That part, at least, is real."

"The coroner will decide what is real," Paul Kradzesh stated heavily. "And here he is now. I never saw a call answered so fast. It's almost impossible."

The coroner was busying himself about the standing dead man, going through what seemed like a burlesque routine.

"Oh, he is rigid in death," the coroner said then. "He's dead standing up, and he rigidified so swiftly and he is so well balanced that he did not fall. Ah, he still has his finger on the gun trigger. Don't stand in front of it. It's a rare happening, and yet I've seen it twice before in my practice."

"You lie," said dead man Tobias Lamb in a pleasanter voice than usual. "Such a thing never happened before. It didn't happen this

time either. Oh, don't look so angry and repelled, good friends. Did you want me dead? You really don't understand the possibilities and paradoxes that are present in the context of 'unelapsed time'? It's a property of very small realms and societies. It's a bonus that almost dwarfs the rest of it. Oh, how howlingly valuable it will be to us!"

"We do not like you, Tobias!" Paul Kradzesh swore savagely. "We do not like you because of tricks like this. But it *did* happen! And the coroner was here!"

"And he is not here now," Toby Lamb laughed. "You cannot say properly 'He was here' because there are no tenses in unelapsed time. Nor will I assure you that my death is an illusion. It is a valid event in unelapsed time, that first remarkable fall-out of the miniature space flight and return.

"No, of course I'm not all right, Francie. I have a shiner. The soft landing of the returning bullet-space-ship was not all that soft. It blacked my eye."

"I hate you, Toby," Paul said tightly. "Why did you do such a thing as that?"

"For the joy of discovery, for dramatic effect, for open fun, and to perform a valid experiment. Ah, that bird-song! It's near perfect now! The inimitable mockery and arrogance of it! And the burning belief! A little discipline in its life was all that bird needed. Aye, get that glob of irony in its song! Mock, bird, mock! And believe at the same time. A one-eyed bird had better be a true believer around here!"

The mocking-bird, still singing on its branch outside, had lost an eye to the fly-by either coming or going. But it had a new song that you had to respect whether you liked it or not.

"The reactive jelly, as you so ignorantly call it, will react astonishingly now," Big Toby said. "It has become a nation of consummate atomic-speed invention. Set it any problem and it will solve it. The ramifications of all this, they are endless."

"We do hate you, Toby," Lucius Cockburn growled.

"Oh sure, oh sure. Whether the little nation did those space marvels or not, it is absolutely essential that it believes it did them. Its motivation lies in its high history."

"We can't accept knowing that even the dust is inventive," Francie Jack said sadly, "but we'll profit from it. We have the perfect activator now. But it will take a new sort of people to accept it fully. Some day you may have them."

"Some day, today, almost immediately," Tobias Lamb gloated. "Oh, the most promising students for it can be selected with no time elapsed at all. I've already put a realm to work on that, and the

selection is already waiting for me."

Those students who are now developing best ways to motivate and mythologize sub-microscopic smears to get maximum performance and invention from them are an odd lot. They have to be, for they are working with small, left-handed orders that are more goatish than sheepish, that are very near to the grotesque heart of matter. And some of those students had a hop on the subject, those who had read Tobias Lamb's *New Physics for Middle-School Children* and had been enchanted by it.

They have accumulated and analyzed a frightening amount of dream material from molecular-level and smaller entities, and the dream material in those little worlds is absolutely grotesque. And the mythic configurations can not even be conceived of in the geometry of human myth. They are quite otherwise.

Those brilliant, odd-lot students have their own cultus and fraternity now, and their token and mascot is the One-Eyed Mocking-Bird.

SKY

The Sky-Seller was Mr. Furtive himself, fox-muzzled, ferret-eyed, slithering along like a snake, and living under the Rocks. The Rocks had not been a grand place for a long time. It had been built in the grand style on a mephitic plot of earth (to transform it), but the mephitic earth had won out. The apartments of the Rocks had lost their sparkle as they had been divided again and again, and now they were shoddy. The Rocks had weathered. Its once pastel hues were now dull grays and browns.

