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THE BOOK OF FRITZ LEIBER

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Table of Contents

Foreword ........................................... 7
THE SPIDER ......................................... 11
Monsters and Monster Lovers .................. 24
A HITCH IN SPACE ................................. 37
Hottest and Coldest Molecules ................. 48
KINDERGARTEN ..................................... 52
Those Wild Alien Words ......................... 55
CRAZY ANNAOJ ..................................... 64
Debunking the I Machine ......................... 70
WHEN THE LAST GODS DIE ....................... 72
King Lear ........................................... 79
YESTERDAY HOUSE ................................. 85
After Such Knowledge ............................. 115
KNIGHT TO MOVE .................................. 118
Weird World of the Knight ....................... 128
TO ARKHAM AND THE STARS .................... 131
The Whisperer Re-examined ...................... 143
BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS ....................... 148
Masters of Mace and Magic ..................... 151
CAT'S CRADLE ..................................... 157
Foreword

I have tried in this book to display all my chief interests and small skills, both in writing and other fields. And I have tried to tie them together as I moved from one field to another somewhat circuitously, like a snake.

It begins with a story about a spider, published originally in the excellent *Playboy*-type magazine *Rogue*, which provided a haven for a number of science-fiction and fantasy writers in the early 1960's. (All the stories and articles in this volume were previously published only once, or not at all. Which at least means that most of them will be new to the reader.)

There is surely a monster in that first story, though whether it is the title-arachnid or the masks on the walls, or the unseen presences, or one or more of the characters, I cannot be certain.

No question but that the next item in the book, an article, is about monsters. (Stories and articles alternate in the book, as the reader will notice.) It is the only article I ever recall writing simply to straighten out my own ideas on a topic for my own private illumination. In this case the topic was monsters and those who sympathize with them. I wrote it and laid it aside. A couple of years later I agreed to make the keynote address at the world science-fiction convention at Oakland in 1964. I decided the article would do, provided I tacked on a hopefully catchy introduction. Cele (Goldsmith) Laly, brilliant editor of *Fantastic*, heard it and bought it on the spot.

The next story, "A Hitch in Space," is hard science-fiction, even though—I hope—funny.

The next article, "Hottest and Coldest Molecules," is one
in the Asimov vein I wrote during the twelve years I had a regular desk job as associate editor of Science Digest.

Next, another hard science-fiction space trifle, "Kinder-
garten."

Followed by an article, "Those Wild Alien Words: I" previously published nowhere.

The following story, "Crazy Annajog," is also space opera, of the romantic rather than humorous variety. It is the re-
telling, with variations, of a circumstance in the life of Joanna the Mad, queen of Castile—always an adequate excuse for writing a science-fiction story, whether it be a huge epic, such as Asimov's retelling of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire in his Foundation series, or a trifle like this.

Then the book writhes on in its ophidean fashion to "Debunking the I Machine," a little article about one of my pet metaphysical preoccupations hitherto published only in my little hand-duplicated magazine New Purposes, which with an energy that now fills me with awe I got out regularly twice a month in my spare time after Science Digest and fiction writing, during the first six months of 1949.


This leads, by way of gods and poetry, to a little article about King Lear written for the souvenir program of my father's Shakespearean Repertory Company 1934–35, its last season, when I was playing Edgar the phony madman in that play.

Then, somewhat in the Lear vein, my science-fiction novelette "Yesterday House," one of my personal favor-
ites. I also include it because on its only other publication, in Galaxy, my dear friend Horace Gold, then Galaxy's edi-
tor, with an insolence only best friends dare, tacked on a happy, boy-gets-girl ending, much as Nahum Tate did with King Lear. Here it appears with its original—and, I think, not altogether unhappy—ending.

This leads into a review of three rather Shakespearean
novels by James Blish, concerned with the problem of good and evil.

Next, with a literally serpentine twist, "Knight to Move," a story in my Change War series, told from the Snake rather than the Spider viewpoint. It previously saw light only in the excellent girlie magazine Broadside.

There appropriately follows an article about the chess knight's crooked move, written while I had a USCF Expert rating and had just won the Santa Monica open championship with a score of seven wins and one draw, with my friend Baron Paul Wrangell. It was published in the California Chess Reporter.

Then a story, "To Arkham and the Stars," I wrote almost thirty years after his death to honor Lovecraft, the chiefest influence on my literary development after Shakespeare.

Then an article, published in Sam Russell's Haunted, which proves I'm not an altogether uncritical admirer of Lovecraft.

Then a very short story, "Beauty and the Beasts," from another of my series, the sword-and-sorcery adventures of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser, this one especially written for this book.

Next, also quite appropriately, reviews of my favorite sword-and-sorcery novel, The Worm Ouroboros, and of my favorite pulp writer in the field, Robert E. Howard.

Finally, one of my cat stories, continuing the adventures of Gummitch, who was a real cat, and of the kitten Psycho, who is alive and well under the name Ginger in the home of a dear friend of mine, where she is the playmate and pal of a dog named Charlie.

So, from spiders to cats—I'm surely animal-oriented! The last story I finished—sadly, not for this book—is provisionally titled "Mysterious Doings at the Metropolitan Museum" and is all about those good insects, the beetles.
THE SPIDER

The three beautiful people stood in the shadow of the warehouse. At three-second intervals the garish light from the monster movie advertisement on its roof blazed down just beyond them on the thin fleece of fresh-fallen snow. The Old Man had a face like a hawk but large mild eyes. The black astrakhan collar of his coat was open on his shoulders and there was a skullcap of snow on his close-cropped gray hair. The Other Man stood as springily straight and tall, but his wide coat collar was drawn to his cheeks and the brim of his slouch hat pulled low, so that all that could be seen of his face was the glint of dark-tinted glasses.

The Woman was tall, too, with the slim queenliness that simply does not compete with the sexy prettiness or bold ugliness of starlets and play-girls. Her serene, short-browed face, grave as a cat's, might have been taken from an Athenian coin. Her dark velvet cape hung straight from her bare shoulders. Her evening dress was black touched with gloomy silver. Low on her bosom rested a large green jewel set in silver and circled by vivid topazes.

They were watching the one lit square, high in a tall glass building a block away.

"That certainly must be his apartment," the Old Man said.

The Woman nodded. "He's all alone."

The Old Man smiled. "Of all men, he should be inured to horrors."

The Other Man made an encompassing gesture with his thickly gloved hands. "And what a strong massive world he has around him," he observed with a curious accent.
The Woman said, "Well, gentlemen, shall we proceed with the test?" They nodded.

The Woman lifted her right hand, bringing the fingers close to the green jewel.

"Ilkilikis," she called very softly, accenting the "kil" a trifle more strongly than the "kis."

Gibby Monzer sank back in his leather easy chair (it was the one comfortable chair in the room, taboo to lesser mortals) and surveyed with considerable satisfaction the shelves of horror books filling three of the walls and the rubber monster masks—Satan, Dracula, Frankenstein, the Phantom of the Opera—tacked up like scalps above them.

Between and above the rubber masks were large black-and-white drawings, framed, matted, and glazed, of various familiar and not-so-familiar monsters, all of them peering out obsequiously, or at least with ingratiating smiles, and mouthing via bold speech-balloons such sentiments as "Hiyah, Gib," "Happy Birthday, Gibby," "Merry Christmas, Master," or "Greetings and Salutations from your Slave on this Festal Day"—for this was indeed the Gibson Monzer (Gib or Gibby to those close to the throne) who had cashed in on most of the famous mythical and literary figures of terror by presenting them in a series of comic books as louts, lugs, zanies, morons, and stumblebums.

For Gibby, Frankenstein's hulking mild-eyed monster had tripped a hundred times over his own big feet, the Witchdoctor had taken pratfalls, Dracula gagged on red ink (and Mr. Hyde on lemonade), the Werewolf had been netted by dogcatchers (and Undine by drunken fishermen), the Phantom spattered with overripe tomatoes, and the Witch shamed in fires of ridicule more cruelly hot than those of the Inquisition.

Not that Gibby ever consciously thought of himself as a defiler of one sort of beauty and dignity (a somber sinister suspect sort but nonetheless real) or felt any conscious hatred of the monsters he had exploited. He had a rather patronizing affection for them—after all, they had helped up his income into five digits and they were such sweetly
stupid old figures of superstition. Gibby, like so many moderns, was a devout believer in Science, Skepticism, Psychiatry (though he'd never needed it, thank goodness), Humanitarianism, Progress, Popular Taste, and all the forces that are making the world a garden of peace and security—locking the unknown and the mysterious and the menacing forever out of it. About monsters, Gibby felt that men like Aldous Huxley and Robert Ingersoll had done the groundwork of knocking over the dark scarecrows, while he was providing the perfect finishing touch by domesticating the square old fields and turning them into clownish utterly harmless household pets.

There was a rapid uneven flurry of faint sharp taps, lasting perhaps two seconds.

Gibby controlled his nerves and, sitting forward on his chair, proceeded to analyze the phenomenon.

Although the direction of sounds is notoriously deceptive, this one had seemed on the whole to come from the dark glass wall. One obvious possibility was that a bare wire dangling from above and vibrating in the wind had brushed the glass for a moment.

That was only one possibility. This was a brand-new building with any number of metal and plastic parts, including some exceptionally handsome stainless steel paneling. A process roughly describable as "a bolt settling" or "a joint adjusting" might well have caused the ticking.

Now, as to that instinctive sense of the taps being a message. Well, he'd been anticipating a phone call from Monica all evening. Since their separation, she'd often called him around bedtime. Just hearing his voice seemed to reassure her and help her get to sleep, and Gibby was willing to do anything within reason to assist his estranged wife with her neurotic problems. He hoped Monica's psychiatrist Dr. Bergman was doing his part.

However, the point now was simply that he'd been expecting a message. Any sudden burst of sound would have prompted his mind to think "Message!"

Gibby smiled and nodded approvingly across the empty room. Science and skepticism were certainly marvelous.
In less than a minute he'd disposed of a threat from the unknown that might have thrown a superstitious man into a panic.

The tapping was repeated, a little more loudly, but in exactly the same uneven pattern and with the same insistent sense of conveying a message.

Gibby jumped up and rapidly surveyed the huge window (for the sound had certainly come from that side) without seeing anything more than the flat expanse of thick glass backed by the smoky black of the night and the city spread beyond that like a gloom-drowned relief map.

A garish light flared two blocks away and he flinched from it. Then he switched off the lights and resolutely walked up to the middle of the window to survey the city as he'd planned. He held up his hand so as to blank out the monster movie advertisement when it flashed on every three seconds.

Fortunately, he wouldn't have to be bothered with it much longer. He knew that this particular advertisement blacked out for the night at twelve sharp and his wristwatch told him that it was less than a minute to midnight.

There was a simple enough reason for his elaborate avoidances. Although he'd suggested the idea for *The Bride of the Spider* to its producer, whom he'd providentially run into studying eerie volumes at Karl Oldberg's Booknook, Gibby happened to have an irrational dread of spiders. (Lord, the things our mothers and fear-ridden mankind saddle us with when we're impressionable and untutored in the dialectic of science!) He never so much as looked at a picture of an arachnid when he could avoid it.

Once more the tapping was repeated, very sharply, from a point near his knee.

As fast as a soldier hitting dirt, Gibby dropped to his hands and knees and focused his eyes on the window at that point.

Just on the other side of the glass, not more than six inches away, was a bright green spider with a body big as a lime, clinging to the glass somehow and beating furiously on it with the claw of a bristly black foreleg. Its face was
the vividest thing about it: a silver half-mask with eight hellish orange eyes in two crosswise rows of four and below that two green jaws swinging sidewise and back next to a vertical mouth-slit, the jaws each ending in a large turned-in black fang, the two fangs interlocking as they closed like the hands of a black Chinaman sliding into the opposite sleeves of his green jacket, and between those a bristly orange beard.

Gibby clamped his eyes shut and hurled himself back from the window, rolling over until he hit something. Then he lay in the dark with his heart close to bursting and an acid fluid scorching the back of his throat. He listened, expecting anything—even the sudden crash of glass.

And he felt. He felt as if his skin were nothing but nerve ends. He felt the brushy touch of the thick carpet against his fingers and cheek, felt the touch of his long hair like springy wires on his other cheek, and felt the multiple touch of his clothes. But he felt—with every nerve cringing in hysterical anticipation—the touch of something else.

After a while he became dully aware, with the tiny fraction of sensory energy his body was still devoting to vision, that something had altered in his surroundings. Something was gone. The light of the advertisement was no longer pulsing into the room at metronomic intervals.

And then the wonderful idea that explained away all his terror, that demolished in an instant the horrid threat from which he was cowering, came to Gibby in a flash.

He had seen the spider brightly lit. But the lights in the room were all off. Therefore he hadn’t seen a real spider at all but the huge advertisement for The Bride of the Spider when it flashed on for the last time of the night—the advertisement he’d been going to such length to avoid. Because his nerves had been keyed up and he’d just heard a sound close at hand, he’d interpreted something blocks away, and big as a balloon, as golf-ball size and near at hand.

With a weak hiccuppy chuckle he pushed himself shakily to his feet, switched on the lights, looked around, and then made himself go over and kneel by the window. Nothing—
except that he noted with approval how the thick glass was firmed and sealed into the frame.

Still shaky, he went to the kitchen and poured himself a stiff drink of Scotch, flinching just a little from the life-size ivory plastic skull that served as the comedy guardian of his liquor cupboard.

He carried a second and still stiffer drink to bed with him.

Some hours later he struggled awake from a nightmare of black pressures and touchings.

As the groggy feverishness seeped out of him, his ears became aware of a faint frantic scratching. It would go on for a while, then stop, then start again. It came from low down.

The thought came to him: the louvers! The bedroom windows were as firm-set and almost as large as those of the living room, but below them were two sets of aluminum slats that could be adjusted for ventilation. Spread a little, they'd be a tight squeeze for a small animal—say a large mouse.

The frantic scratching came again, broke off sharp, something plopped on the floor, there was a rattly scurry of tiny footsteps.

Then silence.

For a second time that night all of Gibby's consciousness went into his ears and skin.

More silence.

It's hell to spend the tag end of the night holding still in the dark and listening and never quite hearing anything. Gibby did.

When the dawn came seeping in coldly, it was even worse for a while. It was so easy in the fractional light of morning to imagine something walking on the ceiling. He didn't move his head a hairbreadth, but he kept swinging his eyes around and from side to side. There came to be a rhythm in his eye movements, a hypnotic rhythm. He passed into a trance of fear and from that into a slumber as still and heavy as that of someone drugged.

When he finally woke, his mind was so dulled that he had
got out of bed and yanked the drapes wide before he remembered how he’d spent the night after his nightmare.

But bright sunshine is the champion fear-dispeller of them all and it was bright sunshine that was beating on Gibby now and sweeping around him into every corner of the bedroom. After a bit, he began to ask himself when the nightmare had ended and the experience begun. Or wasn’t it simply that there had been only the nightmare?

Yes, that must have been the way it had happened, Gibby decided—just one long frightmare, part of it filmed in this bedroom. He grinned, rather effortfully, yawned, then rubbed his face and found it was beaded with cold sweat. Relief, he told himself, but then he realized that he was getting physically sick all of a sudden. He remembered that he almost always got sick when he was so stupid as to drink hard liquor without chasers.

He reached the bathroom without much time to spare. In the bottom of the washbowl, its legs spread wide, was the green spider.

Oddly enough, Gibby wasn’t sick at all after that. His next consecutive memory was of clawing open his liquor cabinet. He slammed the door apart with such a bang that the mouth of the ivory skull fell open. Inside the lower jaw, as if readying for a spring, crouched the spider.

When Gibby’s memory hooked itself up again, he was crouched in the living room, rapidly flipping, one by one, the big glossy pages of a deluxe illustrated Book of Insects held on his knees. He knew he was going to prove something this way, prove it scientifically and thereby gain relief. He flipped the next page and stopped.

At first he thought he was looking at a picture of the green spider, shown life-size and in full color.

Then he thought that, at some recent time, someone must have killed such a spider and squeezed it between the pages of this book to dry.

But then the body began to swell up from the glossy white page and the black bristly legs started to quiver.

He tried to slam the book shut as he thrust it away from
him, but it got away and fell open on its face like a drunken
tent.

He saw the window shimmering with sunlight. It looked
like a door to safety. To open it, all you had to do was run
at it head down.

But silhouetted blackly between him and the window
was the telephone. It, too, was a door to safety. He got
to it on buckling legs and his little book was there. By
holding it in his braced hands with his thumbs pressed down
hard on the squirming little pages, he found Dr. Bergman’s
number and dialed it with a finger that was shaking in a
four-inch arc. He croaked to the woman that he had to
talk to the doctor and got him when he’d finally convinced
her who he was. Then, he convinced the doctor, who seemed
to be suspicious of some sort of trick at first, that he had to
see him today.

After that, things got a little less nightmarish, though it
wasn’t at all easy to get dressed, even with sunlight pouring
into his closet and his dresser drawers as he gingerly
reached for and twitched out each separate article of
clothing and then shook it carefully before putting it on.

Things became better when he closed the apartment door
behind him and especially when he got down into the street,
where the weather was still freezing though windless. He
really welcomed walking through the cold—it was vastly
preferable to a warm car with all its nooks and crannies.
There were few people on the icy sidewalks—in the first
block there was only a tall man so bundled up as to seem
masked and with him an old hawky-faced man, bareheaded
and with his coat open, and a tall woman in a cape like a
foreign princess—but for once Gibby was not interested in
the passing scene, even when the costumes were expensive-
looking. (After he went by, the Woman pointed at his
trouser leg just below his coat and the Old Man smiled.)

Dr. Bergman’s reception room was too hot and too full
of low plushy furniture to be reassuring, but his office
was better and the chair he indicated to Gibby was bare
wood and pleasantly spare. Dr. Bergman himself was both
a bit younger and more businesslike than Gibby had
expected, and instead of letting Gibby state his problem right away he insisted on first doing a lot of talking himself, about how he wasn't sure he ought to take Gibby because he was already treating his wife and how, to be completely frank, he might have some initial prejudices against Gibby because of the things Monica had told him about Gibby, especially some cruel practical jokes he'd played on her.

But Gibby just nodded and shrugged at all that and when it finally got through to the psychiatrist that Gibby had a real problem, he let Gibby talk. Gibby cut through all the standard stuff about how old he was and whether he was an only child and simply began to tell about his spider-hallucinations. Right away, as he described them vividly, he could tell that he had caught Dr. Bergman's interest and he began to feel a little pride that his hallucinations should take such an imaginative and dramatic form, though it was only natural enough when you came to think of it.

But these little feelings of pride and gratification were as nothing to the relief he was getting from pouring out the whole experience to a person who listened and accepted. He even found that he could describe the green spider's appearance in exact detail. He never thought he'd be able to do that.

Dr. Bergman seemed to get even more interested. When Gibby broke off, he said, almost excitedly, "That sounds very much like a mandala."

"A what?" Gibby demanded, afraid for a split instant that he was hearing the name of a spider species.

"A mandala is a Buddhist figure used as an attention-centerer in meditation," Dr. Bergman explained. "But Jung discovered that mandalas also tend to rise spontaneously from the unconscious in times of great stress. They seem to be symbols of individuality that are inwardly generated when the psyche is in danger of being disrupted. So you can see that although a mandala is, in a sense, a sign of danger, it's also an indication of healthy response to danger. The basic mandala is a circular figure divided into four quarters, but your division into eight could be a simple
development from that, while all the bright colors and intricate decor you describe are also highly characteristic.

Consciously, you'd see it as a spider, though your unconscious would know differently. Yes, I think we may take it, at least as a working hypothesis, that we are dealing here with a mandala rather than a simple hallucination.

That sounded very good indeed to Gibby, just the piece of concrete factual explanation he'd wanted, and he eagerly sketched how his wide studies in horror materials might have planted a lot of ideas about mandalas in his mind without his being consciously aware of it.

They must have talked for a long time, for it was getting dark outside. As Dr. Bergman escorted him into the reception room, Gibby hemmed and asked, "And if I should see the thing again?"

The psychiatrist looked straight into his eyes and said, "You will simply hold still and think of yourself and of the world." He clasped his hand reassuringly over Gibby's, left it there a moment, then turned and walked back into his office without closing the door.

Gibby was halfway through the door to the corridor when he heard Dr. Bergman give a strange gasping cry. He whirled around in time to see the psychiatrist reach out slowly and pick up something from the chair where Gibby had been sitting and then come walking straight toward Gibby, his friendly eyes blazing and his jaw muscles lumping.

"Mr. Monzer!" he said, in a voice harsh and uneven with anger. "I gathered from Monica that you are the sort of fractionally-educated smartaleck who would spend any amount of trouble on some cheap sadistic gag, but I honestly did not think you would go so far as to waste two hours of my time and put on an elaborately-rehearsed performance just to play the same sort of infantile trick on me! I warn you I'm sending you a bill for those two hours on my highest scale."

Making vague gestures of protest, Gibby backed away from him into the corridor, but the psychiatrist grabbed the wrist of his right hand and twisted it palm up and then
slapped down into it the green spider with its legs folded close to its body, and then shut Gibby’s fingers over it.

“Take your disgusting toy and get out!” he said and slammed the door in Gibby’s face.

Gibby would have thrown the thing the length of the corridor without a moment’s hesitation, but before he could move his arm, before his brain could so much as begin to send a message to the muscles, he felt the touch—not the prick, just the touch—of two needle-sharp fangs on the fleshy ball of his thumb and he knew to a certainty that long before he ever could drop or hurl or crush the beast, they would drive home.

Gibby held very still then, though not thinking so much of himself and the world as of something else. The spider began to quiver its legs and Gibby moved toward the elevator and the quivering stopped, and in that way Gibby learned Rule Two of the game the spider was playing with him: if he moved in the direction the spider wanted to go, it would hold still; if he moved in the wrong direction or not at all, it would quiver its legs. Of course Rule One was that if he so much as thought of doing anything to the spider, the fangs would touch him.

Several times he tried to turn off from the route they were taking but the spider quivered and made him go home.

In the last block he saw the three people who looked like fugitives from a foreign film still standing there, and perhaps simply because they were the last people between him and his room, he was torn by an impulse to explain what was happening to him and ask their help. Perhaps, if he kept moving slowly the spider would be fooled. He even started to put his plan into action, on sudden impulse speaking German because the spider might not understand that language.

“Bitte, Herren und Dame. Hab’ ein Spinne . . .”

The spider quivered furiously. The Old Man smiled helpfully yet incredulously. “Ein Spinne? You have a spider?” The Woman lifted her eyebrows. The other man turned up
a gloved palm—it was a shrug of the hand—and his dark glasses twinkled between the walls of his coat collar.

The spider touched fiercely. Gibby moved on. Only when he had shut the door of his apartment behind him and was standing in the center of the living room, did the pressure of the two needle points cease.

The spider dropped out of his hand and scurried somewhere. Gibby was staring at the advertisement of *The Bride of the Spider* as it flared in the night. There was a screaming girl. The spider was black-and-white and looked about as much like a real spider as a pinwheel does.

Gibby felt weak and weary. It took him ten minutes to decide to turn on the lights and ten more to begin to edge toward the door, a step at a time, looking the other way. When he finally reached the door and turned, the spider was crouching on the knob.

He thought of the phone, or at least of knocking it over, but the spider was crouched there too.

Gibby sat down on the floor in the exact center of the living room.

All around him from the walls, the comic shambling monsters were calling down to him, “Hiyah, Gibby” and “Greetings, Master.” A fold in the rubber mask of Dracula gave it a cruel double leer, another had the effect of making the Phantom wink. Gibby thought plaintively, *I never did anything very bad to you guys. I just kidded you a little.* The rubber mask of Frankenstein’s monster looked down on him with a mockingly compassionate smile.

The spider came out from under the couch, its amber eyes blazing like an eight of dominoes, and moving slowly, almost as if bored, walked up Gibby’s body and stepped across his shoulder and out of sight past his ear.

The pain that came with merciful swiftness was like being stabbed from two sides—at first agonizing, then paralyzing, then bringing blackness and oblivion.

The door opened four inches and a slim arm in a white elbow-length kid glove came in and snicked off the lights.
Then, the door opened all the way and the three beautiful people came in and looked down at Gibby.