The five underground levels had been parking places for motor vehicles when those were still common, but now these depths were turned into warrens and hovels. The Sky-Seller lurked and lived in the lowest and smallest and meanest of them all.

He came out only at night. Daylight would have killed him; he knew that. He sold out of the darkest shadows of the night. He had only a few (though oddly select) clients, and nobody knew who his supplier was. He said that he had no supplier, that he gathered and made the stuff himself.

Welkin Alauda, a full-bodied but light-moving girl (it was said that her bones were hollow and filled with air), came to the Sky-Seller just before first light, just when he had become highly nervous but had not yet bolted to his underground.

"A sack of Sky from the nervous mouse. Jump, or the sun will gobble your house!" Welkin sang-song, and she was already higher

than most skies.

"Hurry, hurry!" the Sky-Seller begged, thrusting the sack to her while his black eyes trembled and glittered (if real light should ever reflect into them he'd go blind).

Welkin took the sack of Sky, and scrambled money notes into his hands which had furred palms. (Really? Yes, really.)

"World be flat and the Air be round, wherever the Sky grows underground," Welkin intoned, taking the sack of Sky and soaring along with a light scamper of feet (she hadn't much weight, her bones were hollow). And the Sky-Seller darted head-first down a black well-shaft thing to his depths.

Four of them went Sky-Diving that morning, Welkin herself, Karl Vlieger, Icarus Riley, Joseph Alzarsi; and the pilot was—(no, not who you think, he had already threatened to turn them all in; they'd use that pilot no more)—the pilot was Ronald Kolibri in his little crop-dusting plane.

But a crop-duster will not go up to the frosty heights they liked to take off from. Yes it will—if everybody is on Sky. But it isn't pressurized, and it doesn't carry oxygen. That doesn't matter, not if everybody is on Sky, not if the plane is on Sky too.

Welkin took Sky with Mountain Whizz, a carbonated drink. Karl stuffed it into his lip like snuff. Icarus Riley rolled it and smoked it. Joseph Alzarsi needled it, mixed with drinking alcohol, into his main vein. The pilot, Ronny, tongued and chewed it like sugar dust. The plane named Shrike took it through the manifold.

Fifty thousand feet—you can't go that high in a crop-duster. Thirty below zero—Ah, that isn't cold! Air too thin to breathe at all—with Sky, who needs such included things as air?

Welkin stepped out, and went up, not down. It was a trick she often pulled. She hadn't much weight; she could always get higher than the rest of them. She went up and up until she disappeared. Then she drifted down again, completely enclosed in a sphere of ice crystal, sparkling inside it and making monkey faces at them.

The wind yelled and barked, and the divers took off. They all went down, soaring and gliding and tumbling; standing still sometimes, it seemed; even rising again a little. They went down to clouds and spread out on them; black-white clouds with the sun inside them and suffusing them both from above and below. They cracked Welkin's ice-crystal sphere and she stepped out of it. They ate the thin pieces of it, very cold and brittle and with a tang of ozone. Alzarsi took off his shirt and sunned himself on a cloud.

"You will burn," Welkin told him. "Nobody burns so as when sunning himself on a cloud." That was true.

They sank through the black-whiteness of these clouds and came into the limitless blue concourse with clouds above and below them. It was in this same concourse that Hippodameia used to race her horses, there not being room for such coursers to run on earth. The clouds below folded up and the clouds above folded down, forming a discrete space.

"We have our own rotundity and sphere here," said Icarus Riley (these are their Sky-Diver names, not their legal names), "and it is apart from all worlds and bodies. The worlds and bodies do not exist for as long a time as we say that they do not exist. The axis of our present space is its own concord. Therefore, it being in perfect concord, Time stops."

All their watches had stopped, at least.

"But there is a world below," said Karl. "It is an abject world, and we can keep it abject forever if we wish. But it has at least a shadowy existence, and later we will let it fill out again in our compassion for lowly things. It is flat, though, and we must insist that it remain flat."