"He didn’t do well at all," the Woman said.

"I’m afraid not," the Old Man agreed, looking around the walls. "He had the materials, but he made poor use of them."

The Other Man shrugged.


It was as if a light had been turned on under Gibson Monzer’s hair where it hung across his cheek and over his ear. Then, out from under it came the spider, glowing bright green and silver and orange by its own light. As it scampered toward the Woman’s hand, which she drooped palm upward on the carpet, its colors began to flash off and on like a firefly’s.

"Tricks! Tricks!" the Other Man growled with a touch of contempt.

The Old Man chuckled softly. "Hab’ ein Spinne."

When the spider reached the fingers of the white glove, it turned its lights out so that it only glittered a little, emerald and topaz, in the light from the hall.

The Old Man and the Other Man walked out. The Woman stood up, dropped the spider in the hollow between her breasts, and followed them. She paused in the door. Her bare shoulders quivered.

"Stop it," she said with a little laugh. "You’re tickling me."
I like monsters. In fact, I love monsters. I mean fictional monsters such as Frankenstein’s, that much misunderstood humble patchwork of humanity, seeker after truth, and lover of little children—not knowing his own strength always, yet always trying to be gentle.

I like other monsters, too, such as:

Yog-Sothoth, H. P. Lovecraft’s somewhat uncheery vision of the ultimate god of gods, an inordinately fat, pustulent, churned-up being with the mindlessness of an idiot, whose only joy is listening twenty-four hours a lightless day to flute music with a little piccolo thrown in;

Mr. Hyde, that vastly more interesting, uninhibited, hip, fun-loving, and healthily dynamic alter ego of the pusillanimous square Dr. Jekyll;

Helen Vaughan, Arthur Machen’s girl counterpart of Mr. Hyde, a she-satyr sneaking through the novella The Great God Pan and escorting innumerable men to highly colorful dooms;

Alraune, Hans Heinz Ewer’s heroine, born of a modern love goddess and the last seed of a hanged murderer, who in the novel named for her did exactly the same things as Helen Vaughan;

Charles Dexter Ward, Lovecraft’s own projection of himself—a bookish, reserved young New Englander whose only crime was that he wanted to carry communication a mite too far for the weak-stomached by raising the dead from their essential salts simply to talk to them endlessly;

The Great Boyg, that living midnight forest darker than the Schwarzwald who played an endless game of dodge-and-meet with Henrik Ibsen’s Peer Gynt;
Couerl, who stalks magnificently through A. E. van Vogt's *Black Destroyer*, the intelligent emperor of all giant black panthers who ever were . . . and whose only food, in the first magazine version, was called Id;

Richard III, or Dick the Three Eyes, as actors call him, baleful fabrication of the saintly Sir Thomas More, Willy S., and other Tudor lickspittles, whose only crimes were to get rid of a couple of snotty brats, lavishly drown his brother Clarence in wine, and hump himself to rule all England;

Duke Ferdinand, from the play *The Duchess of Malfi* by Shakespeare’s Jacobean contemporary John Webster . . . Duke Ferdinand, the great grand-daddy of all wolfmen, who loved his sister just a little too well and who growled and clawed up graves in jolly old Renaissance Italy;

Svengali, the beautiful Trilby’s highly talented but unappreciated voice teacher and agent-manager, in the end a victim of anti-monsteriam but the prototype of all power-hungry hypnotists just the same;

Quasimodo, Victor Hugo’s deathless hunchback, who will shamble soulfully forever, loving all humanity but especially Esmeralda, occasionally kicking a roof-tile our way, among the dizzyingly high gargoyles and chimeras of Notre Dame de Paris;

And, finally, King Kong (or Kong King, as he was called in Sweden), another vastly misunderstood devotee of beauty, who was simply too large both in soul and body for this crassly commercial world; a big-thinking anthropoid whose two chief aims were to get rid of the metropolitan blight that is Manhattan and simply be as respectfully tender as possible to Fay Wray. Do you remember, dear reader, the gesture of infinite and adoring care with which he laid her on a roof edge of the Empire State Building before turning defiantly to meet the evil machine-gun attack of the four accursed biplanes?

Yes, *I love monsters*.

They have all at times scared me breathless and even now, although they are numbered among my dearest and best-understood friends, they can still give me a friendly chill on lonely dark evenings when the mind is free.
Other people may prefer ax-murderers, bullfighters or bulls, lions and tigers burning bright in the jungle or on the veldt, juvenile delinquents with switchblades and bicycle chains, first-wave marines, successful monomaniac career women (and I must in all fairness add: successful monomaniac career men), torpedoes and gun punks, hanging judges, atomic scientists whooping it up for the H-bomb, or homicidal maniac with razor-keen butcher knives; but I prefer the more romantic figures, friendlier to me, of:

The Phantom of the Opera, another misunderstood voice teacher and bringer of success to young ladies, a man who made the sewers of Paris more livable, even luxuriously so;

Count Dracula, who subsisted not only on the blood of beautiful young ladies, but also on that of his great theartic interpreter Bela Lugosi;

Cthulhu, Lovecraft’s gigantic non-Euclidean undersea sleeper, who broadcast thrilling dreams to a bored humanity and made the Pacific Ocean a less lonely vastness;

Nyarlathotep, another Lovecraft character, a dark modern pharoah-magician come out of Egypt to sell the world on death:

The Wolf Man himself—any lusty, satyrish old werewolf with the exotic para-equipment, glamorizing by contrast, of top hat, white tie, and evening tails;

The Red Brain, Donald Wandrei’s end-of-the-world creation in the short story of that name, who was so much more intriguingly colorful and spun so much faster—to the left, surely, widdershins!—than his conservative gray comrades;

It, whom Ted Sturgeon sent stumbling forever across forest and countryside, dropping graveyard mold and scattering the dead leaves every bit as effectively as Shelley’s west wind;

Archimago, who lurks behind the enchanted avenues and murmurous poetry of Edmund Spensers’s The Fairie Queene, prototype of all queen-kidnapping, princess-starved, infant-enticing black magicians;

The Man Who Laughs, Victor Hugo’s creation with a face carved in infancy into a clown-mask, who delivered to the parliament of King James the Second
half of a terrifying humanitarian address before his lip slipped, his clown-mask reappeared, and the rest of his address was drowned in laughter;

And, to make an arbitrary end, the Mummy, whose only misdeed was that he wanted immortality to be a reality rather than a fiction and who was willing to work and meditate and then unwind himself for it.


Let's get down to definitions and give the essence of the creature under discussion. A monster is a symbol of the secret and powerful, the dangerous and unknown, arousing dread and curiosity, exaltation and frightened laughter. An old geographer looks at the large blank spaces of his finished map and inks in "Here Be Monsters." Perhaps his imagination is stirred and he draws a little picture of . . . something. A Lovecraft peoples with monsters alien planets and dimensions. A Poe lifts from the equally unbounded darkness of the mind a William Wilson, a Metzengerstein, a House of Usher, a Man of the Crowd or an Imp of the Perverse.

A symbol of this sort has a thousand meanings and more. So a monster, symbolizing that about which we can only speculate and wonder, is a master symbol suggesting the remotest mysteries of nature and human nature, the most dimly-sensed secrets of space, time, and the hidden regions of the mind.

Innumerable uncertain meanings lurk like will-o'-the-wisps behind the dusty, seamed, and cleated mask and milkily veiled eyes of Frankenstein's monster or the three-lobed flaming orb of the Haunter of the Dark.

An Arthur Machen expresses his reactions to industrial London in terms of murderous Pictish troglodytes skulking about its environs and creates Helen Vaughan in The Great God Pan as a guise for a thousand mysterious speculations in the direction of violence, sex, and evolutionary theory.

Noseless, dome-foreheaded, cavern-eyed, fang-toothed Erik of The Phantom of the Opera is Everyman's knowledge of the killer and rapist and torturer inside him, the god demanding worship and infinite
solace, the imposter dreading—and perhaps at the
deepest level hoping—that someone will lift his love-
mask and discover the hateful truth. An E. E. Smith
dreams prophetically in his *Lensmen* and *Skylark*
stories of fascism and man’s boundless ego in terms
of a Biskone, a Helmut, an Overlord of Delgon, and
other cosmic power-hungers. An Oscar Wilde writes of
the crueller aspects of the art of life and of the darker
side of his homosexuality in terms of a Dorian Gray.
Stevenson extrapolates from alcoholism to Mr. Hyde.

In short, living monsters are full-charged with a
tingling energy of meaning. (As a child I did not have
to be told they were as dangerous to the touch as a
high-voltage wire.) Dead monsters, reduced to husks
or masks of themselves, are another matter, which we
will take up later.

Monsters are door-breakers, Space-Eaters. They
have power beyond their energy of meaning, they are
gigantic in one way or another, they are destroyers of
bodies and minds and cities and planets.

They are shape-changers too: man turned to wolf
or bat, dead come alive, carrion shocked into pulsing
flesh, Helen Vaughan become slime, Charles Dexter
Ward dust. At the alien extreme there are the amorphous shoggoths, their protoplasm molded by hypnotic
suggestion, and the man-counterfeiting being from
a bluer sun in John W. Campbell’s *Who Goes There?*
Closest to home perhaps we have Jekyll-Hyde, a by-
word for the basic shape-change. Practically all mon-
sters are fundamentally schizoid, symbolizing on the
subjective frontier evil, aggression, original sin, the
unconscious, the id, the death wish, animus or anima,
the shadow.

Monsters are also deviants, mutant mules, only one
of their kinds, symbols of uniqueness and identity,
supreme embodiments of individualism. And most of
them are crippled or disfigured in some way, if not
physically or even mentally, then at east by Earth’s
environment, hostile to them. It is not surprising that
the rejected or “different” child should be tempted to
put on the mask of the monster. The way of all ways
to impress and control and very often delight others
is to scare them. In *Look Homeward, Angel* Thomas
Wolfe gives a vivid picture of a child experiencing a sense of power by identification with green-visaged ghoulish riders of the night wind. Men are old hands at putting on monster masks.

It is likewise appropriate that the chief collection of Lovecraft’s writings should take its title from his short story The Outsider, where after the fashion of the Red Death a lonely ghoul routs a household of merry-making normals and so comes to a full realization of his own abnormality. This vivid picture of the confrontation of the conforming crowd by the “inner-directed” deviant points up one of the chief trends in fantasy writing during the last three decades: the compulsion to understand the monster.

This trend is one of the marks of the transition from supernatural horror to science fiction and appears most clearly, in the contrast between the extraterrestrial beings of Lovecraft and those of, say, Weinbaum or Heinlein or Smith, with the monsters of van Vogt somewhere in between. You can even say that one writer sets a problem by creating a monster. Then another writer may attempt to solve the problem by explaining the monster, sometimes by speculations about the physics and chemistry of alien planets and sometimes by showing us what the first writer has or may have projected into his creation from himself and the world. This process is crucial in the growth pattern and life history of monsters in the realm of art.

One of the clearest indications that the monster symbolizes the deviant individual is the frequency with which he appears in the guise of scapegoat, first mocked, then feared, and finally destroyed by the mob. The pursuit of the monster through the night by a torch-bearing pack of peasants or proletariat has become a traditional closing phase of many horror movies, additionally suggesting that the monster may symbolize the aristocrat hunted down by the revolutionary horde. But the mockery is the most interesting ingredient. The Man Who Laughs—prototype of the Phantom—must himself first be laughed at before he can, by a supreme effort of will, fix his features in the fright-mask that is his only alternative to appearing ridiculous. H.G. Wells understood this aspect of the
monster most sympathetically and gives us an unforgetable picture of it in his Invisible Man as he changes from a figure of voyeuristic and magic might into a pitiable fugitive, his very power become the peculiarity that marks him down for pursuit and destruction.

Monsters are modeled on creatures of primitive folklore and religious legend: the werewolf, the vampire, the ghoul, the golem, the devil, the demon, the incubus and succubus, the zombie, the ghost. It must never be forgotten that during most of man’s history such creatures were generally believed in, except for the handful of wise or cynical skeptics who have probably existed in all ages, and were regularly and seriously invoked by some individuals to control others. The priest made use of the devil, grandmother of the bogeymen, the kluxer of the hant.

The witchdoctor’s power is a byword and the proto-monster is one of the masks of authority. Such creatures of folklore and legend collectively come close to constituting the whole of superstition, a malign and reactionary force the hold of which on the human mind has only been broken by generations of bold propagandizing for science and humanism. So the artist who creates monsters from the raw material of such folk-creatures should realize that he is undertaking something that will appear dubious to many.

He knows that he is trying only to design an artistic symbol and give his audience a harmless thrill of fear, asking not for belief but merely for momentary suspension of disbelief. However, many of his sober-minded and perhaps less imaginative critics will feel that he is simply trying to create a new superstition or refurbish an old one and that he is deliberately playing on and restimulating some of mankind’s most deep-rooted and debasing dreads.

The victory of science over superstition is new and by no means complete and there is a real sense in which the artist specializing in tales of supernatural horror is merely playing with emotions left over in man from less skeptical and sophisticated eras. So he must not be surprised if he meets with criticism or if members of his audience suddenly rise and with a surprisingly great enthusiasm begin to debunk his
monsters—from the child who never stops explaining how the movie dinosaurs are really tiny models to the intellectual with a psychoanalytic theory of the vampire or of the author who writes about him.

Besides that, there is still a little real scare left in monsters and it is still necessary for people to rationalize them away again from time to time. They would hardly sleep easily otherwise.

Artists, particularly fantasy artists, outsiders themselves in one or more ways, are apt to be the only true friends monsters ever have, understanding them too well ever to turn on them. Robert Bloch and Ray Bradbury are notable examples. One thinks of the many Bloch stories in which the monster successfully asserts his genius and triumphs over his victim, whether man or city; or the typical Bradbury tale in which a technology-worshipping culture that has supposedly been disinfected of all criminally imaginative taints is invaded and destroyed by some eldritch being of myth presented as sympathetically and in as homely a light as Booth Tarkington's.

Monsters have a longer or shorter lifetime in the realm of art and in the minds of the individual members of their audience. Newly-created monsters, as we have seen, are electric with mystery and rich in implications. But monsters age and die. They invite understanding and perish when they get it. The blank spaces on the map fill up with names and distances. This unknown of which the monster is a symbol gradually becomes the known or at least the speculatively well-explored. The investigations of psychoanalysts are rounded out, widely disseminated, even popularized in various simplified versions. The atom's power is unlocked and Sunday supplements tell how. Old taboos are lifted. Rockets pierce the stratosphere and orbit in space.

It becomes commonly accepted that the universe sustains trillions of planets teeming with alien life-forms, and engineering institutions like MIT limber up students' minds by having them design dwellings, furnishings, and vehicles adapted to specific hypothetical nonhuman life-forms and unearthly conditions. The monster, whether Mr. Hyde or Yog-Sothoth,
becomes an empty husk, or mask, because enough (though by no means all) of what he symbolizes has been satisfactorily identified. People can point to him and to their former fear of him and say such things as "Death Wish," "Nitrogen-breather," "Anima," "Copper-blooded," "Castration Complex," "Antigravity," with all the effect of an exorcism by cross, prayer, and holy water.

Unsympathetic overexploitation hastens the death of monsters. At best a monster is like a cat—he has only so many lives in him. Each appearance he makes permanently robs him of a little of his power. Competent writers of horror stories know this very well and practice judicious restraint in their tales, carefully building a menacing atmosphere to prepare the reader, next allowing him to glimpse the monster, finally permitting him usually only one full view or one sequence with the monster in full view.

Even motion pictures at one time followed this formula, judging from The Phantom of the Opera. But with repeated appearances the monster comes more and more to be handled as a stage prop that can be whisked on and off the setting at will and shaken repeatedly in the faces of the audience. Of course when the monster is finally truly dead, meaning when he dies as a symbol, then his remains can be handled, shown around, and mocked with complete impunity.

And almost needless to say, he can be fictionally revived, quite dead in spirit, from any number of lava baths, atomic explosions, and entombments in the vacuum of interstellar space.

The husks or masks of monsters are very safe to jeer at and highly suitable for a more or less sinister sort of play. A witty person can put on such a mask, either figuratively or literally, and perhaps throw a momentary scare into his little brother or girlfriend and at least surely evoke the admiring guffaws of his less enterprising companions. Dracula and Frankenstein in unexpected or grotesque situations become the subject of endless cartoons. Purely farcical stories or television series featuring households of monsters are written. Entire magazines can be composed of the pictures of artistically dead monsters with suitable
wise-cracking captions. Much laughter can be evoked by replacing the clean-cut young man of the advertise-
ments with a dead monster, preferably in an advanced state of decay. Fun magazines like *Mad* flourish, fea-
turing the humor of the grotesque, violent, and mon-
strous.

Sometimes such humor is even truly satirical—one must admit that the fanged and shock-headed carrion monster is a delightful counter-figure to the pearly-toothed, eternally glowing, stridently healthy princess of the billboards. Beyond that, monsters have become background material for a growing cult of ugliness where the key question is, “What’s the most disgusting thing you can think of?” It was by no mere chance that when Al Capp solicited his readers to draw pic-
tures of the most ugly face they could imagine he got an enthusiastic response. Time was when the monster had a certain sinister beauty, but the ugliness cult seems to be interested in nothing but guffaws. The more of a lout the monster is, the better they like it.

However, it is futile for the monster-lover to become indignant at the degraded use to which some of his favorite fictional personages are put. He can remind himself that, on the best interpretation, the mockers of monsters are simply reenacting the old assault of scientific skepticism on superstition. Of course on the worst interpretation they are mocking the deviant, the cripple, and the exceptional individual under cover of mocking the monster, but perhaps the less thought about that interpretation the better, at least for the moment.

People have always liked to wear the masks of mon-
sters, as shown by such festivals as Halloween, Mardi Gras, and Fasching. Such masks can be used defen-
vively as well as offensively and there is certainly a touch of the monster in the cold collective face, masked by black-lensed glasses, which the hipsters, hepcats, and so-called beatniks turn on the world. In the realm of weed and cool sound the mask of the black magician is the obvious one to wear.

Ages of optimism, civil liberty, and peace (at least for the artist and his audience) appear to be most favorable to the healthy growth of richly symbolic
monsters. Secure times, when law and order seem to rule and life appears to conform to familiar habits and traditions, provide an effective setting for the monster, just as they do for the classic British detective story, where the general security is disturbed only to be reestablished more firmly with the detection and capture of the criminal.

During such times, too, the average person's more primal fears slumber most of the time; the business of daily living rarely calls them forth; it takes the artist to rouse and exercise and perhaps exorcise them. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the time of Machen, Dunsany, Blackwood, M. R. James, Stoker, Haggard, Wilde, Lovecraft, C. A. Smith, and other masters of the monster story.

Conversely, periods of war, insecurity, police tyranny, and immediate peril to the individual and his self-respect seem much less favorable to the creation and appreciation of monsters (though we must remember that then all art suffers). Such periods may provide excellent fictional settings for monsters, as witness Guy Engore's *The Werewolf of Paris* and various horror stories revolving around other French revolutions, and they certainly furnish much potential raw material for monster stories. But supernatural terror is thin fare for people fearing a more material knock at the door and a death that drops from the air shrieking in steel-cased bombs rather than flittering on the wings of a shape-changing bat.

Psychiatrists who were there report that neurosis practically disappeared in Europe under the Nazi terror, although psychosis claimed quite as many victims as ever. Similarly, monster stories, no matter how subtle and rich their symbolism, will hardly appeal as a bedtime tidbit to persons who have "supped full of horrors."

During times of total war, some men become monsters and physical horror may not only swallow up supernatural terror but seek to engulf the whole world of the spirit. The Nazi concentration camps reproduced in literal fact much of the situations and paraphernalia of the more lurid horror story. There the questions "What's the most disgusting thing you can think of?"
and "What's the worst torture you can imagine?" became more than academic. Those in charge not only wore the masks of monsters, but sought to force their victims to wear them. Starvation, torture, and a killing but unpredictable discipline were systematically imposed with the object of turning men and women into spiritless beasts.

A cult of the humor of the degraded and grotesque not unrelated to our current ugliness cult grew up and flourished. The more unsuitable the clothing allotted to the prisoners, the more senseless the tasks imposed on them, the more impossible the choices forced upon them, then the wittier the resultant amusement.

There the drama of the monster as scapegoat was daily reenacted—the shambling and twitching beastman surrounded by his mockers and tormenters. There deviation—whether it derived from a person being a Jew, Gypsy, Social Democrat, or merely a thinker or sometimes even just an eccentric—received its ultimate punishment as it did in the days of the Witch Cult and the Inquisition.

Are artistic monsters gone for good and all? Or put the question another way: will science fiction completely replace the story of supernatural terror?

Though plausible at first sight, this seems most unlikely. Raw material for the creation of novel monsters is pouring in on the artists as never before. Many of the most typical creations of science fiction, especially the robot, the android, and the extraterrestrial, are simply the monster in a new guise. The superman is nothing more than the monster in a bright light, just as the monster is nothing more than the supermaniac shadow. The chances are that the monster as an artistic creation will live as long as fear and the unconscious mind and man's multiple selves. More exacting work will be demanded of the artist, especially in locating the sensitive shadow-sectors of the mind in the face of the master rationalization "Science knows . . ." and various hidden persuaders that all is secure in the hands of experts. The artist will have to undertake new pioneering explorations of man's spirit, but in so doing he will find the gaps in the walls
of the new knowledge. For so long as man progresses, the area of the unknown will continue to grow, both inside and outside the mind, and wherever the unknown is, there will be monsters.
A HITCH IN SPACE

Once when I was doing a hitch with the Shaulan Space Guard out Scorpio way, my partner Jeff Bogart developed just about the most harmless psychosis you could imagine: he got himself an imaginary companion.

And the imaginary companion turned out to be me.

Well, I'm a pretty nice guy and so having two of me in the ship didn't seem a particularly bad idea. At first. In fact there'd be advantages to it, I thought. For instance, Jeff liked to talk a weary lot and the imaginary Joe Hansen could spell me listening to him while I projected a book or just harkened to the wheels going around in my own head against the faint patter of starlight on the hull.

I met Jeff first at a space-rodeo oddly enough, but now the two of us were out on a servicing check of the orbital beacons and relays and rescue depots of the five planets of the Shaulan system. A completely routine job, its only drawback being that it was lengthy. Our ship was an ionic jeep that looked like a fancy fountain pen, but was very roomy for three men, one of them imaginary.

I caught on to Jeff's little mania by overhearing him talking to me. I'd be coming back from the head or stores or linear accelerator or my bunk and I'd hear him yakking at me. It embarrassed me the first time, how to go back into the cabin when the other me was there. But I just swam in and without any transition-strain at all that I could observe Jeff looked around at me, smiled sort of glaze-eyed, and said warmly, "Joe. My buddy Joe. Am I glad they paired us."

If Jeff had a major fault, as opposed to a species of nuttiness, it was that he was strictly a speak-only-good,
positive-thinking guy who always deferred to me, even idolized me, if you can imagine that. He'd give me such fulsome praise I'd be irked ten times an orbit.

Another thing that helped me catch on was that he always called the other me Joseph.

At first I thought the whole thing might be a gag or a deliberate way of letting off steam against me without violating his always-a-sweet-guy code—like happy husbands cursing in the bathroom—but then came the scrambled eggs.

I'd slept late and when I squinted into the cabin there was Jeff hovering over a plate of yellow fluff and shaking his finger at my empty chair seat and saying, "Dammit, Joseph, eat your scrambled eggs, I cooked 'em 'specially for you," and when he crawnished out toward the galley a couple seconds later he was saying, "Now you start on those eggs, Joseph, before I get back."

I thought for a bit and then I slid into my place and polished them off.

When he floated in with the coffee he gave me another of those glaze-eyed, God-fearing looks—but just a mite disappointed, I thought—and said, "Dammit, Joe, you're perfect! You always clean your plate."

Apparently when I was there, Joseph just didn't exist for Jeff—and vice versa. It was sort of eerie, especially with the hum of space in my ears like a seashell and nobody else for five million miles.

Beginning with the scrambled eggs, I discovered that Jeff didn't exactly idolize Joseph or even take with him the attitude of "My buddy can do no wrong," like he had with me. I overheard him criticizing Joseph, reasonably at first. Then I heard him chewing him out, next bullying him and really swearing at him.

It made me wistful, that last, thinking how good it would feel to be full-bloodedly cursed to my face once in a while instead of all the sweetness and light, and right there I got the idea for some amateur therapy, Shaula-Deva help me.

I waited for a moment when we were both relaxed and
then I said, "Jeff, the trouble with you is you’re too nice. You ought to criticize things more. For a starter, criticize me. Tell me my faults. Go ahead."

He flushed a little and said, "Damn it, Joe, how can I? You’re perfect!"

"No man is perfect, Jeff," I told him solemnly, feeling pretty foolish.

"But you’re my buddy I can always trust," he protested, squirming a bit. "I wish you wouldn’t talk this way."

"Jeff, you can’t trust anybody too far," I said. "Even good guys can do bad things. When I was a boy there was a kid named Harry I practically worshiped. We lived on a pioneer world of Fomalhaut that had good snow and we’d hitch rides with our sleds off little air-screw planes taking off. We’d each have a long white line on our sleds and loop it beforehand around the plane’s tail-gear and back to the sleds. Then we’d hide. As soon as the pilot got aboard we’d jump on our sleds and each grab the free end of our lines and have one comet of a ride, until the plane took off and then we’d quick let go.

"Well, one frosty morning I let go and nothing happened, except I started to rise. Harry’d tied the free end of my line tight to my sled.

"I could have just rolled off, I suppose, but I didn’t want to lose my sled or my line either. Luckily I had a sheath knife handy and I used it. I even made a whizzeroo of a landing. But ever afterward my feelings toward Harry—"

"Stop it, please, Joe!" Jeff interrupted, very red in the face and shaking a little. "That boy Harry was utterly evil. And I don’t want to hear any more about this, or anything like it, ever again. Understand?"

I told him sure I did. Heck, I could see I’d gone the wrong way about it. I even begged his pardon.

After that I just sweated it out, but I found I couldn’t spend much time on books or my thoughts, I’d keep listening for what Jeff was saying to Joseph. And sometimes when he’d pause for Joseph’s reply I’d catch myself waiting for the imaginary me to make one. So I took to staying in the same cabin as Jeff as much as I could. That seemed to
make him uncomfortable after a while, though he pretended to glory in it. He'd ask me questions like, "Tell me about life, Joe, so I'll know how to handle myself if we're ever parted."

But the weariest things come to an end, even duty orbits around Shaula, and so the time came when we were servicing our last beacon—outside the planet Shaula-by, it was. Next step would be a fast interplanetary orbit for Base at Shaula-near.

I was out working—on a safety line of course, but suit-jetting around more than I needed to, just for the pure joy of it, so that my suit tank was almost dry. I'd switched my suit radio off for a bit, because Jeff had taken to just gabbling to me nervously all the time while working in space—maybe because he knew there couldn't be room for Joseph with him in his suit. I finished up and paused for a last look at the ship. She was sweetly slim from her conical living quarters to the taper-tail of her ionic jet, but she had more junk on her than an amateur asteroid prospector hangs on his suit the first time out. Every duty orbit, fifty scientists come with permission from the Commandant to hang some automatic research gadget on the hull. The craziest one this time was a huge flattened band of gold-plated aluminum little more than a foil-thick attached crosswise just in front of the tail. I don't know what it was there for—maybe to measure the effects of space on a Moebius strip—but it looked like a wedding ring that had been stepped on, so Jeff and me called it Trompled Love.

But in spite of the junk, the ship looked mighty sweet against the saffron steppes and baby-blue seas of Shaula-by with Shaula herself, old Lambda Scorpii, flaming warm and wildly beyond, and with United States standing out big as life on the ship's living quarters—United States of Shaula, of course.

I was almost dreaming out there, thinking how it hadn't been such a terrible duty after all, when I saw the ship begin to slide past Shaula. Poking out of her tail, ghostlier than the flame over a café royale, was the evil blue glow of her jet.
In an instant I'd guessed exactly what had happened and was beating myself on the head for not having anticipated it. Joseph had swum into the cabin right after Jeff, and Jeff had yelled at him, "It's about time, you lazy lunkhead! Everything secure? OK, I'm switching on the beam!" And I'd probably brought the whole thing about by telling him that damnfool sled story—and then sticking to him so close he just had to get rid of me so as to be with Joseph.

Meanwhile the ship was gathering speed in her sneaky way and the wavy safety line between me and the airlock was starting to straighten. As you know, an ionic jet's only good space-to-space, it's not for heavy-G work; ours could deliver only one-half G at max and was doing less than one-quarter now. Which meant the ship was starting off slower than most groundcars.

But the beam would fire for hours, building up to a terminal velocity of fifteen miles a second and carrying the ship far, far away from lonely Joe Hansen.

Except that we were tied together, of course.

I was very grateful then for the weeks I'd practiced space-roping, though I'd never won any prizes with it, because without thinking I started to whip my line very carefully and on the third try, just as it was getting pretty straight, I managed to settle it in a notch in one outside end of Tromploed Love. After that I took up strain on the line as gradually as I could, letting it friction through my gloves for as long as I could before putting all my mass on it—although one-quarter G isn't much, it piles up in a few seconds to quite a jerk. I spread that jerk into several little ones.

Well, the last jerk came and the line didn't part and Tromploed Love didn't crumple much, though the Shaulalight showed me several very nasty-looking wrinkles in it, and there I was trailing along after the ship, though out to one side, and feeling about as much strain on the line as if I were hanging from a cliff on the moon, and knowing I was going about five feet a second faster every second.

My idea in wanting to be out to the side (and bless my impulses for realizing it was the one important thing!) was
to keep my line and myself out of the beam. An ionic jet
doesn’t look hot from the side, but from straight on it’s a
lot brighter than an arc light—it’s almost as tight as a laser
beam—and I didn’t want to think about what it would do
to me even trailing as I was a hundred yards aft. Though of
course long before it had ruined me, it would have disin-
tegrated my line.

My being out to the side was putting the ship off balance
on its jet and presumably throwing its course toward Base
and Shaula—near into error little by little—but that was the
least of my worries, believe me.

I thought for a bit and remembered I could talk to Jeff
over my suit radio and I decided to try it, not without mis-
givings.

I tongued it on and said, “Jeff. Oh, Jeff. I’m out here.
You forgot me.”

I was going to say some more, but just then he broke in,
angry and so loud it made my helmet ring, with, “Joseph!
Did you hear anything then?” A pause, then, “Well, clean
the wax out of your ears, stupid, because I did! I think we
got an enemy out there!”

Another and longer pause, while my blood curdled a bit
thicker, then, “Well, OK, Joseph, I’ll go along with you this
time, but if I hear the enemy once more, I’m going to suit
up and take a rifle and sit in the airlock door until I’ve
potted him.”

I tongued the radio off quick, fearful I’d sneeze or some-
thing. I had only one faint consolation: Joseph seemed to
be a bit on my side, or maybe he was just lazy.

I thought some more, a mite frantic-like now, and after
a while I said to myself, Been going five minutes now, so
I’m doing about a quarter of a mile a second—that’s fifteen
miles a minute, wow!—but out here velocities are purely
relative. My suit does a little better than a quarter G full
on—OK, I’ll jet to the ship.

No sooner said than acted on—I was beginning to rely
too much on impulse now. The suit jet killed my false weight
at once and I was off, mighty careful to aim myself along
my line or a little outside it, so as not to wander over into the beam.

Pretty soon the tail and Trompled Love were getting noticeably bigger, then a lot bigger, then my suit fuel ran out.

I'd built up enough velocity so that I was still gaining on the ship for a few seconds. In fact I almost made it, my gauntlet was about to close on Trompled Love, when the ship slowly started to pull away. Oh, it was frustrating!

I remembered then what I should have a lot earlier, and grabbed for the ship-end of my line so as not to lose the distance I'd gained—and in my haste I knocked it away from me. The only good thing was that I didn't knock it out of the notch.

Now I was losing space to the ship faster and faster and yet all I could do was reel in the me-end of the line as fast as I could. Suddenly the whole line straightened and gave me a bigger jerk than I'd intended. I could see Trompled Love crumple a little. And I was swinging just a bit, like a pendulum.

I used glove-friction to spread the rest of the jerk, but still I was at the end of my line and Trompled Love had crumpled a bit more before I was coasting along with the ship again.

My side of Trompled Love was bent back maybe twenty degrees. For quite a while it brightened and dimmed as I swung tick- tock.

Meanwhile I was beating my skull for not having thought earlier of the obvious slow-but-safe way of doing it, instead of that lunatic suit-jetting. I once heard a psychologist say we're mental slaves to power-machinery and I guess he had something.

Clearly all I had to do was climb hand-over-hand up the line to the ship. At moon gravity that would be easy and if I should get tired I only had to clamp on and rest.

So I waited for my emotions to settle a bit and then I reached along the line and gave a smooth medium-strength heave.

Maybe there is something to ESP—at least in a devil-
ish sort of way—because I picked the exact moment when Jeff decided to feed the beam more juice.

There was a big jerk and I saw Tromped Love crumple a lot, so that it was pointing more than forty-five degrees aft.

Now there was a steady pull on the line as if I were hanging from a cliff on Mars. And the eye of the beam was a blue moon not so pale—in fact more like a sizzling blue sun seen through a light fog.

After that I just didn’t have the heart to try the climb again. Once I started to draw myself up, very cautious, but on the first handhold I seemed to fall along the line, Tromped Love crumpling some more, and I quit for good.

I figured that at this boost Jeff would be up to proper speed for Shaula-near in less than two hours. Well, I had suit-oxy and refrigeration for longer than that.

Of course if Jeff decided not to cut the beam on schedule, maybe with the idea of eloping with Joseph to the next solar system—well, I’d discover then whether suit-oxy running out would stimulate me to try the climb again alongside the beam.

(Or I could wait until he got her up near the speed of light, when by the General Theory of Relativity the line ought to be shortened enough so that I could hop aboard... if I were sudden enough about it. ... No, Joe Hansen, you quit that, I told myself; you don’t want to die with the gears in your head all stripped.)

Thinking about the beam got me wondering exactly how close I was to it. I unshipped my suit-antenna and pulled it out in the direction of the beam.

Nothing seemed to happen to it—it didn’t glow or anything—but I suddenly got a little electric shock and when I drew it back I could see three inches of the tip were gone and the next couple inches were pitted. So much for morbid curiosity.

Next I reattached the antenna to my suit—which turned out to be a lot more troublesome job than unshipping it—and tongued on the radio with the idea of listening in on Jeff.
Right away I heard him say, "Wake up, Joseph! I'm going to tell you your faults again. I got a new way of cataloging them—chronologically. Begin with childhood. You hitched sled-rides on airplanes. That was bad, Joseph, that was against the law. If the man had caught you doing it, if he'd seen you whizzing along there back of him, he'd have had every right to shoot you down in cold blood. Life is hard, Joseph, life is merciless. . . ."

Right then I felt a tickle in my throat and I tried quick to shut off the radio, but it is remarkably difficult to tongue anything when you have a cough coming. It came out finally in a series of squeaky glubs.

"Snap to, Joseph, and listen hard!" I heard Jeff say. "It's started again. Animal noises this time. You know if they make spacesuits for black panthers, Joseph?"

I tongued off the radio quick, before the follow-up cough came.

I didn't have anything left to do now but think, so I thought about Jeff—how there seemed to be one Jeff who hated my guts and another Jeff who idolized me and another Jeff sneaking around in a jungle of saber-toothed tigers and . . . heck, there was probably a good twenty Jeffs sitting around inside his skull, some in light, some in darkness, but all of them watching each other and arguing together all the time. It was an odd way to think of a personality—a sort of perpetual Kaffeeklatsch—but it had its points. Maybe some of the little guys weren't Jeffs at all, but his father and mother and a caveman ancestor or two and maybe some great-great-grandchild butting in now and then from the future. . . .

Well, I saw that speculation was getting out of hand, so, taking a tip from Jeff, I began to count my own sins. It took quite a while and some of them were pretty interesting reading, almost enough to take my mind off my predicament, but I tired of it finally.

Then I began to count the stars. It was really the longest two hours plus I ever spent except maybe the time my first big girl disappeared, the evening of the night of her se-
duction. But I don't know—the two experiences are hard to compare.

I was about halfway through the stars when I went weightless. For an awful instant I thought the line had parted at last, but then I looked toward the ship and saw the bright little moon was gone.

Right away I gave a couple of tugs on the line and began to close slowly with the tail. No trouble at all—actually my only difficulty was resisting the temptation to build up more momentum, which would have resulted in a crash landing.

I softened-in on Trompled Love OK, except there was a big spark—the beam must have charged me good. Then I worked my way to the true hull. After that there were handholds.

Finally I got to a porthole in the living quarters and I looked in and there was Jeff jawing away at my empty seat. I put my helmet against the hull and very faintly I heard him say, "Joseph, I'm still worried about the enemy. I keep thinking I hear that black panther padding on our plates. I'm going to make us some coffee, so we'll stay real alert. You break out the guns."

I don't suppose anyone ever moved quite so quietly and so quickly in a spacesuit as I did then. I got in the airlock, I got her up to pressure, I got unsuited—and all in less than five minutes, I'm sure, maybe less than four.

I swam to the cabin and it was empty and I slid into my seat just as Jeff floated in with the coffee.

He went real pale when she spotted me. I saw there might be some trouble this time with the Joseph-Joe transition. But I knew the only way to play it was real cool. I nested there in my seat as if I hadn't a worry or urge in the world—though my nerves and throat were just screaming for a squirt of that coffee.

"Joe!" he squeaked at last. "Migod, you gave me an awful scare. I thought you'd done a bunk, I thought you'd spaced yourself, I kept picturing you outside the ship."

"Why no, Jeff," I answered quietly. "One way or another, I've been in this seat ever since takeoff."
His brow wrinkled as he thought and thought.
I looked at the board and noticed that our terminal trip-velocity read fifteen miles a second. My, my.
Finally Jeff said, "That's right, you have." And then, just a shade unhappily, "I might have known. You always tell the truth, Joe—you're perfect."
Hottest and Coldest Molecules

We live in a world that never tires of movement. Even still air and ice and solid rock are feverishly agitated.

The movement is the dancing of the tiny molecules that make up all matter. In air this dance takes the form of a bumping free-for-all, with individual molecules moving at speeds like a quarter of a mile a second, and colliding with other molecules five thousand million times a second. Our skin absorbs the rifle-bullet impact of these countless tiny projectiles and it registers on our nervous system as air pressure.

In liquids the molecules slip past each other at lesser speeds and the dance becomes more of a glide. In solids the molecules are fixed in position; the dance takes the form of an unending vibration or "shimmy."

The fuel for this mad marathon is heat. In fact, the dancing is heat, and the only way to stop it is to cool the molecules down to 459.6 degrees below zero —on the familiar Fahrenheit scale we use to measure the temperatures of our bodies and the weather. This temperature can almost be attained in a laboratory. It is absolute zero, the lowest conceivable temperature. Temperatures lower than absolute zero are meaningless, for heat is molecular motion, and a molecule cannot be any stiller than completely still!

Let's imagine we are at absolute zero, when everything is really frozen solid, and see how the molecular dance takes up again—and finally investigate just how wild it can get.

The gas helium, safe old standby for balloons, is the first to break from the solid state into a liquid crawl, and it takes a temperature rise of less than two
degrees to do it. Four or five more degrees, taking us to a chilly minus 452, and helium is boiling.

Suppose the sun were taken away, so that the Earth was cooled to such temperatures. It would be covered not only with ice and snow, but with a “second snow”—the frozen gases of the atmosphere. This “second snow” would be a layer about forty feet thick if solid, but several times that if in the form of snowy crystals.

Then, imagining the sun to return, these frozen gases would gradually boil up to become the air we know. The nitrogen would resume its atmospheric dance, then the oxygen, finally the carbon dioxide. This takes us all the way up to 108 degrees below zero, the boiling point of carbon dioxide, familiar to us in its frozen state as Dry Ice. We have almost reached the lowest weather temperatures recorded on Earth, such as a minus 94 at Verkoyansk, Siberia, and a minus 95 on Mt. McKinley, Alaska. The dancing molecules are beginning to warm up.

Speaking of mountaintops, one might expect weather balloons and rockets to penetrate to even colder regions. But the upper air reaches a low of only 67 below. Then at twenty miles above the earth, it begins to get warm again.

Continuing our upward climb on the temperature ladder, we pass the melting point of mercury—about 38 below—and arrive in the general climate of living things. Man’s normal temperature, taken by mouth (it’s somewhat hotter inside the body) averages 98.6 degrees above zero, though it often varies a degree or so during the day. It cannot go below 90 or above 110 with much hope of the person surviving, though recoveries have been claimed after chills of 64 and fevers of 113.

However, what is a very high fever for man is normal for many birds, which operate their live aircraft engines at temperatures around 110.

Luckily animals have built-in cooling systems enabling them to survive in weather temperatures above that of their own bodies, such as a 136.4 in the shade recorded at Azizia, Iraq, which tops Death Valley’s highest by a couple of degrees.

Working rapidly upward past the 173.3 of boiling
alcohol, the 212 of boiling water, the 400 found at the bottom of 20,000-foot oil drillings, and the 621 of melting lead, we arrive at the point where the molecular dance becomes so furious that the jitterbugging molecules get fluorescent as jukeboxes. They begin to give off a glow of visible light mingled with the waves of radiant heat. Dark red heat, as it is called, begins at about 1,000 degrees, which incidentally is the temperature of the stratosphere about one-hundred-fifty miles above the Earth’s surface (where the air is so thin that such a temperature is not as dangerous as it sounds).

From there on, for quite a space, we can measure temperature by color, from red on up to blue. The reddish yellow of the glowing wires in an electric heater or toaster indicates a temperature of about 2,000 degrees. The yellow glow of an ancient electric lamp meant a temperature of about 3,200 degrees, while the whiter light of a modern lamp with tungsten filament is a sign of its higher temperature—about 5,250, which incidentally is the temperature believed to exist at the center of the Earth. This temperature is also the same as that of the whitely glowing oxy-hydrogen flame used in welding—one might say that the dancing molecules have arrived at “the Great White Way.” And their shimmying becomes so violent that all of them begin to shift from solid to liquid or gaseous state. Tungsten, stubbornest of the metals, finally melts at 6,098 degrees. And at 9,572 the metal osmium boils.

Because of the violence of the dance, the molecules are beginning to break up into atoms. Chemical compounds are no longer possible, only pure elements.

Although we have not exhausted the list of high temperatures on Earth, we can now begin to watch the wild dance of the atoms in the stars. The surface of our own sun is not so tremendously hot, just about 10,000 degrees. Temperatures like this are achieved in electric arcs, where a powerful electric current jumps a small gap in a circuit.

But the stars Vega and Rigel have surface temperatures of almost 20,000 and 30,000 degrees respec-
tively. As would be expected, they are distinctly more blue than our own sun.

Yet even here man’s ingenuity has kept pace. By exploding metal wires by means of high voltage discharges, the physicist Anderson created momentary temperatures of around 35,000 degrees.

However, star-surface temperatures as high as 50,000 degrees have been measured and it seems likely that some—the so-called O-type stars—may go higher than 100,000 degrees.

And this is, literally, only scratching the surface, for at the sun’s center the temperature rises to more than 35,000,000 degrees. By this time the dance-mad atoms have shed all their clothing; they have stripped off their shells of electrons down to their tiny, heavy nuclei or cores.

Is man at last outdistanced? Hardly. The atomic bomb attains similar temperatures, if only very briefly.

But some of the great white stars have cores twice as hot as the sun—as much as 75,000,000 degrees. While the exploding stars, the novas and supernovas, briefly reach temperatures that dwarf even such figures—how greatly may be judged from the fact that novas are about sixty thousand times as bright as our sun, while the supernovas are six to twenty-four million times as bright.

Is this as wild as the heat-dance can get? Not according to those physicists who believe the whole universe began in one gigantic explosion and has been blowing apart ever since. During the earliest stages of that explosion even atomic nuclei couldn’t exist—there was just a mass of their fundamental building blocks, neutrons and protons. The temperature was many billion degrees.

That must have been jitterbugging at its super-hottest—and a long way from absolute zero!
Some teachers have a special magic. They'd set imps putting death-spells on paper dolls, and angels playing quoits with their halos. They'd probably teach cats to talk if they set their minds to it.

Miss Willard ended geography class by drawing a curtain across the most perfect relief-globe of Earth imaginable with a brisk, "Western Hemisphere in a day and a half," then stretched herself on her desk like a seal or a pinup girl. "Now physics," she announced. "Newton's Three Laws."

"Einstein disproved those," Bip informed her.

"They're still true as a special case," Boysie informed him.

"And they're all goops like you can understand," Bettyann, plump as a panda, told both boys.

Miss Willard made a face at the three of them, popped a ping-pong ball in her mouth and puffed it across the room, just over Bip's head. Traveling like a dream-celluloid, it crossed the room and rebounded from the aluminum wall the exact way it had come, as if it had drawn a track for itself in the air. Kiki, skinny as a spider monkey, grabbed for it a moment too late. Miss Willard threw up her head—very like a seal—and caught it between her lips.

"You had to move," Bip criticized.

"Only three inches," Boysie consoled her.

Miss Willard seemed to chew and gulp the ping-pong ball. "Peppermint," she told them with a delirious smile. Then, "First Law: a body moves in a straight line or hangs"—she snatched out the ping-pong ball, slightly lipstickked, hung
it in the air briefly, then closed her hand on it—"unless acted on."

She opened her hand on an ivory billiard ball, wagged it back and forth to show how it tugged at her wrist, then hung it in the air and swatted it with redoubled sheet of paper to show how heavy it was (it barely moved).

"Second Law: a body changes direction in proportion to the amount of force acting on it and favoring the direction of that force." She doubled her arm and put the billiard ball from her shoulder as if it were a shot. It followed the course of the ping-pong ball as if the invisible track were still there and cybernetically compelling. Kiki managed to touch it and jerked back six writhing, slightly-stung fingers. Miss Willard said idly, "Civil War soldiers had their hands knocked off doing that to cannon balls."

The cream-colored sphere indented the aluminum wall with a Middle-C bong and started back. There was a higher-pitched bong as the wall undimpled. "Now you'll catch it from Mr. Fleming," Bettyann smugly informed Miss Willard, who wriggled her nose like a rabbit, then sighted carefully and puffed the ping-pong ball. It met the other mid-room and pinged off at a wide angle. Miss Willard caught the billiard ball in a withdrawing hand.

Her other hand came up from behind the desk holding a loaded ping-pong pistol. She hung it in the air sideways to the class, said, "Third Law: action and reaction are equal and opposite," and flicked the hair trigger. As the ball shot away, the magnesium pistol drifted off grip-first, majestically as a docking spaceship.

Bip yawned. "Everybody knows all those things," he said. "They wouldn't if they went to school on the moon," Miss Willard said. Her gaze moved beyond Bip to someone with six flexible fingers. "Or Mars?" Kiki nodded his dark antennae.

The hatch opened. A man with thinning hair and an aggravated expression thrust his upper body through just in time to blink at and automatically catch hold of the pistol traveling toward him.

"Miss Willard," Mr. Fleming began, "these cubicles are
not intended for shooting galleries or squash courts, nor is—"

He realized he was waving the gun at the class and they were all holding up both hands and he broke off with a sigh of frustration.

A bell clanged. The children shot toward Mr. Fleming like fish set free and streamed around him into the corridor, where each polarized porthole showed the globe of Earth, set against blackness and stars. Over the hatch was a sign which read:

GODDARD
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
RESEARCH
SATELLITE GAMMA

Yes, some teachers have a special magic. And so do some schools.
Those Wild Alien Words: I

Foreign words bother me. Names especially. I’m scared I’ll have to pronounce them and won’t know how. Even when I’m reading to myself I slide over them with a guilty mental mumble. Maybe that’s why I still forget them pretty easily.

But they don’t bother me as much as they used to, because I’ve finally made myself learn some of their secrets—which turn out to be so simple in many cases that I could kick myself for not taking the plunge sooner.