"This is important," Joseph said with the deep importance of one on Sky. "So long as our own space is bowed and globed, the world must remain flat or depressed. But the world must not be allowed to bow its back again. We are in danger if it ever does. So long as it is truly flat and abject it cannot crash ourselves to it."

"How long could we fall," Welkin asked, "if we had not stopped time, if we let it flow at its own pace, or at ours? How long could we fall?"

"Hephaestus once tumbled through space all day long," Icarus Riley said, "and the days were longer then."

Karl Vlieger had gone wall-eyed from an interior-turned sexual passion that he often experienced in diving. Icarus Riley seemed to be on laughing gas suddenly; this is a sign that Sky is not having perfect effect. Joseph Alzarsi felt a cold wind down his spine and a series of jerky little premonitions.

"We are not perfect," Joseph said. "Tomorrow or the next day we may be, for we do approach perfection. We win a round. And we win another. Let us not throw away our victory today through carelessness. The earth has bowed his old back a little bit, and we make ready for him! Now, guys, now!"

Four of them (or maybe only three of them) pulled the rings. The chutes unpeeled, flowered, and jerked. They had been together like a sheaf in close conversation. But suddenly, on coming to earth, they were spread out over five hundred yards.

They assembled. They packed their chutes. That would be all the diving for that day.

"Welkin, how did you pack your chute so quickly?" Icarus asked her suspiciously.

"I don't know."

"You are always the slowest one of us, and the sloppiest. Someone always has to re-roll your chute for you before it is used again. And you were the last one to land just now. How were you the first one to be packed? How did you roll it so well? It has the earmarks of my own rolling, just as I rolled it for you before we took off this morning."

"I don't know, Icarus. Oh, I think I'll go up again, straight up."

"No, you've sailed and dived enough for one morning. Welkin, did you even open your chute?"

"I don't know."

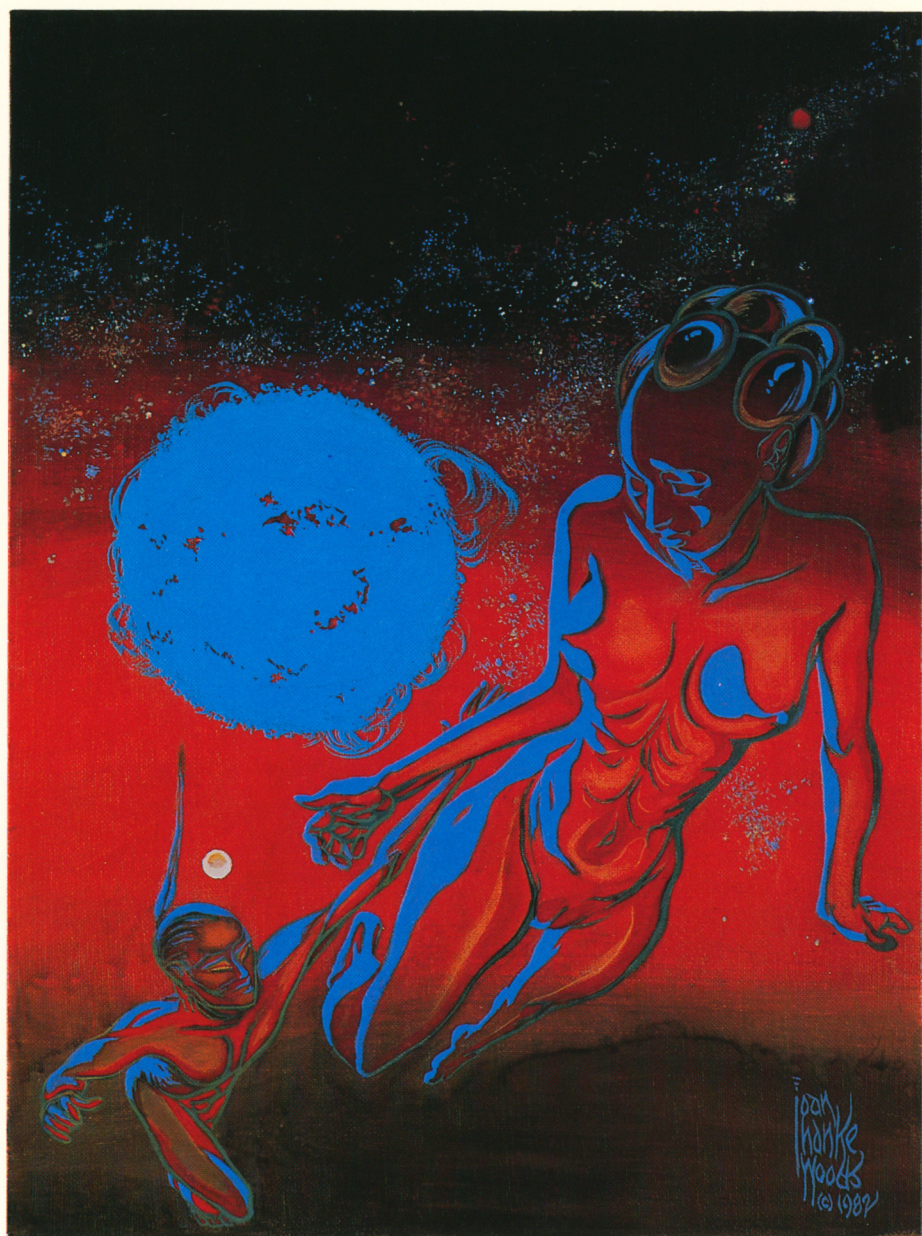
High on Sky, they went up again the next morning. The little plane named Shrike flew up as no plane had ever flown before, up through Storm. The storm-shrouded earth shrank to the size of a pea-doogie.

"We will play a trick on it," said Welkin. "When you're on Sky you can play a trick on anything and make it abide by it. I will say that the pea-doogie that was the world is nothing. See, it is gone. Then I will select another pea-doogie, that one there, and I will call it the world. And that is the world that we will come down to in a little while. I've switched worlds on the world, and it doesn't know what happened to it."

"It's uneasy, though," Joseph Alzarsi spoke through flared nostrils. "You shook it. No wonder the world has its moments of self-doubt."

They were one million feet high. The altimeter didn't go that high, but Ronald Kolibri, the pilot, wrote out the extended figure in chalk to make it correct. Welkin stepped out. Karl and Icarus and Joseph stepped out. Ronald Kolibri stepped out, but only for a while. Then he remembered that he was the pilot and got back in the plane. They were so high that the air was black and star-filled instead of blue. It was so cold that the empty space was full of cracks and pot-holes. They dived half a million feet in no time at all. They pulled up laughing.

It was invigorating, it was vivifying. They stamped on the clouds, and the clouds rang like frosty ground. This was the ancestral country of all hoarfrost, of all grained-snow and glare-ice. Here was weather-maker, here was wind-son. They came into caves of ice mixed with moraine; they found antler hatchets and Hemicyon bones; they found coals still glowing. The winds bayed and hunted in packs through the chasms. These were the cold Fortean clouds,



and their location is commonly quite high.

They came down below Storm, finding new sun and new air. It was pumpkin-summer, it was deep autumn in the sky.

They dropped again, miles and millennia, to full Sky-summer: the air so blue that it grew a violet patina on it to save the surface. Their own space formed about them again, as it did every day, and time stopped.

But not motion! Motion never stopped with them. Do you realize that nothingness in a void can still be in motion? And how much more they of the great centrality! There was Dynamic; there was sustaining vortex; there was the high serenity of fevered motion.

But is not motion merely a relationship of space to time? No. That is an idea that is common to people who live on worlds, but it is a subjective idea. Here, beyond the possible influence of any worlds, there was living motion without reference.

"Welkin, you look quite different today," Joseph Alzarsi spoke in wonder. "What is it?"