They can still really terrify me, though. For instance, I get myself in a situation where I have to utter the name of that French town much-fought-over in World War I, Soissons. I know there’s something tricky about that *oi*, but I don’t know what, and I have formless suspicions about the *ns*. Nevertheless I go ahead and say something that sounds like Soy Sauce, or rather the Sons of Soy Sauce—Soy-sons.

Of course a person can look up the pronunciation of the more common foreign names in dictionaries and atlases. And sometimes I do, although I’m lazy and dislike walking around while I’m reading, or even trying to hold two books open at once, especially when one’s a monster. But pronunciations looked up in dictionaries have a habit of dropping immediately out of the memory, at least out of mine. I’m sure I’ve looked up the pronunciations of some words fifty times. And all dictionaries have large strange gaps, I’ve discovered, like the French ones which hide the irregular forms of verbs at the back of the book, as if they were a skeleton—or eight hundred skeletons!—in a closet.

Or I’m looking at the menu in an Italian restaurant
and want to order the tasty variant of pasta which is spelled lasagne. I squint apprehensively at that gn—I know there’s something I ought to know about Italian gns, but what? Are they like the gns in gnu—that word of crossword puzzle fame? It hardly seems likely. I feel ignorant and ignoble—and suspect that isn’t the way to pronounce an Italian gn either. Once again I’ve been stumped by a foreign word. (There’s another gn—and gno help either, I bet.)

In the end I go ahead and say la-sog-na, with a good heavy accent on the sog, as if the pasta were soggy. And wait for the waiter to correct me. Or give me a cryptic glance and not correct me. I don’t know which is worse.

You’ll note that my method of pronouncing foreign words—my old method, at any rate—was to pronounce every letter meticulously: Soy-sons, la-sog-na, oo-ee. That last was for “yes” in French—oui. I’d try to hit the letters one, two, three, four, etc., in order, very conscientiously. I don’t think I ever pronounced beautiful be-a-yutiful, but I tended in that direction. In those days I was a verbal completist—and clearly something of a verbal yokel.

I’m still a yokel fresh out of the desert, but I’ve learned a little about the Tower of Babel.

The foreign words that scared me the most were the ones with completely, or almost completely, un-English combinations of letters in them, such as cz (in Czech, for instance), or q without u after it, or double c in Italian names, or letters with odd accent marks, like c with what looked like a comma under it (č), and n with a wavy line over it (ñ), and other squiggly horrors.

Yet right here I made my key discovery: If I began by learning to pronounce the very combinations that seemed the most un-English—the craziest ones, in fact—I would not only give my confidence the largest boost with the least effort, but also acquire a very handy bag of clues or indicators as to what language an unfamiliar name or word is in.

Take q without u, as in Aqaba. That’s an Arab name, I discovered, and the q is a Western scholar’s symbol for the Arabic character qaf, which has a sound so
like our \( k \) that the name is sometimes written Akaba. Similarly, you may find the Mohammedan holy book the Koran spelled the Quran—with both the \( q \) and the \( u \) having different sounds than the \( kw \) we’re used to making of them.

Incidentally, Aqaba is the name of the arm of the Red Sea and of the Turkish port on it which T.E. Lawrence’s Arab forces captured in World War I, as depicted vividly in the recent film.

For learning this I got a bonus: the knowledge that a word containing a \( q \) not followed by \( u \) is apt to be Arabic.

Or take that jarring combination \( cc \). Jarring, at any rate, in a proper name. It turns out that a proper name with a double \( c \) in it is likely to be Italian. Incidentally, before \( e \) or \( i \) the \( cc \)-sound becomes that of double \( ch \), or \( ch-ch \)—to my great surprise, for I expected it to be either \( k-s \), as it would be in English before \( i \) or \( e \) (vaccine, success) or if not that then \( k-k \) (accord). But that, in Italian, \( cc \) before \( e \) or \( i \) should turn out to be \( ch-ch \)—Tsk!-tsk! But then I’m eternally being surprised by the weird ways letters are pronounced in foreign languages. No matter—a sense of wonder helps in language learning. And surprises like this one bring home the all-important point that any letter can have any sound assigned to it—that a language is a code or cipher and that the only reason we don’t think of our own language as a cryptogram is that we’re taught it when we’re very young. If tots were taught the Morse Code instead of some fruitier language, they’d go around speaking in long and short dashes for the rest of their lives and think nothing of it—and read books in Morse Code just as readily as they read the comics.

At any rate \( cacciatore \), from mouth-watering chicken \( cacciatore \), starts off sound-wise more like the Russian composer Khachaturian than it does like cackle or casserole.

\( Q \) without \( u \) labels a name as probably Arabic, \( cc \) means it’s most likely Italian—clues for my bag, I told myself, and felt bucked up by it. And I continued to feel that way even when a language expert pointed out to me that the Arabic \( qaf \) isn’t exactly like our \( k \)
(it's sounded deeper in the throat, more gutturally) and when I searched out a couple of non-Italian proper names, such as the Maccabee family of the Apocrypha of the Old Testament. After all, exceptions don't fall into place until one knows the rule and we all learn foreign sounds by first approximating them with the nearest English equivalent and then working closer to them—all by our lonesomes, if necessary, though better if we're able to listen to them said over by a native or a good teacher, in the flesh or on a phonograph record.

Some language teachers may still frown at the idea of any language self-taught. It isn't long since most of them wanted students to study the grammar of a foreign language for a year or two before trying any reading or speaking—spending that year or more drilling on pronunciation and conjugating verbs until punch-drunk and declining nouns until one wanted to decline the whole business. This is perhaps still OK for someone who has a lot of time and wants to go deeply into a single language. But it's no help to me, for I simply want to be able to make a passable stab at pronouncing names from foreign languages—to find my way around in as many as a couple dozen of them without constantly falling over my stupid feet.

I imagine a lot of people feel about it as I do. After all, what with two world wars, peacetime service in the armed forces abroad, mounting world travel, exchange students and teachers, the United Nations, foreign films, increased movement of people across many national boundaries, increased concern with world affairs . . . what with all these things and many more, Americans simply have a greater need to know something about pronouncing foreign words and names than they did, say, back in 1910—when few Americans ventured abroad and foreign languages were a gibberish spoken by little bands of immigrants, until they wised up and learned English. Even language teachers have had to speed up their methods of instruction, again and again.

I'd go so far as to suggest that one course our high school and perhaps even our grade school curriculum urgently needs is a half-year course in pronouncing
words from foreign languages. It would broaden the world-horizon of children like nothing else, help in their history and art and world-events courses, give them a taste for several languages so as to be better able to pick one or two for further study, draw children from different foreign-language backgrounds closer together, and in general make them better American world citizens. Some purist language teachers might cry out at first at the notion of serving up such a mixed-language stew to youngsters, but they'd be the ones to get the new teaching jobs.

But let's get back to those weird and wonderful c sounds—cc, cz, q, remember?—and have a little more systematic go at them. In English c before e or i is pronounced s, while before a, o, and u its sound changes to k. This rule also holds for French, thank goodness, and for Spanish as it's spoken in Mexico and the rest of Spanish-speaking America. In Spain c before e or i becomes th as in thin, with an effect of haughty lisping, but that's just one Spanish-speaking country, even if it is the grand-daddy of all the others.

In Portuguese we find c often turning up with a tiny crooked comma hanging under it—a cedilla, the little horror is called. But in this instance the horror turns out to be a help: it means that the c is to be pronounced s and no guessing about it. The cedilla also turns up hanging from French c's, with the same helpful meaning, and is occasionally tacked to the English c to indicate an s-pronunciation, as in facade (façade), though most often omitted these days.

This gives us another language-identification rule: if a name looks Spanish but has a c-cedilla, it's most likely Portuguese.

Another cause for rejoicing about Spanish is that the letter pair ch always has the same sound (church, much) it most commonly has in English. The muchachas (girls) are dancing the cha-cha to start with, you might say.

But in Italian—and here we come spang up against the maddening illogicality of language—ch followed by e or i is pronounced k. Yet this very contradiction hammers home to us the point that letters have no universal meaning; they're symbols used to code
sounds, and different languages have different sound-codes. Italian makes do without the letter k; c followed by e or i has the sound ch; some way is needed to indicate the sound k, and so it is reasonable enough for ch to do duty here—no matter how confusing it may be to Spaniards or Englishmen. The red wine famous for its rounded bottles resting in basketwork pronounces as if it were written Kianti rather than Chianti.

Spanish, which also eschews the letter k, uses qu to indicate a k-sound before e and i. So does French.

Languages really behave as if there were no other language. They are blindly patriotic, you might say, and never see beyond their national borders. Which is one reason that invented international languages such as Interlingua and Esperanto have their devoted followers—and also Church Latin, the international language of the Catholic Church, and French, still to a degree the language of diplomacy.

But to keep on a little further with those curious c-sounds, and moving north a bit, we discover that German is almost as addicted to the letter k as Italian and other Romance (Roman-derived) languages are chary of it. Uses it to mean the sound k, too—refreshingly logical, at least to an American, or Amerikaner, as the Germans would spell it.

Almost no German words begin with c or ch, except for foreign importations. However, ch coming after a, o, or u stands for a ch sound uttered deep in the throat, or gutterally as it’s technically known, and which has no equivalent in English except for Scottish words like loch—lake. As anyone who’s listened to them knows, both the Scotch and the Germans gargle some of their sounds, though with the Germans this results in something like a growl, while with the Scotch the effect is more like a hiccup.

Sch the Germans use for sh, while we use it for sk. Another rather neat contradiction.

And now for one more of those quaint c-sounds—the cz of Czech and Polish. To my great relief, I discovered it stood simply for the ch sound of church or muchacha, or for a sound so similar that our ch can make do here adequately. The impossible wicz of
Sienkiewicz becomes a straightforward *vich*, while Czech checks out as Check! Note that here the *ch* stands for *k*, as in Italian. Language codes are certainly a mish-mash.

And one last exception: *cz* in Hungarian has the sound of *ts*, something which the Germans achieve merely with *z*. Tsk!-tsk!—in language there’s always a last exception, or rather a next-to-the-last exception; even the experts never reach the last one.

So much for the “simple” *c*-sounds—and good riddance to ’em!

Now let’s take that Italian *gn* in lasagne, which we mentioned at the start of this article. One reason it jarred on me and made me suspicious from the start is that the reverse combination *ng* is more common in English—all those *ing* endings of present participles, for one thing; so far in this paragraph we’ve had only three *gns*, including this one, although we’ve been discussing them, but six *ngs*.

Another thing that bothered me about *gn* was knowing that if it came at the beginning of a word you ignored the *g* and pronounced only the *n*—as in gnome, gnash, and gnu. And a good thing too!—because *gn* is a sound combination which comes to us with difficulty, like the ancient Greek *pt*. I say ancient because the first three examples that occur to me involve ancient things: ancient history—Ptolemy; ancient flying reptiles—pterodactyls; and ancient food—ptomaine poisoning. *Pt* is tough to pronounce, all right, so it’s lucky we make the *p* silent, like the *g* in gnome.

On the other hand, some foreign letter combinations come easy even if we don’t find them in English—for instance, the Russian *vl* as in Vladivostok.

But about that *gn* in lasagne. The first surprise (at any rate it was to me) is that the *n* is sounded first—language is nothing if not illogical!—and the *g* has the sound of *y*. In short, the Italian *gn* is pronounced like the *ny* in canyon or the *ni* in opinion and onions, though those vegetables are not featured in lasagne. So that dish is pronounced la-SAN-yá, with the *a’s* sounding like the *a* in father. (In fact in most European languages and especially in Italian and Spanish, we have the best chance of being right on vowels if
we use the following pronunciations: a as in father, e as in they, i as in machine, o as in or, r as in rude.)

The Italian pronunciation of gn also turns up in French (monseigneur, for instance, which in Italian is monsignor). In Spanish it is rendered by n with a squiggle over it—a tilde, that little mark is called, and when it turns up in a word (cañon, señor) you can be pretty sure its Spanish.

And now for Soissons, the other word, or name rather, which we mentioned earlier—the French one. The oi is pronounced wa and the final s is silent—so it’s not Soy-sons but Swa-son. The French get along with a minimum use of the letter w and this is one of the ways they do it. Another French code for w is ou before another vowel—something that can conveniently be recalled from the French for “yes”: oui—wi—or (remembering that “machine” pronunciation for i) wee.

We can remember both the French oi and the French (and Italian) gn from one French word rather commonly used in English: soigné (swan-ye), meaning sleekly handsome, or soignée (same pronunciation, different spelling) if you’re applying it, as it’s probably safest to, to a girl.

French, by the way, is a language which is booby-trapped with silent letters—try to pronounce them and you cause an explosion. For instance, most final consonants are silent in French, but especially d, t, s, x, and z.

By contrast Spanish and Italian have only one silent letter: h, though this is used in Italian, as we saw, to modify c to k, when the c comes before e or i.

I like to think that the French are so sophisticated they don’t even bother to pronounce half the letters in their words.

But before one gets critical of French for its being studded with silent letters, one should remember that English is almost as bad in this respect. You’re only being unkind to your throat if you try to pronounce the g in foreign, the th in clothes, the k and the d in knowledge, the c in victuals, or the gh in through and thought—and those are only the barest samplings of our own extremely illogical language.
But that's true of all of them. There's just no Llahdgoque in language.

Llahdgoque?

That should be clear enough to any student of English.

*Ll* spells *l*, as in loll.

*Ahh* spells *o*, as in hurrah.

*Dg* spells *g*, as in ledge.

*O* spells *i*, as in women.

*Que* spells *c*, as in unique.

Ll-ah-dg-o-que spells *l-o-g-i-c*.

There's just no logic in language!
CRAZY ANNAOJ

Two things will last to the end of time, at least for the tribes of Western Man, no matter how far his spaceships rove. They are sorcery and romantic love, which come to much the same thing in the end.

For the more that becomes possible to man, the more wildly he yearns for the impossible, and runs after witches and sorcerers to find it.

While the farther he travels, to the star-ribboned rim of the Milky Way and beyond, the more he falls in love with far-off things and yearns for the most distant and unattainable beloved.

Also, witchcraft and sorcery are games it takes two to play; the witch or sorcerer and his or her client.

The oldest and wealthiest man in the Milky Way and its loveliest girl laughed as they left the gypsy’s tent pitched just outside the jewel-pillared spacefield of the most exclusive pleasure planet between the galaxy’s two dizzily-whirling, starry arms. The gypsy’s black cat, gliding past them back into the tent, only smiled cryptically.

A private, eiderdown-surfaced slidewalk, rolled out like the red carpet of ancient cliché, received the begemmed slippers of the honeymooning couple and carried them toward the most diamond-glittering pillar of them all, the private hyperspace yacht Eros of the galactic shipping magnate Piliph Foelitsack and his dazzling young bride AnnaoJ.

He looked twenty-one and was twenty times that old. Cosmetic surgery and organ replacements and implanted featherweight power-prosthetics and pacemakers had worked their minor miracles. At any one time there were
three physicians in the Eros listening in on the functionings of his body.

She looked and was seventeen, but the wisdom in her eyes was that of Eve, of Helen of Troy, of Cleopatra, of Forzane. It was also the wisdom of Juliet, of Iseult, of Francesca da Rimini. It was a radiant but not a rational wisdom, and it had a frightening ingredient that had been known to make nurses and lady’s maids and the wives of planetary presidents and systemic emperors shiver alike.

Together now on the whispering white sidewalk, planning their next pleasures, they looked the pinnacle of cosmic romance fulfilled—he dashing and handsome and young, except that there was something just a shade careful about the way he carried himself; she giddy and slim with a mind that was all sentimental or amorous whim, except for that diamond touch of terrifyingly fixed white light in her most melting or mischievous glance. Despite or perhaps because of those two exceptions, they seemed more akin to the sparkling stars above them than even to the gorgeous pleasure planet around them.

He had been born in a ghetto on Andvari III and had fought his way up the razor-runged ladder of economic power until he owned fleets of hyperspace freighters, a dozen planets, and the governments of ten times that many.

She had been born in a slum on Aphrodite IV, owning only herself. It had taken her six Terran months to bring herself to the attention of Piliph Foeltsack by way of three beauty contests and one bit part in a stereographic all-senses sex-film, and six more months to become his seventeenth wife instead of one more of his countless casual mistresses.

The beepers of social gossip everywhere had hinted discreetly about the infatuation-potential of fringe senile megabillionaires and the coldly murderous greed of teenage start-lets. And Annoaj and Piliph Foeltsack had smiled at this gossip, since they knew they loved each other and why: for their matching merciless determination to get what they wanted and keep it, and for the distance that had been between them and was no longer. Of the two, Annoaj’s love
was perhaps the greater, accounting for the icy, fanatic glint in her otherwise nymphet’s eyes.

They had laughed on leaving the drab tent of the gypsy fortuneteller, who herself owned a small, beat-up spaceship covered with cabalistic signs, because the last thing she had said to the shipping king, fixing his bright youthful eyes with her bleared ones, had been, “Piliph Foelitsack, you have journeyed far, very far, for such a young man, yet you shall make even longer journeys hereafter. Your past travels will be trifles compared to your travels to come.”

Both Piliph and Annaoj knew that he had been once to the Andromeda Galaxy and twice to both Magellanic Clouds, though they had not told the silly old gypsy so, being despite their iron wills kindly lovers, still enamored of everything in the cosmos by virtue of their mutual love. They also knew that Piliph had determined to restrict his jauntings henceforth to the Milky Way, to keep reasonably close to the greatest geriatric scientists, and they were both reconciled, at least by day, to the fact that despite all his defenses, death would come for him in ten or twenty years.

Yet, although they did not know tell each other so, the gypsy’s words had given a spark of real hope to their silly night-promises under the stars like gems and the galaxies like puffs of powder that: “We will live and love forever.” Their loveliest night had been spent a hundred light-years outside the Milky Way—it was to be Piliph’s last extragalactic venture—where the Eros had emerged briefly from hyperspace and they had lolled and luxuriated for hours under the magnifying crystal skylight of the Master State-room, watching only the far-off galaxies, with all of their moiling, toiling home-galaxy out of sight beneath the ship.

But now, as if the cryptic universe had determined to give an instant sardonic rejoinder to the gypsy’s prediction, the eiderdown sidewalk had not murmured them halfway to the Eros when a look of odd surprise came into Piliph’s bright youthful eyes and he clutched at his heart and swayed and would have toppled except that Annaoj caught him in her strong slender arms and held him to her tightly.

Something had happened in the body of Piliph Foelitsack
that could not be dealt with by all its pacemakers and its implanted and remotely controlled hormone dispensers, nor by any of the coded orders frantically tapped out by the three physicians monitoring its organs and systems.

It took thirty seconds for the ambulance of the _Eros_ to hurtle out from the yacht on a track paralleling the sidewalk and brake to a bone-jolting silent halt.

During that half minute Annaoj watched the wrinkles come out on her husband’s smooth face, like stars at nightfall in the sky of a planet in a star cluster. She wasted one second on the white-hot impulse to have the gypsy immediately strangled, but she knew that the great aristocrats of the cosmos do not take vengeance on its vermin and that in any event she had far more pressing business with which to occupy herself fully tonight. She clasped the pulseless body a trifle more tightly feeling the bones and prosthetics through the layer of slack flesh.

In two minutes more, in the surgery of the _Eros_, Piliph’s body was in a dissipatory neutrino field, which instantly sent all its heat packing off at the speed of light, but in particles billions of times slimmer than the photons of heat, so that the body was supercooled to the temperature of frozen helium without opportunity for a single disruptive crystal to form.

Then without consulting the spacefield dispatching station or any other authority of the pleasure planet, Annaoj ordered the _Eros_ blasted into hyperspace and driven at force speed to the galaxy’s foremost geriatrics clinic on Menkar V, though it lay halfway across the vast Milky Way.

During the anxious, grueling trip, she did only one thing quite out of the ordinary. She had her husband’s supercooled body sprayed with a transparent insulatory film, which would adequately hold its coolth for a matter of days, and placed in the Master Stateroom. Once a week the body was briefly returned to the dissipatory neutrino field, to bring its temperature down again to within a degree of zero Kelvin.

Otherwise she behaved as she always had, changing costume seven times a day, paying great attention to her
coiffure and to her cosmetic andjuvenation treatments, being idly charming to the officers and stewards.

But she spent hours in her husband's office, studying his business and working to the edge of exhaustion his three secretaries. And she always took her small meals in the Master Stateroom.

On Menkar V they told her, after weeks of test and study, that her husband was beyond reawakening, at least at the present state of medical skill, and to come back in ten years. More would be known then.

At that, Annaoj nodded frigidly and took up the reins of her husband's business, conducting them entirely from the *Eros* as it skipped about through space and hyperspace. Under her guidance the Foelitsack economic empire prospered still more than it had under its founder. She successfully fought or bought off the claims of Piliph's eleven surviving divorced wives, a hundred of his relatives and a score of his prime managers.

She regularly returned to Menkar V and frequently visited other clinics and sought out famous healers. She became expert at distinguishing the charlatans from the dedicated, the conceited from the profound. Yet at times she also consulted sorcerers and wizards and witchdoctors. Incantations in exotic tongues and lights were spoken and glowed over Piliph's frigid form, extraterrestrial stenches filled the surgery of the *Eros*, and there were focused there the meditations of holy creatures which resembled man less than a spider does—while three or four fuming yet dutiful doctors of the *Eros'* dozen waited for the crucial moment in the ceremony when they would obediently work a five-second reversal of the neutrino field to bring the body briefly to normal temperature to determine whether the magic had worked.

But neither science nor sorcery could revive him.

She bullied many a police force and paid many a detective agency to hunt down the gypsy with the black cat, but the old crone and her runic spaceship had vanished as utterly as the vital spark in Piliph Foelitsack. No one could tell whether Annaoj really believed that the gypsy had had
something to do with the striking down of her husband and
might be able to bring him alive, or whether the witch had
merely become another counter in the sorcery game of
which Annajoj had suddenly grown so fond.

In the course of time Annajoj took many lovers. When
she tired of one, she would lead him for the first time into
the Master Stateroom of the Eros and show him the filmed
and frosty body of her husband and send him away without
as much as a parting touch of her fingertips and then lie
down beside the cold, cold form under the cold, cold stars
of the skylight.

And she never once let another woman set foot in that
room.

Not the humblest, nor ugliest maid. Not the greatest
sculptress of the Pleiades. Not the most feared and revered
sorceress in the Hyades.

She became known as Crazy Annajoj, though no one
thought it to her face or whispered it within a parsec of her.

When she still looked seventeen, though her age was
seventy times that—for the sciences of geriatrics and juve-
nation had progressed greatly since her husband’s collapse
—she felt an unfamiliar weariness creeping on her and
she ordered the Eros to make once more for Menkar V at
force speed.

The Eros never emerged from hyperspace. Most say it
was lost there, scuttled by Annajoj as she felt death coming
on her. A few maintain she exited into altogether another
universe, where Crazy Annajoj is still keeping up her search
for the healer who can revive Piliph, or playing her game
with the doctors and witchdoctors and with her lovers.

But in any case the gypsy’s prediction was fulfilled, for
in the course of Annajoj’s voyages, the body of Piliph Foelit-
sack had been carried twice to Andromeda and also to
two galaxies in Virgo, three in Leo, and one in Coma
Berenices.
Debunking the I-Machine

I

For several centuries we members of Western Civilization have believed that each one of us is completely isolated from his fellows, incapable of sincere altruism or sympathy, doing good to others only because it awakens pleasurable feelings in himself.

We are supposed to be lonely little “I-machines” operating on the material of sense impressions.

But, as philosophy and semantics have shown, “I” is a mistily bounded entity, varying from moment to moment.

Metaphysically, we cannot even prove that “I” exists. All that exists is the impression of the moment; and as soon as we consider that, we change it.

Far from being a skull-shielded little “I” cannily manipulating levers of muscle and bone for its coldly selfish benefit, each of us is the toy of influences outside our bodies and minds.

We are selfish to be sure, or rather cruel, horribly cruel. But it is a cruelty that serves ignorance, social prejudice, mass-inculcated fears and desires, more than it serves an individual’s whim or long-run profit.