"I don't know. It's wonderful to be different and I'm wonderful."

"It is something missing from you," said Icarus. "I believe it is a defect missing."

"But I hadn't any, Icarus."

They were in central and eternal moment, and it did not end, it could not end, it goes on yet. Whatever else seems to happen, it is merely in parentheses to that moment.

"It is time to consider again," Icarus mused after a while. There is no time or while in the Moment, but there is in the parentheses. "I hope it is the last time we will ever have to consider. We, of course, are in our own space and beyond time or tangent. But the earth, such as it is, is approaching with great presumption and speed."

"But it's *nothing* to us!" Karl Vlieger suddenly raged out in a chthonic and phallic passion. "We can shatter it! We can shoot it to pieces like a clay pigeon! It cannot rush onto us like a slashing dog. Get down, world! Heel, you cur! Heel, I say!"

"We say to one world 'rise' and it rises, and to another one 'heel' and it heels," Icarus Sky-spoke in his dynamic serenity.

"Not yet," Joseph Alzarsi warned. "Tomorrow we will be total. Today we are not yet. Possibly we could shatter the world like a clay pigeon if we wished, but we would not be lords of it if we had to shatter it."

"We could always make another world," said Welkin reasonably.

"Certainly, but this one is our testing. We will go to it when it is crouched down. We cannot allow it to come ravening to us. Hold! Hold there, we order you!"

And the uprushing world halted, cowed.

"We go down," said Joseph. "We will let it come up only when it is properly broken."

("And they inclined the heavens and came down.")

Once more, three of them pulled the rings. And the chutes unpeeled, flowered, and jerked. They had been like a sheaf together in their moment; but now, coming to earth, they were suddenly scattered out over five hundred yards.

"Welkin, you didn't have your chute at all today!" Icarus gaped with some awe when they had assembled again. "That is what was different about you."

"No, I guess I didn't have it. There was no reason to have it if I didn't need it. Really, there was never any reason for me to have used one at all, ever."

"Ah, we were total today and didn't know it," Joseph ventured. "Tomorrow none of us will wear chutes. This is easier than I had believed."

Welkin went to the Sky-Seller to buy new Sky that night. Not finding him in the nearer shadows of the Rocks, she went down and down, drawn by the fungoid odor and the echoing dampness of the underground. She went through passages that were man-made, through passages that were natural, through passages that were unnatural. Some of these corridors, it is true, had once been built by men, but now they had reverted and became most unnatural deep-earth caverns. Welkin went down into the total blackness where there were certain small things that still mumbled out a faint white color; but it was the wrong color white, and the things were all of a wrong shape.

There was the dead white shape of Mycelium masses, the grotesqueness of Agaricus, the deformity of Deadly Amanita and of Morel. The gray-milky Lactarius glowed like lightless lanterns in the dark; there was the blue-white of the Deceiving Clitocybe and the yellow-white of the Caesar Agaric. There was the insane ghost-white of the deadliest and queerest of them all, the Fly Amanita, and a mole was gathering this.

"Mole, bring Sky for the Thing Serene, for the Minions tall and the Airy Queen," Welkin jangled. She was still high on Sky, but it had begun to leave her a little and she had the veriest touch of the desolate sickness.

"Sky for the Queen of the buzzing drones, with her hollow heart and her hollow bones," the Sky-Seller intoned hollowly.

"And fresh, Oh I want it fresh, fresh Sky!" Welkin cried.

"With these creatures there is no such thing as fresh," the Sky-Seller told her. "You want it stale, Oh so stale! Ingrown and aged and with its own mold grown moldy."

"Which is it?" Welkin demanded. "What is the name of the one you gather it from?"

"The Fly Amanita."

"But isn't that simply a poisonous mushroom?"

"It has passed beyond that. It has sublimated. Its simple poison has had its second fermenting into narcotic."

"But it sounds so cheap that it be merely narcotic."

"Not merely narcotic. It is something very special in narcotic."