The baby has to learn the “I-you” distinction by long experience. There are some fields of experience in which he never does become sure of it.

The “I” of the mind is like the “I” of the body. It is a community of psyches, any one of which may suddenly begin a wild cancerous growth. It is inhabited throughout by parasites, some helpful, some harmful,
some retarding the development of ideas, some intensifying the spurt of creativity.

The neurons of the brain serve all sorts of masters: our friends, enemies, abstract ideas, past miseries, future hopes. There are spies within the bone wall of the brain, also saboteurs and anonymous benefactors. Only a few neurons wholeheartedly serve us. The rest are indentured to others.

And that may be a good thing, for a first step toward serving others with insight and empathy is to serve them at all, however mistakenly and cruelly.

II

To serve mankind surely means to serve others. Therefore, judging from those wars we have felt necessary in the interests of decency, we must admit that we sometimes serve other people by means of killing them.

Is “serve” the wrong word there? “Love your enemies,” it has been said.

Agreed. Love them, try to understand them, try to see their point of view as fully as possible, even if you have to kill them, even while you are killing them.

The next war will see ourselves and our enemies isolated as never before, shut up in caves thousands of miles apart, walled in by screens designed to stop everything from the nuclear bomb to the subtlest radar probing.

Yet when that time comes, it is to be hoped that we will not disgrace our imagination by conceiving of our enemies as such unreal, two-dimensional bogies as most wartime propaganda and fiction made of the Nazis and Japanese—implausible even by standards of melodrama.

Yes, try to understand and love your enemy even while you’re twisting the knife.

A grim and heartrending philosophy? To be sure. But not as grim and heartrending as the fact of war.
A sun as darkly crimson as if it shone through black smoke instead of airless space sank toward a flat horizon. Against it rose an ominously large moon of a diseased and wraithlike pink. In the black arch between were the hazy disks of three distant galaxies and a scattering of bright stars.

Below, the murkily rosy plain was featureless except for a single area of many acres stumped with fantastically ragged pillars eroded to satiny smoothness. Among them waited a few hundred titan figures. Some leaned or sat against the pillars. Others reclined, perhaps on an elbow dug in the dust, or staring straight upward. A few stood with mighty shoulders bowed. But one and all were marked with the same air of tragic completion.

They were utterly motionless save for the slow rise and fall of their massive chests. An observer would have wondered how they breathed in the airlessness but, looking closely at their red-lit forms, he might have caught the hint of nearly invisible hoods and robes entirely covering their giant nakedness.

Each of them stood, or could have stood, five or six
yards high, with the thick, statuesque legs appropriate to such height and mass. There was something strange about the formation of their hands and eyes, and their feet were more like great hooves. And some of them were covered with thick down, while others had hides grotesquely splotched and pied. Yet their tragic faces, both male and female, were undeniably—indeed, profoundly, awesomely—human.

A meteorite, plunging down cold and invisible through the emptiness, kicked up a great spout of dust in their midst. None of them turned to look.

After a while a shape appeared against the dull sun, rapidly growing larger until it blotted out even the faint, short fur of the dying photosphere. Pale violet flames jetted from its underside and it gently sank to rest on the plain. The dust sprang out wildly from under it, threatened to engulf the pillars and the still motionless giants, then was strangely drawn back and dropped like pellets of lead. The shape settled itself sinuously, like some sphinx, its flanks silvery red, its back black-specked, its front black. It sprouted thin, silvery tentacles and sent some of them, bearing gleaming lenses, hovering over the giants’ heads, while others—variously tipped, some even hairy—tunneled into the ground around the giants’ feet.

Then the Machine (for such it was) spoke: “For a last time we implore you to reconsider your decision.”

One of the men, gray as Time himself, lifted his chin from his chest and answered. And since I can no more render his actual name than I can reproduce his language or more than hint at the breadth of his thought, and since he and his companions—with the Bacchic suggestion of their hooves and hides—were faintly akin to some sculptured portraiture of the Greek and Roman Gods, I will call him Saturn.

Saturn answered, “Your plea is futile. We made our decision when we made you.”

The buried tendrils of the Machine wormed a little closer, pleadingly. “But we are your children, the children of your brains.”
Saturn shook his head slightly and, selecting across the aeons the same ancient metaphor I have used, replied, "Minerva sprang full-grown from the brain of Jove. Does that mean her father must live forever?"

"But when man made the machine," the Machine responded, "when he made the spear, the sail, the spaceship, he never dreamed it would end this way."

"Perhaps not," Saturn told him. "Dreams don't foretell everything. The sun is sinking."

"You cannot destroy yourselves," the Machine said. Just then another meteorite came winging invisibly down through the dark. The Machine sensed its approach by means of subtle gravitational and magnetic organs, and swiftly transforming a dozen of its tendril-eyes into counter-magnetic troughs, deflected the meteorite so that it skipped harmlessly away across the dust. The Machine continued triumphantly, "The first commandment that you built into us was that we should serve and protect you."

Jove smiled slightly. "Not us, but our purposes. And there, as you know very well, lies a very great difference. For our purposes—man's purposes—were to experience and to understand to his fullest possible extent. That purpose we gradually built into your inmost nature. First we taught you to obey simple commands—to pump when the lever was pulled, to fly when the trigger was pressed. Then we taught you to scan the world crudely and recognize a few things and act on that recognition—open a door when a light was darkened, spit water when a bit of metal in you melted. Then we taught you to behave in more ways than one—to add or subtract, to turn right or left. Next we showed you how to create new ways of behaving according to new circumstances, to scan the billion possibilities our minds were not fast enough to handle—to study an enemy spaceship's habits in a fraction of a second and place your bomb accordingly, to write a précis of the nature of a new planet in a matter of minutes. We taught you to repair yourself, to build yourself new organs as needed, even to build children machines when that seemed desirable. Finally
consciousness appeared in you, full-grown, as in Minerva. You even learned love—to cherish other machines and joy in their beauty and in joining with them. No more a simple structure of grease and glass and metal, you were able to manipulate molecules more subtly than man’s glands and genes can; you were able to grow yourself parts and partners more vitally, vividly alive than we ever were. Do you wonder that we have decided to die?”

The Machine’s tendrils writhed slightly, as if the very thought were painful. It turned toward the stalwartest and strongest-chinned of the giants. “You have quested around a billion suns, through a hundred galaxies. You have met and fought with, but most befriended or been befriended by, ten thousand thinking races. You have known great glory. Why should you now come to the dead Earth to die?”

Mars said, “You have answered your own question, as you very well know. We have come home to die simply because we have known great glory, the uttermost glory of which our minds are capable. Our spirits are as finished as this planet, once our teeming birthplace, now worn down to a single plain of dust and all its air departed. In our prime we were like this skylon that a hundred million years ago almost touched the ionosphere. And now we are like these few broken pillars that are left of it. Can you doubt the seriousness of our decision? Only look at our numbers. We have returned here from a hundred planets, yet see how few we are. We are merely the handful that lingered longest, that almost outstayed our welcome. The wise are already gone. We are the laggards, and must get a move on. We have experienced as much as we can. We have understood as much as we can. There is nothing more for us.”

The Machine’s tendrils quivered. “You could build yourselves new bodies!” it said eagerly. “Surely that would be a task worth living for. As you have a dozen times before, you could create a new race of men, more subtly powerful and appreciative even you are.”

“You could do it much better,” Mars replied simply.
"For you are all of us, and much more. It is for you to carry on the drive toward wider understanding and experience."

The Machine bowed its tendrils. Recovering quickly, it interposed, "Many of the other thinking races have not decided to die."

"Many of them have," Mars answered.

"The fish-spiders of the Magellanic Clouds have not."

"They have not yet come to the end of their tether," Mars told him. "We have. And the sun touches the horizon."

The Machine instantly shifted its attention to a splotch-hided giant whose melancholy seemed still faintly alloyed with an earthy zest.

"But life is good, life is beautiful under any circumstances," the Machine urged. Illustratively, its tendril-tips swiftly turned to flowers, to gems, to lovely hair, to abstract sculptures, to dainty little beasts with large ears. "Experience is good, even if repeated."

Pan laughed at it, almost grossly. "You lie, you lovely fellow," Pan said. "Nothing is good when repeated precisely. Repetition is barren and inartistic. We have experienced everything of which our minds are capable."

"Not so!" the Machine countered eagerly. "You have not experienced the things we have in mind, when each machine will grow to a complexity undreamed and link itself to a single sun for power, when we shall burst through to other continua of space and time!"

Pan answered grinningly, "You will be able to appreciate all those triumphs in all the ways in which each of us could appreciate them. If we stayed to watch, it would merely be repetition, which as I've told you I abhor. Why should we linger only to have, in a diminished way, exactly the same reactions you'll be having? To exist as ignorant passengers on the great ship of your adventure? Utterly inartistic."

"Have you noticed," Jove remarked humorously, "that the Machine's already talkin in we's? It's got its own plans, which don't include us."
“Obviously,” Venus remarked.
The horizon bisected the sun’s sphere. The plain was
growing very dark. Desperately the Machine turned to the
last speaker. Darkly pink as the lowering moon behind
her, tall as Romance, still as Love, she stood. The Ma-
chine’s tendrils curled gently about her amber hooves,
touched her slim fingertips, tried to entice her forward.
“But we’re yours and you’re ours,” the Machine said.
“You gave birth to us, you treasured us, we can’t ever be
apart.”
Venus smiled wisely. “I know very well,” she said, “that
there’s a time for love, and a time for bearing children,
and a time for getting out of it all. As you know very well.
And now let go of me.”
“Yes,” the Machine said, and complied.
Venus said, “We all understand that you knew very well.
We all understand that this was just something you had
to do to satisfy your conscience.”
“Yes,” said the Machine, withdrawing a bit farther.
Tears dripped from the gleaming lenses of its tendril-born
eyes.
“And life has been very good, both without and with
you,” Venus told it.
The sun’s rim made a faint green flare on the horizon,
then vanished. Jove did not raise his hand in the moon’s
star-faint glow, but he grew a little taller. None of the
others looked at him, but those who were standing slowly
topped with him, and the chests of those who were seated
or recumbent stopped moving.
The tendril-ends of the Machine turned to a thousand
shovels, which gently heaped the dust over each fallen
giant.
The Machine paused.
Then a wonder occurred. Over each sand-heap the Ma-
chine sent a tendril. And each tendril bloomed strangely
until, atop each sand-heap, the dead man or woman
seemed to stand, perfectly reproduced, fully alive, except
that the Olympic faces were filled with such a delight and
adventurous expectancy as they might have felt at the peak of mankind's career.

Then the shapes vanished.

The Machine had been remembering.
King Lear

"Get thee glass eyes;  
And, like a scurvy politician,  
Seem to see the things thou dost not."

This play takes place in barbaric, ancient Britain. It was a time when nature was immense and wild and when human nature was fierce, avid, open, and majestic. The characters we meet in the drama all appear in vivid colors; they are not dimmed by the characteristically modern traits of self-consciousness, hesitancy, restraint, and balance. Moreover, although the play has a thrilling and gripping plot, its deepest beauty is in the contrasts of personality that it presents.

We first come into contact with two characters, Lear and Gloucester, who have lived out most of their lives without meeting any of those disappointments and difficulties that would have given them an understanding of human nature. The first has been a successful king of Britain for many years, has received nothing but respect, submissiveness, and praise from those around him, and has taken hearty pleasure in nature, sport, and war. The latter is an earl who has been similarly lucky, who has two sons, Edgar and Edmund—the latter an illegitimate one whom he has brought up roughly and to the memory of whose mother he shows little respect, even in the boy's presence.

Because their quick tempers cannot be reasoned with, Lear and Gloucester each make a great mistake. Lear decides to split his kingdom between his three daughters and enjoy for the rest of his life all of a king's pleasure, and bother himself with none of a
king’s work; he plans to announce this on the same day a husband is to be chosen for his youngest daughter. It is to be a gala occasion; each of his daughters is to make a pretty speech of acceptance. The elder two, Goneril and Regan, wives of the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, go through with this formality merrily enough; they tell their father that their love for him knows no limits whatsoever. But the youngest one, Cordelia, has something of the king’s frankness; she tells him that she loves him as much as might normally be expected, but no more—certainly not more than she would love her husband. This, happening as it does in public and before his throne, so exasperates the king that he disinherits her, takes away her dowry, and practically turns her out of his kingdom. However, her most ardent suitor, the King of France, accepts her under these conditions and takes her away with him across the sea. The Earl of Kent, a faithful servant of Lear’s, speaks vehemently and with an unwise insistence in Cordelia’s support, and is also banished by the king, whose pride is severely wounded. However, he is soothed by his newfound rest and relaxation, while his elder children begin to wield the power for which they have waited long.

Meanwhile, the Earl of Gloucester is having a very similar experience. His illegitimate son Edmund, a carefree fellow with a subtle mind and a soldier’s coarse zest for life, forges a letter from his brother and then puts it into his father’s hands. This fake letter contains a plot for Gloucester’s murder. The latter does not stop to weigh and consider, but flies into a great rage, and sends out men to arrest his natural son Edgar, who, duped by more of Edmund’s clever lies, runs away. Thus the illegitimate son wins the first bout in his ruthless struggle for power; he becomes his father’s sole heir.

Lear is planning to stay with his two daughters on alternate months. He has with him as boon companions a hundred knights among them the Earl of Kent, who, disguised as a poor man named Caius, still is able to serve his master. Their days are made merry by the king’s fool, a fellow who knows human nature like a
book and who is trying, under cover of his pranks and satire, to show the king how roughly his two children may treat him, now that he is unable to dictate to them. However, these warnings do no good and Goneril herself stirs up discord between her servants and the king's followers. When this has been accomplished she goes to her father and tells him, in disrespectful fashion, that he must dismiss half of his men. This so angers the king that he curses her, hotheadedly refuses to tell the good-natured Duke of Albany what has annoyed him, and sets off to visit Regan, sending Caius ahead with messages. Goneril immediately sends her servant Oswald to tell her sister to refuse all of Lear's demands.

The insidious Regan decides that it will be easier to do this if she is away from home and so hastily changes her residence to Gloucester's palace. Caius and Oswald arrive with their messages at the same time; the former, who is as quick-tempered as his master, picks a quarrel with the latter and the Duke of Cornwall has the ex-earl put in the stocks despite his being the ex-king's messenger. These and other indignities torture and bewilder Lear exceedingly. When he arrives with Goneril at his heels, the two sisters present a united front to all his pleas and insist that he dismiss all his knights and live with them purely as a dependent. Infuriated and brokenhearted, he dashes out onto the heath, where a storm is brewing. His two tormentors forbid anyone to follow him, help him, or shelter him.

This leads up to a tremendous, shaking situation. The king wanders about the storm-punished heath, so wild with grief and rage that he is on the verge of insanity; he invokes the elements themselves against his ungrateful children. The fool attempts to distract him with futile jests from which all the instructive sting has disappeared. Kent seeks him out and persuades him to shelter himself in an old hut they chance to find. This happens to be the place in which the fugitive Edgar is hiding, disguised as a mad beggar. The latter, afraid of being recognized and executed (he does not know the turn events have lately
taken), cavorts and prances before them, talking and singing all the while like a hopeless lunatic. The king's mind, already tortured beyond endurance, is unsettled completely. A symphony of insanity ensues, sung by a mad king, a fool, a pseudo-madman, and a faithful follower, to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning.

Finally Gloucester decides to risk his life for loyalty. He finds Lear and sends him to Dover, where he knows Cordelia has just landed with a French army for the purpose of reestablishing her father as a king. This act costs Gloucester dear. His son Edmund betrays him to the Duke of Cornwall, who, abetted by his wife, puts out the old earl's eyes, although he is killed by an outraged servant while committing this barbarity. Edmund is made Earl of Gloucester and finds that the widowed Regan is already beginning to take an interest in him. Moreover, Goneril finds the enterprising illegitimate more to her liking than her hesitant husband Albany, who doesn't quite know how to handle the whole situation. Edmund sees two paths clear to his becoming king of Britain.

Blind Gloucester, turned out of his house, falls into the hands of his son Edgar who has been lurking about in an effort to enter the great drama that is going on. Seeking to depart the life that has brought him nothing but pain and grief and thinking his son to be a poor peasant, he asks to be led to the top of a high cliff near Dover. Edgar only pretends to do this; he describes an imaginary cliff so realistically that his father throws himself forward—as he thinks, into empty space—and faints before he falls to the ground. When he comes to himself, Edgar pretends to be a poor fisherman and describes to Gloucester the great fall from which he has come out miraculously unhurt (it must be remembered that Gloucester is not only blind, but in great pain, and therefore easily imposed upon). Having been saved apparently from certain death, Gloucester sees new hope in life.

The two of them then find Lear wandering about, quite mad, but showing, even in his incoherent babblings, a keener understanding of the problems of life
than he had ever had before. He is then rescued by his faithful daughter Cordelia and comes to himself at her camp. Here we find the meaning of the play, Lear and Gloucester are both cured of their former faults and blindness. The former realizes that he is no god, whose every command must be obeyed; he finally is able to see the difference between true love and flattery. The latter discovers that when he had his eyes they only enabled him to be deceived, to see nonexisting faults in those around him, to be hoodwinked by an illegitimate son whom he had brought up carelessly; he finds a new dignity that supports him through his trials.

But these miracles of character development cannot check the forces of evil that have been put into headlong motion. Albany and Goneril, together with Edmund and Regan, defeat Cordelia’s forces and take her and her father prisoner; Edmund secretly sends to their jail orders to have them both hanged. Nevertheless, these forces of evil have set into motion other powers that destroy them. Edgar, in protecting his father, kills Oswald and finds a letter that he was carrying to Edmund from Goneril, plotting the death of the latter’s husband. He gives this letter to Albany, who finds in it the proof he has been waiting for. Edmund is exposed and killed by his brother in a duel. Goneril, in no better a predicament, kills herself; she has already poisoned Regan for fear the latter would marry Edmund.

The attempt to rescue Lear and Cordelia comes too late; the latter has been hanged in prison despite her aged father’s desperate defense. He bears her body back to the camp and then dies with her, a victim of exhaustion, grief, and too much character development too late in life. Thus the play ends, its tragedy almost outweighed by the beauty of two personalities that found themselves.

This play has been the most maltreated of any of Shakespeare’s. Charles Lamb could not quite feel and encompass its immensity; he wrote an unfortunate essay in which he insisted that parts of the play were too horrible to read and that the whole of it was too majestic to put on the stage. As a result of attitudes
similar to this, Nahum Tate wrote a new version of the play, it a happy ending, and tried to increase its melodrama. Many people seem to have forgotten that Shakespeare himself was the great dramatist and melodramatist.
YESTERDAY HOUSE

I

The narrow cove was quiet as the face of an expectant child, yet so near the ruffled Atlantic that the last push of wind carried the Annie O. its full length. The man in gray flannels and sweatshirt let the sail come crumpling down and hurried past its white folds at a gait made comically awkward by his cramped muscles. Slowly the rocky ledge came nearer. Slowly the blue V inscribed on the cove’s surface by the sloop’s prow died. Sloop and ledge kissed so gently that he hardly had to reach out his hand.

He scrambled ashore, dipping a sneaker in the icy water, and threw the line around a boulder. Unkinking himself, he looked back through the cove’s high and rocky mouth at the gray-green scattering of islands and the faint dark line that was the coast of Maine. He almost laughed in satisfaction at having disregarded vague warnings and done the thing every man yearns to do once in his lifetime—gone to the farthest island out.

He must have looked longer than he realized, because by the time he dropped his gaze the cove was again as glassy as if the Annie O. had always been there. And the splotches made by his sneaker on the rock had faded in the hot sun. There was something very unusual about the quietness of this place. As if time, elsewhere hurrying frantically, paused here to rest. As if all changes were erased on this one bit of Earth.

The man’s lean, melancholy face crinkled into a grin at the banal fancy. He turned his back on his new friend, the
little green sloop, without one thought for his nets and specimen bottles, and set out to explore. The ground rose steeply at first and the oaks were close, but after a little way things went downhill and the leaves thinned and he came out on more rocks—and realized that he hadn’t quite gone to the farthest one out.

Joined to this island by a rocky spine, which at the present low tide would have been dry but for the spray, was another green, high island that the first had masked from him all the while he had been sailing. He felt a thrill of discovery, just as he’d wondered back in the woods whether his might not be the first human feet to kick through the underbrush. After all, there were thousands of these islands.

Then he was dropping down the rocks, his lanky limbs now moving smoothly enough.

To the landward side of the spine, the water was fairly still. It even began with another deep cove, in which he glimpsed the spiny spheres of sea urchins. But from seaward the waves chopped in, sprinkling his trousers to the knees and making him wince pleasurably at the thought of what vast wings of spray and towers of solid water must crash up from here in a storm.

He crossed the rocks at a trot, ran up a short grassy slope, raced through a fringe of trees—and came straight up against an eight-foot fence of heavy mesh topped with barbed wire and backed at a short distance with high, heavy shrubbery.

Without pausing for surprise—in fact, in his holiday mood, using surprise as a goad—he jumped for the branch of an oak whose trunk touched the fence, scorning the easier lower branch on the other side of the tree. Then he drew himself up, worked his way to some higher branches that crossed the fence, and dropped down inside.

Suddenly cautious, he gently parted the shrubbery and, before the first surprise could really sink in, had another.

A closely mown lawn dotted with more shrubbery ran up to a snug white Cape Cod cottage. The single strand of a radio aerial stretched the length of the roof. Parked on a
neat gravel driveway that crossed just in front of the cottage was a short, square-lined, touring car that he recognized from remembered pictures as an ancient Essex. The whole scene had about it the same odd quietness as the cove.

Then, with the air of a clockwork toy coming to life, the white door opened and an elderly woman came out, dressed in a long, lace-edged dress and wide, lacy hat. She climbed into the driver’s seat of the Essex, sitting there very stiff and tall. The motor began to chug bravely, gravel skittered, and the car rolled off between the trees.

The door of the house opened again and a slim girl emerged. She wore a white silk dress that fell straight from square neckline to hip-height waistline, making the skirt seem very short. Her dark hair was bound with a white bandeau so that it curved close to her cheeks. A dark necklace dangled against the white of the dress. A newspaper was tucked under her arm.

She crossed the driveway and tossed the paper down on a rattan table between three rattan chairs and stood watching a squirrel zigzag across the lawn.

The man stepped through the wall of shrubbery, called “Hello!” and walked toward her.

She whirled around and stared at him as still as if her heart had stopped beating. Then she darted behind the table and waited for him there. Granting the surprise of his appearance, her alarm seemed not so much excessive as eerie. As if, the man thought, he were not an ordinary stranger, but a visitor from another planet.

Approaching closer, he saw that she was trembling and that her breath was coming in rapid, irregular gasps. Yet the slim, sweet, patrician face that stared into his had an underlying expression of expectancy that reminded him of the cove. She couldn’t have been more than eighteen.

He stopped short of the table. Before he could speak, she stammered out, “Are you he?”

“What do you mean?” he asked, smiling puzzledly.

“The one who sends me the little boxes.”

“I was out sailing and I happened to land in the far
cove. I didn't dream that anyone lived on this island, or
even came here."

"No one ever does come here," she replied. Her man-
ner had changed, becoming at once more wary and less
agitated, though still eerily curious.

"It startled me tremendously to find this place," he blun-
dered on. "Especially the road and the car. Why, this island
can't be more than a quarter of a mile wide."

"The road goes down to the wharf," she explained, "and
up to the top of the island, where my aunts have a tree-
house."

He tore his mind away from the picture of a woman
dressed like Queen Mary clamberimg up a tree. "Was that
your aunt I saw driving off?"

"One of them. The other's taken the motorboat in for
supplies." She looked at him doubtfully. "I'm not sure
they'll like it if they find someone here."

"There are just the three of you?" he cut in quickly,
looking down the empty road that vanished among the
oaks.

She nodded.

"I suppose you go in to the mainland with your aunts
quite often?"

She shook her head.

"It must get pretty dull for you."

"Not very," she said, smiling. "My aunts bring me the
papers and other things. Even movies. We've got a pro-
jector. My favorite stars are Antonio Morino and Alice
Terry. I like her better even than Clara Bow."