"No, no, not narcotic at all!" Welkin protested. "It is liberating, it is world-shattering. It is Height Absolute. It is motion and detachment itself. It is the ultimate. It is mastery."

"Why, then it is mastery, lady. It is the highest and lowest of all created things."

"No, no," Welkin protested again, "not created. It is not born, it is not made. I couldn't stand that. It is the highest of all uncreated things."

"Take it, take it," the Sky-Seller growled, "and be gone. Something begins to curl up inside me."

"I go!" Welkin said, "and I will be back many times for more."

"No, you will not be. Nobody ever comes back many times for Sky. You will be back never. Or one time. I think that you will be back one time."

They went up again the next morning, the last morning. But why should we say that it was the last morning? Because there would no longer be divisions or days for them. It would be one last eternal day for them now, and nothing could break it.

They went up in the plane that had once been named Shrike and was now named Eternal Eagle. The plane had repainted itself during the night with new name and new symbols, some of them not immediately understandable. The plane snuffled Sky into its manifolds, and grinned and roared. And the plane went up!

Oh! Jerusalem in the Sky! How it went up!

They were all certainly perfect now and would never need Sky again. They were Sky.

"How little the world is!" Welkin rang out. "The towns are like fly-specks and the cities are like flies."

"It is wrong that so ignoble a creature as the Fly should have the exalted name," Icarus complained.

"I'll fix that," Welkin sang. "I give edict: That all the flies on earth be dead!" And all the flies on earth died in that instant.

"I wasn't sure you could do that," said Joseph Alzarsi. "The wrong is righted. Now we ourselves assume the noble name of Flies. There are no Flies but us!"

The five of them, including the pilot, Ronald Kolibri, stepped chuteless out of the Eternal Eagle.

"Will you be all right?" Ronald asked the rollicking plane.

"Certainly," the plane said. "I believe I know where there are other Eternal Eagles. I will mate."

It was cloudless, or else they had developed the facility of seeing through clouds. Or perhaps it was that, the earth having become as small as a marble, the clouds around it were insignificant.

Pure light that had an everywhere source! (The sun also had become insignificant and didn't contribute much to the light.) Pure and intense motion that had no location reference. They weren't going anywhere with their intense motion (they already were everywhere, or at the super-charged center of everything).

Pure cold fever. Pure serenity. Impure hyper-space passion of Karl Vlieger, and then of all of them; but it was purely rampant at least. Stunning beauty in all things along with a towering cragginess that was just ugly enough to create an ecstasy.

Welkin Alauda was mythic with nenuphars in her hair. And it shall not be told what Joseph Alzarsi wore in his own hair. An always-instant, a million or a billion years!

Not monotony, no! Presentation! Living sets! Scenery! The scenes were formed for the splinter of a moment; or they were formed forever. Whole worlds formed in a pregnant void: not spherical worlds merely, but dodeka-spherical, and those much more intricate than that. Not merely seven colors to play with, but seven to the seventh and to the seventh again.

Stars vivid in the bright light. You who have seen stars only in darkness be silent! Asteroids that they ate like peanuts, for now they were all metamorphic giants. Galaxies like herds of rampaging elephants. Bridges so long that both ends of them receded over the light-speed edges. Waterfalls, of a finer water, that bounced off galaxy clusters as if they were boulders.

Through a certain ineptitude of handling, Welkin extinguished the old sun with one such leaping torrent.

"It does not matter," Icarus told her. "Either a million or a billion years had passed according to the time-scale of the bodies, and surely the sun had already come onto dim days. You can always make other suns."

Karl Vlieger was casting lightning bolts millions of parsecs long and making looping contact with clustered galaxies with them.

"Are you sure that we are not using up any time?" Welkin asked them with some apprehension.

"Oh, time still uses itself up, but we are safely out of the reach of it all," Joseph explained. "Time is only one very inefficient method of counting numbers. It is inefficient because it is limited in its numbers, and because the counter by such a system must die when he has come to the end of his series. That alone should weigh against it as a mathematical system; it really shouldn't be taught."