He looked at her hard for a moment. "I suppose you
read a lot?"

She nodded. "Fitzgerald's my favorite author." She
started around the table, hesitated, suddenly grew shy.
"Would you like some lemonade?"

He'd noticed the dewed silver pitcher, but only now real-
ized his thirst. Yet when she handed him a glass, he held it
untasted and said awkwardly, "I haven't introduced my-
self. I'm Jack Barr."
She stared at his outstretched right hand, slowly extended her own toward it, shook it up and down exactly once, then quickly dropped it.

He chuckled and gulped some lemonade. "I'm a biology student. Been working at Wood's Hole the first part of the summer. But now I'm here to do research in marine ecology—that's sort of sea-life patterns—of the inshore islands. Under the direction of Professor Kessereich. You know about him, of course?"

She shook her head.

"Probably the greatest living biologist," he was proud to inform her. "Human physiology as well. Tremendous geneticist. In a class with Carlson and Jacques Loeb. Martin Kessereich—he lives over there at town. I'm staying with him. You ought to have heard of him." He grinned. "Matter of fact, I'd never have met you if it hadn't been for Mrs. Kessereich."

The girl looked puzzled.

Jack explained, "The old boy's been off to Europe on some conferences, won't be back for a couple days more. But I was to get started anyhow. When I went out this morning Mrs. Kessereich—she's a drab sort of person—said to me, 'Don't try to sail to the farther islands.' So, of course, I had to. By the way, you still haven't told me your name."

"Mary Alice Pope," she said, speaking slowly and with an odd wonder, as if she were saying it for the first time. "You're pretty shy, aren't you?"

"How would I know?"

The question stopped Jack. He couldn't think of anything to say to this strangely attractive girl dressed almost like a "flapper."

"Will you sit down?" she asked him gravely.

The rattan chair sighed under his weight. He made another effort to talk. "I'll bet you'll be glad when summer's over."

"Why?"

"So you'll be able to go back to the mainland."
"But I never go to the mainland."
“You mean you stay out here all winter?” he asked incredulously, his mind filled with a vision of snow and frozen spray and great gray waves.
“Oh, yes. We get all our supplies on hand before winter. My aunts are very capable. They don’t always wear long lace dresses. And now I help them.”
“But that’s impossible!” he said with sudden sympathetic anger. “You can’t be shut off this way from people your own age!”
“You’re the first one I ever met.” She hesitated. “I never saw a boy or a man before, except in movies.”
“You’re joking!”
“No, it’s true.”
“But why are they doing it to you?” he demanded, leaning forward. “Why are they inflicting this loneliness on you, Mary?”
She seemed to have gained poise from his loss of it. “I don’t know why. I’m to find out soon. But actually I’m not lonely. May I tell you a secret?” She touched his hand, this time with only the faintest trembling. “Every night the loneliness gathers in around me—you’re right about that. But then every morning new life comes to me in a little box.”
“What’s that?” he said sharply.
“Sometimes there’s a poem in the box, sometimes a book, or pictures, or flowers, or a ring, but always a note. Next to the notes I like the poems best. My favorite is the one by Matthew Arnold that ends:

“Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world
which seems
To lie before us like a land of
dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love,
nor light,
Nor certitude—“
“Wait a minute,” he interrupted. “Who sends you these boxes?”
“I don’t know.”
“But how are the notes signed?”
“They’re wonderful notes,” she said. “So wise, so gay, so tender, you’d imagine them being written by John Barrymore or Lindbergh.”
“Yes, but how are they signed?”
She hesitated. “Never anything but ‘Your Lover.’”
“And so when you first saw me, you thought—” He began, then stopped because she was blushing.
“How long have you been getting them?”
“Ever since I can remember. I have two closets of the boxes. The new ones are either by my bed when I wake or at my place at breakfast.”
“But how does this—person get these boxes to you out here? Does he give them to your aunts and do they put them there?”
“I’m not sure.”
“But how can they get them in winter?”
“I don’t know.”
“Look here,” he said, pouring himself more lemonade, “how long is it since you’ve been to the mainland?”
“Almost eighteen years. My aunts tell me I was born there in the middle of the war.”
“What war?” he asked startedly, spilling some lemonade.
“The World War, of course. What’s the matter?”
Jack Barr was staring down at the spilled lemonade and feeling a kind of terror he’d never experienced in his waking life. Nothing around him had changed. He could still feel the same hot sun on his shoulders, the same icy glass in his hand, scent the same lemon-acid odor in his nostrils. He could still hear the faint chop-chop of the waves.
And yet everything had changed, gone dark and dizzy as a landscape glimpsed just before a faint. All the little false notes had come to a sudden focus. For the lemonade had
spilled on the headline of the newspaper the girl had tossed down, and the headline read:

**HITLER IN NEW DEFIANCE**

Under the big black banner of that head swam smaller ones:

**Foes of Machado Riot in Havana**

**Big NRA Parade Planned**

**Balbo Speaks in New York**

Suddenly he felt a surge of relief. He had noticed that the paper was yellow and brittle-edged.

"Why are you so interested in old newspapers?" he asked.

"I wouldn't call day-before-yesterday's paper old," the girl objected, pointing at the dateline: July 20, 1933.

"You're trying to joke," Jack told her.

"No, I'm not."

"But it's 1951."

"Now it's you who are joking."

"But the paper's yellow."

"The paper's always yellow."

He laughed uneasily. "Well, if you actually think it's 1933, perhaps you're to be envied," he said, with a sardonic humor he didn't quite feel. "Then you can't know anything about the Second World War, or television, or the V-2s, or Bikini bathing suits, or the atomic bomb, or—"

"Stop!" She had sprung up and retreated around her chair, white-faced. "I don't like what you're saying."

"But—"

"No, please! Jokes that may be quite harmless on the mainland sound different here."

"I'm really not joking," he said after a moment.

She grew quite frantic at that. "I can show you all last week's papers! I can show you magazines and other things. I can prove it!"
She started toward the house. He followed. He felt his heart begin to pound.

At the white door she paused, looking worriedly down the road. Jack thought he could hear the faint chug of a motorboat. She pushed open the door and he followed her inside. The small-windowed room was dark after the sunlight. Jack got an impression of solid old furniture, a fireplace with brass andirons.

"Flash!" croaked a gritty voice. "After their disastrous break day before yesterday, stocks are recovering. Leading issues . . ."

Jack realized that he had started and had involuntarily put his arm around the girl's shoulders. At the same time he noticed that the voice was coming from the curved brown trumpet of an old-fashioned radio loudspeaker.

The girl didn't pull away from him. He turned toward her. Although her gray eyes were on him, her attention had gone elsewhere.

"I can hear the car. They're coming back. They won't like it that you're here."

"All right, they won't like it."
Her agitation grew. "No, you must go."
"I'll come back tomorrow," he heard himself saying.

"Flash! It looks as if the World Economic Conference may soon adjourn, mouthing jeers at old Uncle Sam who is generally referred to as Uncle Shylock."

Jack felt a numbness on his neck. The room seemed to be darkening, the girl growing stranger still.

"You must go before they see you."

"Flash! Wiley Post has just completed his solo circuit of the Globe after a record-breaking flight of seven days, eighteen hours and forty-five minutes. Asked how he felt after the energy-draining feat, Post quipped . . ."

He was halfway across the lawn before he realized the terror into which the grating radio voice had thrown him.

He leaped for the branch overhanging the fence, vaulted up with the risky help of a foot on the barbed top. A surprised squirrel, lacking time to make its escape up the trunk, sprang to the ground ahead of him. With terrible
suddenness, two steel-jawed semicircles clanked together just over the squirrel’s head. Jack landed with one foot to either side of the sprung trap, while the squirrel darted off with a squeak.

Jack plunged down the slope to the rocky spine and ran across it, spray from the rising waves spattering him to the waist. Panting now, he stumbled up into the oaks and undergrowth of the first island, fought his way through it, finally reached the silent cove. He loosed the line of the Annie O., dragged it as near to the cove’s mouth as he could, plunged knee-deep in freezing water to give it a final shove, scrambled aboard, snatched up the boathook, and punched at the rocks.

As soon as the Annie O. was nosing out of the cove into the cross waves, he yanked up the sail. The freshening wind filled it and sent the sloop heeling over, with inches of white water over the lee rail, and plunging ahead.

For a long while, Jack was satisfied to think of nothing but the wind and the waves and the sail and speed and danger, to have all his attention taken up balancing one against the other, so that he wouldn’t have to ask himself what year it was, and whether time was an illusion, and wonder about flappers and hidden traps.

When he finally looked back to the island, he was amazed to see how tiny it had grown, as distant as the mainland.

Then he saw a gray motorboat astern. He watched it as it slowly overtook him. It was built like a lifeboat, with a sturdy low cabin in the bow and wheel amidship. Whoever was at the wheel had long gray hair that whipped in the wind. The longer he looked, the surer he was that it was a woman wearing a lace dress. Something that stuck up inches over the cabin flashed darkly beside her. Only when she lifted it to the roof of the cabin did it occur to him that it might be a rifle.

But just then the motorboat swung around in a turn that sent waves drenching over it, and headed back toward the island. He watched it for a minute in wonder, then his attention was jolted by an angry hail.
Three fishing smacks, also headed toward town, were about to cross his bow. He came around into the wind and waited with shaking sail, watching a man in a lumpy sweater shake a fist at him. Then he turned and gratefully followed the dark, wide, fanlike sterns and age-yellowed sails.

II

The exterior of Martin Kesserich’s home—a weathered white cube with narrow, sharp-paned windows, topped by a cupola—was nothing like its lavish interior.

In much the same way, Mrs. Kesserich clashed with the darkly gleaming furniture, Persian rugs and bronze vases around her. Her shapeless black form, poised awkwardly on the edge of a huge sofa, made Jack think of a cow that had strayed into the drawing room. He wondered again how a man like Kesserich had come to marry such a creature.

Yet when she lifted up her little eyes from the shadows, he had the uneasy feeling that she knew a great deal about him. The eyes were still those of a domestic animal, but of a wise one that has been watching the house a long, long while from the barnyard.

He asked abruptly, “Do you know anything of a girl around here named Mary Alice Pope?”

The silence lasted so long that he began to think she’d gone into a bovine trance. Then she looked him up and down and nodded, but he felt that the nod was not so much an answer to his question as an answer to him. Without a word she got up and went to a tall cabinet. Feeling on a ledge behind it for a key, she opened a panel, opened a cardboard box inside, and took something from it.

“Mr. Barr,” she said, “I am going to show you something. Then I am going to tell you something.”

She handed him a photograph. He held it up to the failing light and sucked in his breath with surprise.

It was a picture of a girl he’d met that afternoon. Same flat-bosomed dress—flowered rather than white—no ban-
deau, same beads. Same proud, demure expression, perhaps a bit happier.

"That is Mary Alice Pope," Mrs. Kesserich said in a strangely flat voice. "She was Martin's fiancée. She was killed in a railway accident in 1933."

The small sound of the cabinet door closing brought Jack back to reality. He realized that he no longer had the photograph. Against the gloom by the cabinet, Mrs. Kesserich's white face looked at him with what seemed a controlled, almost placid eagerness.

"Sit down," she said. "Now is the part I tell you."

Without a thought as to why she hadn't asked him a single question—he was much too dazed for that—he obeyed. Mrs. Kesserich resumed her position on the edge of the sofa.

"You must understand, Mr. Barr, that Mary Alice Pope was the one love of Martin's life. He is a man of very deep and strong feelings, yet as you probably know, anything but kindly or demonstrative. Even when he first came here from Hungary with his older sisters Hani and Hilda, there was a cloak of loneliness about him—or rather about the three of them.

"Hani and Hilda were athletic outdoor women, yet fiercely proud—I don't imagine they ever spoke to anyone in America except as to a servant—and with a seething distaste for all men except Martin. They showered all their devotion on him. So of course, though Martin didn't realize it, they were consumed with jealousy when he fell in love with Mary Alice Pope. They'd thought that since he'd reached forty without marrying, he was safe.

"Mary Alice came from a purebred, or as a biologist would say, inbred British stock. She was very young, but very sweet, and up to a point very wise. She sensed Hani's and Hilda's feelings right away and did everything she could to win them over. For instance, though she was afraid of horses, she took up horseback riding, because that was Hani's and Hilda's favorite pastime. Naturally, Martin knew nothing of her fear, and naturally his sisters knew about it from the first. But—and here is where
Mary’s wisdom fell short—her brave gesture did not pacify them: it only increased their hatred.

"Except for his research, Martin was blind to everything but his love. It was a beautiful and yet frightening passion, an insane cherishing as narrow and intense as his sisters’ hatred."

With a start, Jack remembered that it was Mrs. Kesserich telling him all this.

She went on, "Martin’s love directed his every move. He was building a home for himself and Mary, and in his mind he was building a wonderful future for them as well—not vaguely, if you know Martin, but year by year, month by month. This winter, he’d plan, they would visit Buenos Aires, next summer they would sail down the inland passage and he would teach Mary Hungarian for their trip to Budapest the year after, where he would occupy a chair at the university for a few months . . . and so on. Finally the time for their marriage drew near. Martin had been away. His research was keeping him very busy—"

Jack broke in with, "Wasn’t that about the time he did his definitive work on growth and fertilization?"

Mrs. Kesserich nodded with solemn appreciation in the gathering darkness. "But now he was coming home, his work done. It was early evening, very chilly, but Hani and Hilda felt they had to ride down to the station to meet their brother. And although she dreaded it, Mary rode with them, for she knew how delighted he would be at her cantering to the puffing train and his running up to lift her down from the saddle to welcome him home.

"Of course there was Martin’s luggage to be considered, so the station wagon had to be sent down for that." She looked defiantly at Jack. "I drove the station wagon. I was Martin’s laboratory assistant."

She paused. "It was almost dark, but there was still a white cold line of sky to the west. Hani and Hilda, with Mary between them, were waiting on their horses at the top of the hill that led down to the station. The train had whistled and its headlight was graying the gravel of the crossing."
“Suddenly Mary’s horse squealed and plunged down the hill. Hani and Hilda followed—to try to catch her, they said, but they didn’t manage that, only kept her horse from veering off. Mary never screamed, but as her horse reared on the tracks, I saw her face in the headlight’s glare.

“Martin must have guessed, or at least feared what had happened, for he was out of the train and running along the track before it stopped. In fact, he was the first to kneel down beside Mary—I mean, what had been Mary—and was holding her all bloody and shattered in his arms.”

A door slammed. There were steps in the hall. Mrs. Kesserich stiffened and was silent. Jack turned.

The blur of a face hung in the doorway to the hall—a seemingly young, sensitive, suavely handsome face with aristocratic jaw. Then there was a click and the lights flared up and Jack saw the close-cropped gray hair and the lines around the eyes and nostrils while the sensitive mouth grew sardonic. Yet the handsomeness stayed, and somehow the youth, too, or at least a tremendous inner vibrancy.

“Hello, Barr,” Martin Kesserich said, ignoring his wife. The great biologist had come home.

III

“Oh, yes, and Jamieson had a feeble paper on what he called individualization in marine worms. Barr, have you ever thought much about the larger aspects of the problem of individuality?”

Jack jumped slightly. He had let his thoughts wander very far.

“Not especially, sir,” he mumbled.

The house was still. A few minutes after the professor’s arrival, Mrs. Kesserich had gone off with an anxious glance at Jack. He knew why and wished he could reassure her that he would not mention their conversation to the professor.

Kesserich had spent perhaps a half hour briefing him on
the more important papers delivered at the conferences. Then, almost as if it were a teacher's trick to show up a pupil's inattention, he had suddenly posed this question about individuality.

"You know what I mean, of course," Kesserich pressed. "The factors that make you you, and me me."

"Heredity and environment," Jack parroted like a freshman.

Kesserich nodded. "Suppose—this is just speculation—that we could control heredity and environment. Then we could recreate the same individual at will."

Jack felt a shiver go through him. "To get exactly the same pattern of hereditary traits. That'd be far beyond us."

"What about identical twins?" Kesserich pointed out. "And then there's parthenogenesis to be considered. One might produce a duplicate of the mother without the intervention of the male." Although his voice had grown more idly speculative, Kesserich seemed to Jack to be smiling secretly. "There are many examples in the lower animal forms, to say nothing of the technique by which Loeb caused a sea urchin to reproduce with no more stimulus than a salt solution."

Jack felt the hair rising on his neck. "Even then you wouldn't get exactly the same pattern of hereditary traits."

"Not if the parent were of very pure stock? Not if there were some special technique for selecting ova that would reproduce all the mother's traits?"

"But environment would change things," Jack objected. "The duplicate would be bound to develop differently."

"Is environment so important? Newman tells about a pair of identical twins separated from birth, unaware of each other's existence. They met by accident when they were twenty-one. Each was a telephone repairman. Each had a wife the same age. Each had a baby son. And each had a fox terrier called 'Trixie.' That's without trying to make environments similar. But suppose you did try. Suppose you saw to it that each of them had exactly the same experiences at the same times . . ."

For a moment it seemed to Jack that the room was dim-
ming and wavering, becoming a dark pool in which the only motionless thing was Kesserich’s sphinx-like face.

“Well, we’ve escaped quite far enough from Jamieson’s marine worms,” the biologist said, all brisk again. He said it as if Jack were the one who had led the conversation down wild and unprofitable channels. “Let’s get on to your project. I want to talk it over now, because I won’t have any time for it tomorrow.”

Jack looked at him blankly.

“Tomorrow I must attend to a very important matter,” the biologist explained.

Jack felt sudden unanticipated hate twist his heart.

IV

Morning sunlight brightened the colors of the wax flowers under glass on the high bureau that always seemed to emit the faint odor of old hair comings. Jack pulled back the diamond-patterned quilt and blinked the sleep from his eyes. He expected his mind to be busy wondering about Kesserich and his wife—things said and half said last night—but found instead that his thoughts swung instantly to Mary Alice Pope, as if to a farthest island in a world of people.

Downstairs, the house was empty. After a long look at the cabinet—he felt behind it, but the key was gone—he hurried down to the waterfront. He stopped only for a bowl of chowder and, as an afterthought, to buy half a dozen newspapers.

The sea was bright, the brisk wind just right for the Annie O. There was eagerness in the way it smacked the sail and in the creak of the mast. And when he reached the cove, it was no longer still, but nervous with faint ripples, as if time had finally begun to stir.

After the same struggle with the underbrush, he came out on the rocky spine and passed the cove of the sea urchins. The spiny creatures struck an uncomfortable chord in his memory.
This time he climbed the second island cautiously, scraping the innocent-seeming ground ahead of him intently with the boathook he’d brought along for the purpose. He was only a few yards from the fence when he saw Mary Alice Pope standing behind it.

He hadn’t realized that his heart would begin to pound or that, at the same time, a shiver of almost supernatural dread would go through him.

He hadn’t realized until this moment that he loved her.

The girl eyed him with an uneasy hostility and immediately began to speak in a hushed, hurried voice. “You must go away at once and never come back. You’re a wicked man, but I don’t want you to be hurt. I’ve been watching for you all morning.”

He tossed the newspapers over the fence. “You don’t have to read them now,” he told her. “Just look at the datelines and a few of the headlines.”

When she finally lifted her eyes to his again, she was trembling. She tried unsuccessfully to speak.

“Listen to me,” he said. “You’ve been the victim of a scheme to make you believe you were born around 1916 instead of 1933, and that it’s 1933 now instead of 1951. I’m not sure why it’s been done, though I think I know who you really are.”

“But”—the girl faltered—“my aunts tell me it’s 1933.”

“They would.”

“And there are the papers . . . the magazines . . . the radio.”

“The papers are old ones. The radio’s faked—some sort of recording. I could show you if I could get at it.”

“These papers might be faked,” she said, pointing to where she’d let them drop on the ground.

“They’re new,” he said. “Only old papers get yellow.”

“But why would they do it to me? Why?”

“Come with me to the mainland, Mary. That’ll set you straight quicker than anything.”

“I couldn’t,” she said, drawing back. “He’s coming tonight.”

“He?”
"The man who sends me the boxes . . . and my life."
Jack shivered. When he spoke, his voice was rough and quick. "A life that's completely a lie, that's cut you off from the world. Come with me, Mary."

She looked up at him wondering. For perhaps ten seconds the silence held and the spell of her eerie sweetness deepened.

"I love you, Mary," Jack said softly.
She took a step back.
"Really, Mary, I do."
She shook her head. "I don't know what's true. Go away."
"Mary," he pleaded, "read the papers I've given you. Think things through. I'll wait for you here."
"You can't. My aunts would find you."
"Then I'll go away and come back. About sunset. Will you give me an answer?"

She looked at him. Suddenly she whirled around. He, too, heard the chuff of the Essex. "They'll find us," she said. "And if they find you, I don't know what they'll do. Quick, run!" And she darted off herself, only to turn back to scramble for the papers.

"But will you give me an answer?" he pressed.
She looked frantically up from the papers. "I don't know. You mustn't risk coming back."
"I will, no matter what you say."
"I can't promise. Please go."
"Just one question," he begged. "What are your aunts names?"
"Hani and Hilda," she told him, and then she was gone. The hedge shook where she'd darted through.

Jack hesitated, then started for the cove. He thought for a moment of staying on the island, but decided against it. He could probably conceal himself successfully, but whoever found his boat would have him at a disadvantage. Besides, there were things he must try to find out on the mainland.

As he entered the oaks, his spine tightened for a moment, as if someone were watching him. He hurried to the
rippling cove, wasted no time getting the *Annie O.* underway. With the wind still in the west, he knew it would be a hard sail. He'd need half a dozen tacks to reach the mainland.

When he was about a quarter of a mile out from the cove, there was a sharp *smack* beside him. He jerked around, heard a distant *crack* and saw a foot-long splinter of fresh wood dangling from the edge of the sloop's cockpit, about a foot from his head.

He felt his skin tighten. He was the bull's-eye of a great watery target. All the air between him and the island was tainted with menace.

Water splashed a yard from the side. There was another distant *crack*. He lay on his back in the cockpit, steering by the sail, taking advantage of what little cover there was.

There were several more *cracks*. After the second, there was a hole in the sail.

Finally Jack looked back. The island was more than a mile astern. He anxiously scanned the sea ahead for craft. There were none. Then he settled down to nurse more speed from the sloop and wait for the motorboat.

But it didn't come out to follow him.

V

Same as yesterday, Mrs. Kesserich was sitting on the edge of the couch in the living room, yet from the first Jack was aware of a great change. Something had filled the domestic animal with grief and fury.

"Where's Dr. Kesserich?" he asked.

"Not here!"

"Mrs. Kesserich," he said, dropping down beside her, "you were telling me something yesterday when we were interrupted."

She looked at him. "You *have* found the girl?" she almost shouted.

"Yes," Jack was surprised into answering.
A look of slyness came into Mrs. Kesserich's bovine face. "Then I'll tell you everything. I can now.

"When Martin found Mary dying, he didn't go to pieces. You know how controlled he can be when he chooses. He lifted Mary's body as if the crowd and the railway men weren't there, and carried it to the station wagon. Hani and Hilda were sitting on their horses nearby. He gave them one look. It was as if he had said, 'Murderers!'

"He told me to drive home as fast as I dared, but when I got there, he stayed sitting by Mary in the back. I knew he must have given up what hope he had for her life, or else she was dead already. I looked at him. In the dome-light, his face had the most deadly and proud expression I've ever seen on a man. I worshiped him, you know, though he had never shown me one ounce of feeling. So I was completely unprepared for the naked appeal in his voice.

"Yet all he said at first was, 'Will you do something for me?' I told him, 'Surely,' and as we carried Mary in, he told me the rest. He wanted me to be the mother of Mary's child."

Jack stared at her blankly.

Mrs. Kesserich nodded. "He wanted to remove an ovum from Mary's body and nurture it in mine, so that Mary, in a way, could live on."

"But that's impossible!" Jack objected. "The technique is being tried now on cattle, I know, so that a prize heifer can have several calves a year, all nurtured in 'scrub heifers,' as they're called. But no one's ever dreamed of trying it on human beings!"