"Then nothing can hurt us ever?" Welkin wanted to be reassured.

"No, nothing can come at us except inside time and we are outside it. Nothing can collide with us except in space and we disdain space. Stop it, Karl! As you do it that's buggery."

"I have a worm in my own tract and it gnaws at me a little," the pilot Ronald Kolibri said. "It's in my internal space and it's crunching along at a pretty good rate."

"No, no, that's impossible. Nothing can reach or hurt us," Joseph insisted.

"I have a worm of my own in a still more interior tract," said Icarus, "the tract that they never quite located in the head or the heart or the bowels. Maybe this tract always was outside space. Oh, my worm doesn't gnaw, but it stirs. Maybe I'm tired of being out of reach of everything."

"Where do these doubts rise from?" Joseph sounded querulous. "You hadn't them an instant ago, you hadn't them as recently as ten million years ago. How can you have them now when there isn't any now?"

"Well, as to that—" Icarus began—(and a million years went by)—"as to that I have a sort of cosmic curiosity about an object in my own past"—(another million years went by)—"an object called world."

"Well, satisfy your curiosity then," Karl Vlieger snapped. "Don't you even know how to make a world?"

"Certainly I know how, but will it be the same?"

"Yes, if you're good enough. It will be the same if you make it the same."

Icarus Riley made a world. He wasn't very good at it and it wasn't quite the same, but it did resemble the old world a little.

"I want to see if some things are still there," Welkin clamored. "Bring it closer."

"It's unlikely your things are still there," Joseph said, "Remember that billions of years may have passed."

"The things will be there if I put them there," Icarus insisted.

"And you cannot bring it closer since all distance is now infinite," Karl maintained.

"At least I can focus it better," Icarus insisted, and he did. The world appeared quite near.

"It remembers us like a puppy would," Welkin said. "See, it jumps up at us."

"It's more like a lion leaping for a treed hunter just out of reach," Icarus grudged. "But we are not treed."

"It can't ever reach us, and it wants to," Welkin piqued. "Let's reach down to it."

("And they inclined the heavens and went down.")

A most peculiar thing happened to Ronald Kolibri as he touched earth. He seemed to have a seizure. He went slack-faced, almost horror-faced, and he would not answer the others.

"What is it, Ronald?" Welkin begged in kindred anguish. "Oh, what is it? Somebody help him!"

Then Ronald Kolibri did an even more peculiar thing. He began to fold up and break up from the bottom. Bones slowly splintered and pierced out of him and his entrails gushed out. He compressed. He shattered. He splashed. Can a man splash?

The same sort of seizure overtook Karl Vlieger: the identical slack-face horror-face, the same folding up and breaking up from the bottom, the same hideous sequence.

And Joseph Alzarsi went into the same sundering state, baffled and breaking up.

"Icarus, what's happened to them?" Welkin screamed. "What is the slow loud booming?"

"They're dead. How could that be?" Icarus puzzled trembling. "Death is in time, and we are not."

Icarus himself passed through time as he crashed earth, breaking up, spilling out more odiously than any of them.

And Welkin touched earth, crashed, then what? She heard her own slow loud booming as she hit.

(Another million years went by, or some weeks.)

A shaky old woman on crutches was going down the middle-of-the-night passages that are under the Rocks. She was too old a woman to be Welkin Alauda, but not too old for a Welkin who had lived millions of years outside of time.

She had not died. She was lighter than the others, and besides she had done it twice before unscathed. But that was before she had known fear.

Naturally they had told her that she would never walk again; and now most unnaturally she was walking with crutches. Drawn by the fungoid odor and the echoing dampness she went down in the

total dark to where small things were growing with the wrong color white and were all of the wrong shape. She wanted one thing only, and she would die without it.

"Sky for salving the broken Crone! Sky for the weal of my hollow bone!" she crackled in an old-woman voice. But it was only her own voice that echoed back to her.

Should a Sky-Seller live forever?

Golden Gate and Other Stories

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