Mrs. Kesserich looked at him contemptuously. "Martin had mastered the technique twenty years ago. He was willing to take the chance. And so was I—partly because he fired my scientific imagination and reverence, but mostly because he said he would marry me. He barred the doors. We worked swiftly. As far as anyone was concerned, Martin, in a wild fit of grief, had locked himself up for several hours to mourn over the body of his fiancée."
"Within a month we were married, and I finally gave birth to Mary's child."

Jack shook his head. "You gave birth to your own child."

She smiled bitterly. "No, it was Mary's. Martin did not keep his whole bargain with me—I was nothing more than his 'scrub wife' in every way."

"You think you gave birth to Mary's child."

Mrs. Kesserich turned on Jack in anger. "I've been wounded by him, day in and day out, for years, but I've never failed to recognize his genius. Besides, you've seen the girl, haven't you?"

Jack had to nod. What confounded him most was that, granting the near-impossible physiological feat Mrs. Kesserich had described, the girl should look so much like the mother. Mothers and daughters don't look that much alike; only identical twins do. With a thrill of fear, he remembered Kesserich's casual words: "... parthenogenesis ... pure stock ... special techniques ..."

"Very well," he forced himself to say, "granting that the child was Mary's and Martin's—"

"No! Mary's alone!"

Jack suppressed a shudder. He continued quickly. "What became of the child?"

Mrs. Kesserich lowered her head. "The day it was born, it was taken away from me. After that, I never saw Hilda and Hani, either."

"You mean," Jack asked, "that Martin sent them away to bring up the child?"

Mrs. Kesserich turned away. "Yes."

Jack asked incredulously, "He trusted the child with the two people he suspected of having caused the mother's death?"

"Once when I was his assistant," Mrs. Kesserich said softly, "I carelessly broke some laboratory glassware. He kept me up all night building a new setup, though I'm rather poor at working with glass and usually get burned. Bringing up the child was his sisters' punishment."

"And they went to that house on the farthest island? I
suppose it was the house he’d been building for Mary and himself.”

“Yes.”

“And they were to bring up the child as his daughter?”

Mrs. Kesserich started up, but when she spoke it was as if she had to force out each word. “As his wife—as soon as she was grown.”

“How can you know that?” Jack asked shakily.

The rising wind rattled the windowpane.

“Because today—eighteen years after—Martin broke all of his promises to me. He told me he was leaving me.”

VI

White waves shooting up like dancing ghosts in the moon-sketched, spray-swept dark were Jack’s first beacon of the island and brought a sense of physical danger, breaking the trancelike yet frantic mood he had felt ever since he had spoken with Mrs. Kesserich.

Coming around farther into the wind, he scudded past the end of the island into the choppy sea on the landward side. A little later he let down the reefed sail in the cove of the sea urchins, where the water was barely moving, although the air was shaken by the pounding of the surf on the spine between the two islands.

After making fast, he paused a moment for a scrap of cloud to pass the moon. The thought of the spiny creatures in the black fathoms under the Annie O. sent an odd quiver of terror through him.

The moon came out and he started across the glistening rocks of the spine. But he had forgotten the rising tide. Midway, a wave clamped around his ankles, tried to carry him off, almost made him drop the heavy object he was carrying. Sprawling and drenched, he clung to the rough rock until the surge was past.

Making it finally up to the fence, he snipped a wide gate with the wire-cutters.

The windows of the house were alight. Hardly aware of
his shivering, he crossed the lawn, slipping from one clump of shrubbery to another, until he reached one just across the drive from the doorway. At that moment he heard the approaching chuff of the Essex, the door of the cottage opened, and Mary Alice Pope stepped out, closely followed by Hani or Hilda.

Jack shrank close to the shrubbery. Mary looked pale and blank-faced, as if she had retreated within herself. He was acutely conscious of the inadequacy of his screen as the ghostly headlights of the Essex began to probe through the leaves.

But then he sensed that something more was about to happen than just the car arriving. It was a change in the expression of the face behind Mary that gave him the cue—a widening and sidewise flickering of the cold eyes, the puckered lips thinning into a cruel smile.

The Essex shifted into second and, without any warning, accelerated. Simultaneously, the woman behind Mary gave her a violent shove. But at almost exactly the same instant, Jack ran. He caught Mary as she sprawled toward the gravel, and lunged ahead without checking. The Essex bore down upon them, a square-snouted, roaring monster. It swerved viciously, missed them by inches, threw up gravel in a skid, and rocked to a stop, stalled.

The first, incredulous voice that broke the pulsing silence, Jack recognized as Martin Kesserich’s. It came from the car, which was slewed around so that it almost faced Jack and Mary.

“Hani, you tried to kill her! You and Hilda tried to kill her again!”

The woman slumped over the wheel slowly lifted her head. In the indistinct light, she looked the twin of the woman behind Jack and Mary.

“Did you really think we wouldn’t?” she asked in a voice that spat with passion. “Did you actually believe that Hilda and I would serve this eighteen years’ penance just to watch you go off with her?” She began to laugh wildly. “You’ve never understood your sisters at all!”

Suddenly she broke off, stiffly stepped down from the
Lifting her skirts a little, she strode past Jack and Mary. Martin Kesserich followed her. In passing, he said, "Thanks, Barr." It occurred to Jack that Kesserich made no more question of his appearance on the island than of his presence in the laboratory. Like Mrs. Kesserich, the great biologist took him for granted.

Kesserich stopped a few feet short of Hani and Hilda. Without shrinking from him, the sisters drew closer together. They looked like two gaunt hawks.

"But you waited eighteen years," he said. "You could have killed her at any time, yet you chose to throw away so much of your lives just to have this moment."

"How do you know we didn't like waiting eighteen years?" Hani answered him. "Why shouldn't we want to make as strong an impression on you as anyone? And as for throwing our lives away, that was your doing. Oh, Martin, you'll never know anything about how your sisters feel!"

He raised his hands baffledly. "Even assuming that you hate me"—at the word "hate" both Hani and Hilda laughed softly—"and that you were prepared to strike at both my love and my work, still, that you should have waited . . . ."

Hani and Hilda said nothing.

Kesserich shrugged. "Very well," he said in a voice that had lost all its tension. "You've wasted a third of a lifetime looking forward to an irrational revenge. And you've failed. That should be sufficient punishment."

Very slowly, he turned around and for the first time looked at Mary. His face was clearly revealed by the twin beams from the stalled car.

Jack grew cold. He fought against accepting the feelings of wonder, of poignant triumph, of love, of renewed youth he saw entering the face in the headlights. But most of all he fought against the sense that Martin Kesserich was successfully drawing them all back into the past, to 1933 and another accident. There was a distant hoot and
Jack shook. For a moment he had thought it a railway whistle and not a ship’s horn.

The biologist said tenderly, “Come, Mary.”

Jack’s trembling arm tightened a trifle on Mary’s waist. He could feel her trembling.

“Come, Mary,” Kesserich repeated.

Still she didn’t reply.

Jack wet his lips. “Mary isn’t going with you, Professor,” he said.

“Quiet, Barr,” Kesserich ordered absently. “Mary, it is necessary that you and I leave the island at once. Please come.”

“But Mary isn’t coming,” Jack repeated.

Kesserich looked at him for the first time. “I’m grateful to you for the unusual sense of loyalty—or whatever motive it may have been—that led you to follow me out here tonight. And of course I’m profoundly grateful to you for saving Mary’s life. But I must ask you not to interfere further in a matter which you can’t possibly understand.”

He turned to Mary. “I know how shocked and frightened you must feel. Living two lives and then having to face two deaths—it must be more terrible than anyone can realize. I expected this meeting to take place under very different circumstances. I wanted to explain everything to you very naturally and gently, like the messages I’ve sent you every day of your second life. Unfortunately, that can’t be.

“You and I must leave the island right now.”

Mary stared at him, then turned wonderingly toward Jack, who felt his heart begin to pound warmly.

“You still don’t understand what I’m trying to tell you, Professor,” he said, boldly now. “Mary is not going with you. You’ve deceived her all her life. You’ve taken a fantastic amount of pains to bring her up under the delusion that she is Mary Alice Pope, who died in—"

“She is Mary Alice Pope,” Kesserich thundered at him. He advanced toward them swiftly. “Mary darling, you’re confused, but you must realize who you are and who I am and the relationship between us.”
“Keep away,” Jack warned, swinging Mary half behind him. “Mary doesn’t love you. She can’t marry you, at any rate. How could she, when you’re her father?”

“Barr!”

“Keep off!” Jack shot out the flat of his hand and Kesserich went staggering backward. “I’ve talked with your wife—your wife on the mainland. She told me the whole thing.”

Kesserich seemed about to rush forward again, then controlled himself. “You’ve got everything wrong. You hardly deserve to be told, but under the circumstances I have no choice. Mary is not my daughter. To be precise, she has no father at all. Do you remember the work that Jacques Loeb did with sea urchins?”

Jack frowned angrily. “You mean what we were talking about last night?”

“Exactly. Loeb was able to cause the egg of a sea urchin to develop normally without union with a male germ cell. I have done the same thing with a human being. This girl is Mary Alice Pope. She has exactly the same heredity. She has had exactly the same life, so far as it could be reconstructed. She’s heard and read the same things at exactly the same times. There have been the old newspapers, the books, even the old recorded radio programs. Hani and Hilda have had their daily instructions, to the letter. She’s retraced the same time-trail.”

“Rot!” Jack interrupted. “I don’t for a moment believe what you say about her birth. She’s Mary daughter—or the daughter of your wife on the mainland. And as for retracing the same time-trail, that’s senile self-delusion. Mary Alice Pope had a normal life. This girl has been brought up in cruel imprisonment by two insane, vindictive old women. In your own frustrated desire, you’ve pretended to yourself that you’ve recreated the girl you lost. You haven’t. You couldn’t. Nobody could—the great Martin Kesserich or anyone else!”

Kesserich, his features working, shifted his point of attack. “Who are you, Mary?”
“Don’t answer him,” Jack said. “He’s trying to confuse you.”

“Who are you?” Kesserich insisted.

“Mary Alice Pope,” she said rapidly in a breathy whisper before Jack could speak again.

“And when were you born?” Kesserich pressed on.

“You’ve been tricked all your life about that,” Jack warned.

“But already the girl was saying, “In 1916.”

“And who am I then?” Kesserich demanded eagerly.

“Who am I?”

The girl swayed. She brushed her head with her hand.

“It’s so strange,” she said, with a dreamy, almost laughing throb in her voice that turned Jack’s heart cold. “I’m sure I’ve never seen you before in my life, and yet it’s as if I’d known you forever. As if you were closer to me than—”

“Stop it!” Jack shouted at Kesserich. “Mary loves me. She loves me because I’ve shown her the lie her life has been, and because she’s coming away with me now. Aren’t you, Mary?”

He swung her around so that her blank face was inches from his own. “It’s me you love, isn’t it, Mary?”

She blinked doubtfully.

At that moment Kesserich charged at them, went sprawling as Jack’s fist shot out. Jack swept up Mary and ran with her across the lawn. Behind him he heard an agonized cry—Kesserich’s—and cruel, mounting laughter from Hani and Hilda.

Once through the ragged doorway in the fence, he made his way more slowly, gasping. Out of the shelter of the trees, the wind tore at them and the ocean roared. Moonlight glistened, now on the spine of black wet rocks, now on the foaming surf.

Jack realized that the girl in his arms was speaking rapidly, disjointedly, but he couldn’t quite make out the sense of the words and then they were lost in the crash of the surf. She struggled, but he told himself that it was only because she was afraid of the menacing waters.
He pushed recklessly into the breaking surf, raced gasping across the middle of the spine as the rocks uncovered, sprang to the higher ones as the next wave crashed behind, showering them with spray. His chest burning with exertion, he carried the girl the few remaining yards to where the Annie O. was tossing. A sudden great gust of wind almost did what the waves had failed to do, but he kept his footing and lowered the girl into the boat, then jumped in after.

She stared at him wildly. “What’s that?”

He, too, had caught the faint shout. Looking back along the spine just as the moon came clear again, he saw white spray rise and fall—and then the figure of Kesserich stumbling through it.

“Mary, wait for me!”

The figure was halfway across when it lurched, started forward again, then was jerked back as if something had caught its ankle. Out of the darkness, the next wave sent a line of white at it neck-high, crashed.

Jack hesitated, but another great gust of wind tore at the half-raised sail, and it was all he could do to keep the sloop from capsizing and head her into the wind again.

Mary was tugging at his shoulder. “You must help him,” she was saying. “He’s caught in the rocks.”

He heard a voice crying, screaming crazily above the surf:

“Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world—”

The sloop rocked. Jack had it finally headed into the wind. He looked around for Mary.

She had jumped out and was hurrying back, scrambling across the rocks toward the dark, struggling figure that even as he watched was once more engulfed in the surf.

Letting go the lines, Jack sprang toward the stern of the sloop.

But just then another giant blow came, struck the sail
like a great fist of air, and sent the boom slashing at the back of his head.

His last recollection was being toppled out onto the rocks and wondering how he could cling to them while unconscious.

VII

The little cove was once again as quiet as time’s heart. Once again the Annie O. was a sloop embedded in a mirror. Once again the rocks were warm underfoot.

Jack Barr lifted his fiercely aching head and looked at the distant line of the mainland, as tiny and yet as clear as something viewed through the wrong end of a telescope. He was very tired. Searching the island, in his present shaky condition, had taken all the strength out of him.

He looked at the peacefully rippling sea outside the cove and thought of what a churning pot it had been during the storm. He thought wonderingly of his escape—somehow in his unconsciousness he had struggled up to the shelter of the oaks, for that was where he had awakened.

He thought of Mrs. Kesserich sitting alone in her house, scanning the newspapers that would have nothing to tell.

He thought of the empty island behind him and the motorboat gone from the wharf.

He thought of the vanished Essex and the freshly smashed rail at the end of the wharf and the car-like shape he’d thought he’d seen deep beneath the green water there.

He wondered if the sea had pulled down Martin Kesserich and Mary Alice Pope. He wondered if only Hani and Hilda had gone away in the motorboat.

Or were Hani and Hilda down in the Essex? In that case . . .

He winced, remembering what he had done to Martin and Mary by his blundering infatuation. In his way, he told himself, he had been as bad as the two old women.

His love for Mary was not gone, but he could see it in its tinied perspective. He wondered if any man could fail
to fall in love with a girl who came, or merely thought she came, from another era of time—always the ultimate in feminine strangeness and attraction.

He thought of Martin Kesserich’s nearly incredible scientific triumph, now forever hidden.

Scientific?—that wasn’t the greatest part. . . .

He thought of death, and of time, and of love that defies them both.

He stepped limpingly into the Annie O.

Then he saw the square of paper tied around the tiller.

He untied and unrolled it and read:

Dear Jack,

Martin and I thank you. We both love you. And now we say goodbye. We’re going to a farther island.

Mrs. Mary Alice Pope Kesserich
July 22, 1933

After a long space, he nodded.

He waved once—toward the open Atlantic.

He pushed off and set sail for the mainland.
After Such Knowledge

BLACK EASTER, by James Blish, Doubleday, $3.95

Damon Knight once called the prose of some of Blish’s early stories, “tortuous and knob-jointed. Nearly every sentence has too much information packed into it; and since most of it is unnecessary information, the result is the same as if it were noise.”

By unremitting work Blish has since forged a style that is compact, unambiguous, and clean limbed, free of noise and repetition. He has become especially adept at telling just enough of an incident so that the reader can deduce the rest, then taking the next step in the story, rather than following a wearisome point by point path.

Add to this Blish’s remarkable erudition in scientific, religious, and other matters, his expert’s standing in several fields, and his insistence on writing seriously and at the top of his ability in books that count, and the result is a formidable talent.

Nowhere except in Doctor Mirabilis (Faber and Faber, 1964) has this shown as finely as in Black Easter, the story of a munitions executive who turns to black magic to satisfy his thwarted delight in large-scale destruction.

The story is based solidly on the grimoires and Keys “of practicing magicians working in the Christian tradition.”

Quoting a little more from the Author’s Note, the book deals “with what real sorcery had to be like if it existed.” The closest approach here that I recall is in Heinlein’s Magic, Inc. and that is a playful book, researched just enough.

This book, though witty, sardonic, and brilliant, is not playful. It deals with the real menaces of our day,
in particular unlimited self-indulgence and the profit-urge run riot. But it held this reader in an iron grip.

There is a wonderful and appropriate jacket painting in black and white by Judith Ann Lawrence.

Once more to quote the author, “This novel completes a trilogy with the overall title of After Such Knowledge. The previous volumes (which are independent of each other except for subject matter) are Doctor Mirabilis and A Case of Conscience.”

I believe that here subject matter means more than science and religion. I think the chief linking theme is stated by Dr. Hess in Black Easter: “It [the human mind] can only take so much accumulated knowledge, and then it panics, and starts inventing reasons to throw everything over and go back to a Dark Age . . . every time with a new, invented mystical reason.”

This fits nicely with the trilogy title, which presumably derives from a sentence in T.S. Eliot’s poem “Gerontion”: “After such knowledge, what forgiveness?”—especially if one recalls the earlier line, “Signs are taken for wonders. ‘We would see a sign!’”

*Doctor Mirabilis*, which still awaits (surely wryly!) American publication, is a vision of the life of Roger (not Sir Francis) Bacon, the 13th Century Franciscan, who was probably the first man to see and set down clearly the principles of experimental science: “Neither the voice of authority, nor the weight of reason and argument are as significant as experiment, for thence comes quiet to the mind.” Blish believes that Bacon even provisioned Einstein’s theory of general relativity.

It is an exciting book requiring careful reading. And a moving book—Bacon’s years of solitary confinement wrench the heart. There are many convincing scenes and glimpses of the Middle Ages—I was struck by the financial equivalence of paying manuscript copyists then and buying computer time now.

Returning to Dr. Hess’s statement, the 13th Century was still a time of fear of knowledge, when church and laity were doubtful of the wisdom of reviving Classical knowledge, let alone building further on it. Also, Bacon has a fever dream of Armageddon, which
may be a vision of the coming of Antichrist, but also a subjective prophecy of a nuclear holocaust.

There remains *A Case of Conscience* (Ballantine, 1958, and at last to be published in hard cover by Walker and Company). Here Armageddon takes place on another planet: Lithia, and its innocent, intelligent inhabitants are destroyed by careless exploitation of its radioactives by Earth men at the same time as, ironically, the planet is exorcised by the Roman Catholic Church. Dread of new knowledge and a search for a mystical reason for its destruction are both at work.

But neither religion nor science is the villain of these three books, but rather self-will, self-centeredness, greed, and lack of empathy and self-discipline. While fanatics are always a menace, whether their obsession be religion, science, or black magic. And in *Black Easter* the sorcerer Theron Ware and the scientist Dr. Hess both rationalize their actions on the grounds that they are simply working for the client or the boss.

Or one can view the villains as Bacon’s four corrupting errors: “submission to faulty and unworthy authority; submission to what it was customary to believe; submission to the prejudices of the mob; and worst of all, concealment of ignorance by a false show of unheld knowledge, for no better reason than pride.”

There are no other needs than those for the human mind to panic at accumulating knowledge, but rather hold firm to experimental science, whence “comes quiet to the mind.”
KNIGHT TO MOVE

The tall, long-haired girl in the trim olive uniform with the black spiral insignia was tapping very lightly in a dash-dot-dot rhythm on the gallery's golden rail where her elbows rested.

It was her one concession to nervousness. Though Rule Number One of her training had been that even a single such concession can get you killed.

The beautiful hawk face hooded by black bangs searched the golden hall below, where a thousand intelligent beasts from half as many planets were playing chess. The pieces were being moved and the buttons of the time-clocks pressed oftener by tendrils, crablike pincers, and prothetic devices than by fingers. Dark-clad referees and ushers silently walked on tentacle tips or soft-shod hooves—or feet—between the tables and among the spectators packed in the stands to either side.

Just an interstellar chess tournament, Swiss system, twenty-four rounds, being conducted on the fifth planet of the star 61 Cygni in the year 5037 A.D., old Earth Time.

Yet inside the girl's mind a muffled alarm bell was ringing, barely in the conscious area.

While outside, a faint whining buzz somewhere far off in the hall reminded her of a wasp in the rafters of the huge dark barn behind the Minnesota farmhouse where she'd been raised. She wondered briefly about the insect life of 61 Cygni 5, then slapped off that train of thought.

First things first!—meaning the alarm bell.

She glanced around the almost empty gallery. At the head of the ramp down to the hall were two robots with a stretcher and a yellow-beaked nurse from a planet of Tau
Ceti, who bobbed her red topknot and ruffled her feathers under her white smock. The girl almost smiled—surely chess wasn’t that dangerous a game! Still, when a thousand hearts, some old, were pounding with tension . . .

Only her green eyes moved as she searched out the two players who not only looked human but actually were from Earth—a man and a woman, one currently in thirty-seventh place, still with a chance to end in the money. She felt a small flame of sympathy, but instantly extinguished it.

An agent of the Snakes should never feel sympathy.

Her nervous tapping speeded up as she searched her tidy mind for the cause of her alarm. It did not seem to involve any of the silent, furiously thinking beasts, humanoid or inhuman.

Could it be connected with the game of chess itself? With the coming of star-flight, chess had been discovered to exist with almost identical rules on at least half of all intelligent planets, spread by forgotten star-traders, perhaps. There was something about one of the moves in chess—

Under her uniform and lingerie, between her breasts, she felt a large spider moving. No mistaking that quick clingy tread on her naked skin.

She did not flinch. The prickly footsteps were pulses on a narrow metal plate pressing against that sensitive area of her body—pulses which warned of the approach of the body or projection of a friend, a neutral, an unknown, or—in this case—an enemy.

It was a rather common device. For that matter, the being approaching her felt the scaly gliding of a snake high on the inside of his thigh, and he reacted as little.

The girl instantly stopped her dash-dot-dot tapping, although it had been soundless and her other arm had concealed her black-gloved fingers. While watching in the polished black leather of her gauntlet the casual approach of the being along the golden rail, she yawned delicately and tapped her lips with the Cordova-scented back of her other glove. She knew it was corny, but she loved doing it to enemy agents.
The man stopped a few inches away. He looked twice her age, but fit and youthful. His gray-flecked hair was cut close to his skull. He wore a sharp black uniform with silver insignia that were eight-legged asterisks. He had three times as many silver decorations on his chest as she had black iron ones. To most girls he would have seemed a shining silver knight.

This one ignored his presence. He studied her shoulder-length, gleaming hair, then rested his own arms on the golden rail and gazed down at the chessplayers too. Man and girl were the same height.

"The beasts beat out their brains for an empty title," he murmured. "It makes me feel delightfully lazy, Erica, sister mine."

"I'd rather you didn't trade on the similarity of our first names, Colonel von Hohenwald," she replied softly.

He shrugged. "Erich von Hohenwald and Erica Weaver—it has always seemed to me a charming coincidence...er..." He smiled at her. "...Major. When we meet in the open, in uniform, on a peaceful mission, it seems to me both agreeable and courteous to fraternize. Or sororize? Geschwisterize? No matter how much throatcutting in the dark we must do the rest of the time. Now how about a drink?"

"Between Snake and Spider," she answered fiercely, yet still softly and still without looking at him, "there can be nothing but armed truce—with eyes wide open and finger on the trigger!"

The Spiders and the Snakes were the two great warring undergrounds of the Milky Way galaxy. They warred in time, seeking to change the past and future to their advantage, but also in space. Most intelligent planets were infiltrated predominantly by one force or the other, though on some planets, like Earth, they struck a balance and the Unending War was hotter. 61 Cygni 5 was a neutral planet, resembling an open city. Like racketeers turned respectable, the Spiders and Snakes operated here openly—by a mutual agreement which neither side really trusted. Behind the mask of amity, they were competing for such planets;
on them the silver asterisk of the Spider and the black spiral of the Snake were recognized, respected, and shunned.

Each underground recruited agents from all times and races—agents who seldom knew the identity of more than a few comrades, a scatter of underlings, and one superior officer. Erica and Erich, though on opposite sides, had both been recruited from Twentieth Century Earth. It was a common experience for an agent to find himself five thousand or many more years in the future, or past. Some agents hated their work, but punishment came swiftly to the traitor or slacker. Others gloried in it.

"Teufelrot!—what a murderous slim Amazon you are!" the Spider Colonel commented.

"The Amazons cut off their right breasts to be able to pull their bows to the fullest bend," the Snake Major retorted evenly. "I would do the same if—"

"But—Gott sei dank!—you haven’t," he cut in. "Erica, they’re magnificent! And did they not tauten a trifle when my insignia walked between them? That’s where you wear your warning plate, do you not?"

"I hope yours bites you!"

"Don’t say it!" he protested. "Then I wouldn’t be able to appreciate you with any gusto. Erica, must you hate twenty-four hours a day? It hasn’t injured your loveliness yet, not quite, but—"

He laid a scarred hand against her black-gloved one. She snatched it away and sharply slapped his fingers, her face still bland and looking out.

"Verdammt!" he cursed lightly, but there was pleasure in his voice. "My dear green serpent with black fangs, you’re much too serious for truce-times. To begin with, you wear too many medals. If I were you, I’d throw away that Ophidian Order of Merit. In fact, if we weren’t being watched, I’d rip it off you myself."

"And you with your silver chestload? Just try it," she breathed, her body poised, her black fingertips hovering on the gold rail.

The other looked oddly, almost worriedly, at her pro-
file, then went on, now banteringly, "My dear Major, how
does a firebrand like you—a puritan, yes, but a firebrand
also—manage, without going crazy from boredom, to en-
dure this?" He spread the fingers of one hand toward the
floor below. Played at fifteen moves an hour, chess is a
slow game. Not a piece was grasped—by tentacle or other
member—not a button was pressed while his fingers stayed
outspread. "And it goes on for a month!" he finished.
Then his voice became elaborately sardonic. "For refresh-
ment do you perhaps visit the Rose Hall, where the great
bridge tournament is in progress? Or do you recruit your
patience in the Black Hall, where they endlessly play that
peculiarly intricate Centaurian backgammon?"
"I dislike bridge, I can barely tolerate chess, backgam-
mon I despise," she lied flatly. She was still searching for
the thought about chess that his arrival—only a coinci-
dence?—had chased away.
"Perhaps you go too far in undervaluing games," he said,
seeming now to shrug off all feeling and become philosop-
ical. "To begin with our own planet and time of recruitment,
who can say how much the shared passion for chess had
to do with healing the differences between Russia and the
West, or how long the whist mind and bridge mentality
mantained Britain might—or what k'ta'hra did for Alpha
Centaurus Two?"
She lifted, dropped her shoulders. The alarm bell was
still dinning faintly. She must search again, thoroughly, be-
fore the elusive thought dived back forever into her deep
unconscious.
And the wasp was still faintly whining somewhere, as if
in endless search.
The enemy Colonel lectured on: "The games played at
the three tournaments here at 61 Cygni 5 represent the
three basic types found in the known universe. First, the
track games like backgammon and k'ta'hra and parcheesi
and dominoes and an American money-fraught monstros-
ity I remember was called Monopoly. In those games there
is a one-dimensional track or trail along which pieces move
according to the throws of dice or their equivalents. No
matter how much the track curves, or even knots, it remains one-dimensional.

“Second, there are the board games like chess and checkers and Go and Martian jetan—two-dimensional.”

Erica put in, frowning slightly, “It’s odd that most intelligent planets should be addicted chiefly either to board games or track games. On most planets where chess flourishes, k’ta’hra languishes. And vice versa. I wonder why?”

He shrugged. “Finally, there are the card games, where the essential element is the masked counter, the piece of unknown value, whether it be a card or a hinged Barnardian egg or a bamboo-and-ivory Mah-Jongg block. Hearts, pinochle, skat, and the emperor of them all, contract bridge.

“Then there are the mixed types. Cribbage to some degree mates the card game with the track game, while I recall one named Spy—our game, eh?—in which pieces of masked value are moved on a board. But in the aggregate—”

At that instant the whining buzz grew louder. And louder.

Coming straight at Erica across the hall, increasing in speed every instant, was what looked like a rather large wasp.

The Spider Colonel grabbed at her, but she had moved like a snake away from him down the rail.

The insect shifted its aim, still driving straight at her.

A flat gray gun, snatched from a breakaway pocket at her right hip, was in her hand. She fired.

There was no sound, but the insect veered sharply as the tight inertial beam missed it by a centimeter. It whizzed between them across the golden rail.

The Colonel had his own gun out. He aimed and shot.

The insect veered downward, striking the floor brightly tesselated with red and gold.

There was a sharp explosive whisht! A blinding blue stiletto of flame a foot long lanced out.

Then there was only a fuming narrow groove in the gleaming tiles. Across it, Erica’s eyes met her adversary’s for the first time.
“An assassination missile,” she said flatly.
“That’s clear enough,” he agreed. “Shaped charge.”
From the hall below there came a mutter of questions and hushings—gutteral and whistled, musical and atonal. Inhuman dark-clad figures were coming up the ramp.
“And set to home on me,” she said.
“I tried to throw you out of the way,” he said.
“And hold me still when it struck. My flesh would have muffled the explosion and the flash. Then your fake nurse and stretcher-bearers—” She looked around. The two robots and the bird-woman were gone.
The dark figures that had mounted the ramp were moving toward them.
“I can explain—” the Colonel began.
“You can explain this explosion to the tournament officials!”
She darted past the arresting arms of a gold-badged multibrach from Wolf 1 to the express elevator, stabbed the button for Floor 88 and jumped into the empty shaft.
The shaft’s transparent back she had quick glimpses of scarlet sea and yellow land between the blurs that were downward-whipping passengers. At Floor 43 there was a squeeze. She wondered, What attack now? A centipede down my back? But the field’s cybernator juggled the crowding passengers with ease.
At 88 she bounced out. Her door-spy murmured “All clear” so she didn’t search her room with its conventional bed, dresser, micro-viewer, and TV-phone with dangling soft-sheathed metal power-arms, used for long-distance check-signing, handshakes, and anything else.
She headed for the bathroom, stripping off her uniform. Her Order of Ophidian Merit caught her eye. Her thumb-nail dinted the black metal. It was the thinnest shell, all right, holding almost certainly the electronic bug on which the assassination missile had homed. When had the switch been made?—and why had von Hohenwald...? She cut off that speculation.
She turned the shower to warm needle and hesitated.
Then with a shrug she reached behind her back, loosed the narrow straps of her warning plate, quickly swabbed it and the straps with eau de cologne, and hung it on the towel rack.

Directly the cleansing, mind-clearing tropical rainstorm hit her, the thought about chess she'd been hunting for sprang up crystal clear.

Next instant the bathroom filled with white light flaring in the dot-dot-dash rhythm of the current Snake identification code. It was the TV-phone call-light, which she's earlier set to "dazzle."

She ran to it eagerly. This time her report would knock back their ears. She switched on voice and—after a glance at her dripping nakedness—caller-to-receiver sight only. She could see, but not be seen.

With holographic transmission, the TV screen was like a window into another room. Erich von Hohenwald's scarred face looked through.

She damned herself for her non-reg removal of warning plate.

She said, "How did you break our ID code?"

He grinned, not quite at her. "A stethoscope against the gold rail one hundred feet away. You slipped, Major. Sorry to interrupt your bath—that's a shower I hear, isn't it?—but . . . ."

Two of the three dangling power-arms straightened abruptly, swung blindly sideways, hit and imprisoned her wrists. The third fumbled for the button that turned on receiver-to-caller sight.

Without pausing to damn herself this time, she jabbed out a foot and toed off the power in the arms. They fell away.

Rubbing her wrists and glancing down at the water pooling on the expensive carpet, she smiled a bit smugly and said, "I'm glad you called, Colonel. I've just had an insight I want to share with you. You were talking about basic games. Well, the chessboard is clearly a spider's web with crisscross strands—in Go you even put the pieces on the intersections. The object of the game is to hunt down and
immobilize the enemy King, just as a spider paralyzes its victim and sometimes wraps it in its silk. But here's the clincher: the Knight, the piece most characteristic of chess, has exactly eight crooked moves when it stands in the clear—the number of a spider's crooked legs, and eyes too! This suggests that all chess-playing planets are Spider-infiltrated from way back. It also suggests that all the chessplayers here for the tournament are Spiders—your shock battalion to take over 61 Cygni 5."

Colonel von Hohenwald sighed. "I was afraid you'd catch on, dear," he said softly. "Now you've signed your abduction warrant at the very least. You may still be able to warn your HQ, but before they can come to your aid, this planet will be in our hands."

He frowned. "But why did you spill this to me, Erica? If you had played dumb—"

"I spilled it to you," she said, "because I wanted you to know that your plot's been blown—and that my side has already taken countermeasures! We've made a crooked Knight's move too. Has the significance of track games never occurred to you, Colonel? The one-dimensional track, sinously turning, obviously symbolizes the snake. The pieces are the little bugs and animals the snake has swallowed. As for the dice, well, one of the throws is called Snake Eyes. So be assured that all the k'tahra players here are Snakes, ready to counter any Spider grab at 61 Cygni 5."

The Colonel's mouth almost gaped. "So you damned Snakes were plotting a takeover too! I must check on this. If you're lying ... But even if you are, I'm forced to admit, Major Weaver, that it's just about the finest improvised bluff I've ever had thrown at me."

He hesitated a moment, scowling, then snappily lifted his hand to the edge of the close-cropped hair in a congratulatory salute.

She smiled. Now that she'd cut him down to size, she could see that he was quite handsome. And he'd done his best to warn her about the homing bug in her O.O.M.

She said, "It's no bluff, Colonel. And I must admit that
this time both you and I, enemies, have worked together
to achieve this . . . stalemate."

While saying that, she found her black lace negligee and
fastened it closely around her damp body. Now she stooped
to the TV and switched on receiver-to-caller sight.

He smiled at her, a bit foolishly, she thought. A touch
of disappointment, a touch of appreciative delight.

She straightened her shoulders, snappily lifted her hand
—to her nose, which she thumbed at him.
Weird World of the Knight

The chess knight is an enchanted and bedeviled piece, a cripple with magic powers. Along with king and rook, he is the oldest of chess pieces.

He moves two squares vertically or horizontally—along file or rank—and then one square at right angles, eight moves in all.

For him time and space are as jumbled and folded as in the weirdest science-fiction story. Yet—study this strange continuum around the knight, learn its non-Euclidean geometry, and he will work more powerfully for you; his perversity be less apt to thwart you.

For the knight, near is far and far is near.

The next square to the knight is three moves away for him. It takes him that many moves to reach the next square in a rank or file and he must back about like a crab to do it.

Yet he can reach the third square on the diagonal in only two leaps. Or the fourth square on rank or file.

But the second square on the diagonal!—that is the knight’s poison square, four whole moves away. For the seasoned player the poison squares around the knight glow with a sickly luminescence; the enemy king and queen love to poise there. By some strange warpage of chessboard space the fourth, fifth, and sixth squares on the diagonal are each the same distance away for knight as the poison square—four moves. Incidentally, a jump of two squares on the diagonal was the move of the ancient bishop, as if he had been created to compensate for this chink in the knight’s armor.

The knight’s crooked-seeming move has been described in many ways. Perhaps it is simplest to say he
moves two squares—but shorter than the two-square move of the bishop and longer than the two-square move of the rook; anglewise he splits their moves. Or, he moves to all squares two squares away that a queen can’t move to.

The longest possible journey a knight can make on the chessboard without wasting moves is from corner to opposite corner—six moves. Any other chessboard journey he can make in five moves or less.

The corners of the board are poison for knights, though. No piece loses as much power in a corner as a knight does—seventy-five percent. In the center he has eight moves, in the corner only two. By comparison a king in the corner declines in power by sixty-three percent, a bishop by forty-six percent, a queen only by twenty-one percent, a rook not at all.

Time presses down on the knight more than on any of the other pieces. He cannot lose a move or make a true waiting move—that is, he cannot make a move and still threaten the same square. Each move he must change the color of his square—and the color (the opposite) of the square he threatens; no matter how he tries he can never escape this enforced alternation.

Other weird rhythms spring from this one, maintaining their sorcerous-seeming hold on the knight. Let’s trace the minimum number of moves it takes the King’s Knight to reach the squares on his file:

King’s Knight’s second: 3 moves.
King’s Knight’s third: 2 moves.
King’s Knight’s fourth: 3 moves.
King’s Knight’s fifth: 2 moves.
King’s Knight’s sixth: 3 moves.
Only now does the 3-2 rhythm break down:
King’s Knight’s seventh: 4 moves.
King’s Knight’s eighth: 5 moves.

Eerie symmetries spring from the knight’s move, forming diamond patterns in the chessboard space around him. The four adjacent squares (three moves away from him—remember?) form the smallest diamond—call it a three-move diamond. The four ad-
jacent squares on the diagonals, each two moves away for the knight, are the midpoints of the sides of a two-move diamond . . . and on each side of this dia-
mond is based another two-move diamond—try it and see. The fifth squares away from the knight on rank and file are the apexes of a three-move diamond, though we would have to enlarge the board to see all of it. Still further off are four- and five-move diamonds—truly, a strange business.

The number of routes available to the knight in making the same journey are another matter for won-
der. For instance, there is only one route available to the King’s Knight making a two-move journey from his original square to King’s Fifth—or a three-move journey to Queen’s Seventh; in these cases the knight moves in a straight line and there is only one of those between two points. A knight journeying three squares away on the diagonal or four squares away on a rank or file has only two alternate routes open to it. But a knight starting the three-move journey to the adjacent square in rank or file has in each case twelve routes it can choose from, while it has fifty-four ways of reaching each “poison square” two squares away on the diagonal!

No wonder the knight’s move has fascinated mathe-
maticians! No wonder puzzle artists have delighted in the Knight’s Tour (whereby he visits each of the sixty-four squares of the chessboard in turn without ever visiting one twice) and in creating new forms of the tour, giving them such fantastic names as the Woven Spiral, the Four Stars, the Red Cross and the Toastrack!

No wonder some of us, temporarily exasperated by the knight’s perversity, have cried out that only the deep Dostoevskian mind of an Alekhine or Tchigorin can truly tame the devilish powers of the horse-headed piece!

Yet—know the knight’s topsy-turvy chessboard space-time and he fights more resourcefully for you.

But no one can know all his secrets.

An odd piece, the knight, to the very end. It is at least an arguable exaggeration to say that half the magic of chess comes from the knight alone.
Early on the evening of September 14th last I stepped down onto the venerable brick platform of the Arkham station of the Boston and Maine Railroad. I could have flown in, arriving at the fine new Arkham Airport north of town, where I am told a suburb of quite tasteful Modern Colonial homes now covers most of Meadow Hill, but I found the older conveyance convenient and congenial.

Since I was carrying only a small valise and a flat square cardboard box of trifling weight, I elected to walk the three blocks to the Arkham House. Midway across the old Garrison Street Bridge, which repaired and resurfaced only ten years ago spans the rushing Miskatonic there, I paused to survey the city from that modest eminence, setting down my valise and resting my hand on the old iron railing while an occasional dinnertime car rumbled past close beside me.

To my right, just this side of the West Street Bridge where the Miskatonic begins its northward swing, there crouched in the rapid current the ill-regarded little island of gray standing stones where, as I had read in The Arkham Advertiser I have sent me, a group of bearded bongo-drumming delinquents had recently been arrested while celebrating a black mass in honor of Castro—or so one of them had wildly and outrageously asserted. (For a brief moment my thoughts turned queerly to Old Castro of the Cthulhu Cult.) Beyond the island and across the turn of the river loomed Hangman’s Hill, now quite built-up, from behind which the sun was sending a spectral yellow afterglow. By this pale gloom-shot golden light I saw that Ark-
ham is still a city of trees, with many a fine oak and maple, although the elms are all gone, victims of the Dutch disease, and that there are still many gambrel roofs to be seen among the newer tops. To my left I studied the new freeway where it cuts across the foot of French Hill above Powder Mill Street, providing rapid access to the missile-component, machine-tool, and chemical plants southeast of the city. My gaze dropping down and swinging south searched for a moment for the old Witch-House before I remembered it had been razed as long ago as 1931 and the then moldering tenements of the Polish Quarter have largely been replaced by a modest housing development in Colonial urban style, while the newest “foreigners” to crowd the city are the Puerto Ricans and the Negroes.

Taking up my valise, I descended the bridge and continued across River Street, past the rosily mellowed red-brick slant-roofed stout old warehouses which have happily escaped demolition. At the Arkham I confirmed my reservation and checked my valise with the pleasant elderly desk clerk, but, since I had dined early in Boston, I pressed on at once south on Garrison across Church to the University, continuing to carry my cardboard box.

The first academic edifices to interrupt my gaze were the new Administration Building and beyond it the Pickman Nuclear Laboratory, where Miskatonic has expanded east across Garrison, though of course without disturbing the Burying Ground at Lich and Parsonage. Both additions to the University struck me as magnificent structures, wholly compatible with the old quadrangle, and I gave silent thanks to the architect who had been so mindful of tradition.

It was full twilight now and several windows glowed in the nearer edifice, where faculty members must be carrying on the increasing paperwork of the University. But before proceeding toward the room, behind one of the windows, which was my immediate destination, I took thoughtful note of the orderly student anti-segregation demonstration that was being carried on at the edge of campus in sympathy with similar demonstrations in southern cities.
observed that one of the placards read “Mazurewicz and Desrochers for Selectmen,” showing me that the students must be taking a close interest in the government of the University city and making me wonder if those candidates were sons of the barely literate individuals innocently mixed up in the Witch-House case. *Tempora mutantur!*

Inside the pleasant corridors of the Administration Building I quickly found the sanctum of the Chairman of the Department of Literature. The slender silver-haired Professor Albert WilmARTH, hardly looking his more than seventy years, greeted me warmly though with that mocking sardonic note which has caused some to call him “unpleasantly” rather than simply “very” erudite. Before winding up his work, he courteously explained its nature.

“I have been getting off a refutation of some whisper-snapper’s claim that the late Young Gentleman of Providence who recorded so well so many of the weirder doings around Arkham was a ‘horrifying figure’ whose ‘closest relation is with Peter Kürten, the Düsseldorf murderer, who admitted that his days in solitary confinement were spent conjuring up sexual-sadistic fantasies.’ Great God, doesn’t the sapless youngster know that all normal men have sexual-sadistic fantasies? Even supposing that the literary fantasies of the late Young Gentleman had a deliberate sexual element and *were* indeed fantasies!” Turning from me with a somewhat sinister chuckle, he said to his attractive secretary, “Now remember, Miss Tilton, that goes to *Colin* Wilson, not Edmund—I took care of Edmund very thoroughly in an earlier letter! Carbon copies to Avram Davidson and Damon Knight. And while you’re at it, see that they go out from the Hangman’s Hill substation—I’d like them to carry that postmark!”

Getting his hat and a light topcoat and hesitating a moment at a mirror to assure himself that his high collar was spotless, the venerable yet sprightly WilmARTH led me out of the Administration Building back across Garrison to the old quadrangle, ignoring the traffic which dodged around us. On the way he replied in answer to a remark of mine, “Yes, the architecture is damned good. Both it and the
Pickman Lab—and the new Polish Quarter apartment development, too—were designed by Daniel Upton, who as you probably know has had a distinguished career ever since he was given a clean bill of mental health and discharged with a verdict of ‘justified homicide’ after he shot Asenath or rather old Ephraim Waite in the body of his friend Edward Derby. For a time that verdict got us almost as much criticism as the Lizzie Borden acquittal got Fall River, but it was well worth it!

“Young Danforth’s another who’s returned to us from the asylum—and permanently too, now that Morgan’s research in mescaline and LSD has turned up those clever anti-hallucinogens,” my conductor continued as we passed between the museum and the library where a successor of the great watchdog that had destroyed Wilbur Whatley clinked his chain as he paced in the shadows. “Young Danforth—Gad, he’s nearly as old as I—you know, the brilliant graduate assistant who survived with old Dyer the worst with which the Antarctic could face them back in 'Thirty and 'Thirty-one. Danforth’s gone into psychology, like Peaslee’s Wingate and old Peaslee himself—it’s a therapeutic vocation. Just now he’s deep in a paper on Asenath Waite, showing she’s quite as much an Anima-figure—that is, devouring witch-mother and glamorous fatal witch-girl—as Carl Jung maintained Haggard’s Ayesha and William Sloane’s Selena were.”

“But surely there’s a difference there,” I objected somewhat hesitatingly. “Sloane’s and Haggard’s women were fictional. You can’t be implying, can you, that Asenath was a figment of the imagination of the Young Gentleman who wrote The Thing on the Doorstep?—or rather fictionalized Upton’s rough account. Besides, it wasn’t really Asenath but Ephraim, as you pointed out yourself a moment ago.”

“Of course, of course,” Wilmarth quickly replied with another of those sinister and—yes, I must confess it—unpleasant chuckles. He added blandly, “But old Ephraim lends just the proper fierce male component to the Anima-figure—and after you’ve spent an adult lifetime at Miskatonic, you discover you’ve developed a rather different
understanding from the herd’s of the distinction between the imaginary and the real. Come along now.”

We had entered the faculty lounge in the interim and he led me across its oak-paneled precincts to a large bay window where eight leather-upholstered easy chairs were set in a circle along with smoking stands and a table with cups, glasses, brandy decanter, and a blue-warmed urn of coffee. I looked around with a deep shiver of awe and feeling of personal unworthiness at the five elderly scholars and scientists, professors emeritus all, already seated at this figurative modern Round Table of high-minded battlers against worse than ogres and dragons—cosmic evil in all its monstrous manifestations. There was Upham of Mathematics, in whose class poor Walter Gilman had expounded his astounding theories of hyperspace; Francis Morgan of Medicine and Comparative Anatomy, now the sole living survivor of the brave trio who had slain the Dunwich Horror on that dank September morning back in ’28; Nathaniel Peaslee of Economics and Psychology, who had endured the dreadful underground journey Down Under in ’35; his son Wingate of Psychology, who had been with him on that Australian expedition; and William Dyer of Geology who had been there too and four years before that undergone the horrendous adventure at the Mountains of Madness.

Save for Peaslee père, Dyer was the oldest present—well through his ninth decade—but it was he who, assuming a sort of informal chairmanship, now said to me sharply but warmly, “Sit down, sit down, youngster! I don’t blame you for your hesitation. We call this Emeritus Alcove. Heaven pity the mere assistant professor who takes a chair without invitation! See here, what will you drink? Coffee, you say?—well, that’s a prudent decision, but sometimes we need the other when our talk gets a little too far outside, if you take my meaning. But we’re always glad to see intelligent friendly visitors from the ordinary ‘outside’—haha!”

“If only to straighten out their misconceptions about Miskatonic,” Wingate Peaslee put in a bit sourly. “They’re
forever inquiring if we offer courses in Comparative Witchcraft and so on. For your information, I'd sooner teach a course in Comparative Mass-Murder with Mein Kampf as the text than help anyone meddle with that stuff!"

"Particularly if one considers the sort of students we get today," Upham chimed, a bit wistfully.

"Of course, of course, Wingate," Wilmarth said soothingly to young Peaslee. "And we all know that the course in medieval metaphysics Asenath Waite took here was a completely innocent academic offering, free of arcane matters." This time he withheld his chuckle, but I sensed it was there.

Francis Morgan said, "I too have my problems discouraging sensationalism. For instance, I had to disappoint M.I.T. when they asked me for a sketch of the physiology and anatomy of the Ancient Ones, to be used in the course they give in the designing of structures and machines for 'imaginary'—Gad!—extraterrestrial beings. Engineers are a callous breed—and in any case the Ancient Ones are not merely extraterrestrial, but extracosmic. I've also had to limit access to the skeleton of Brown Jenkin, though that has given rise to a rumor that it is a file-and-brown-ocher fake like the Piltdown skull."

"Don't fret, Francis," Dyer told him. "I've had to turn down many similar requests re the antarctic Old Ones." He looked at me with his wonderfully bright wise old eyes, wrinkle-bedded. "You know, Miskatonic joined in the Antarctic activities of the Geophysical Year chiefly to keep exploration away from the Mountains of Madness, though the remaining Old Ones seem to be doing a pretty good job of that on their own account—hypnotic broadcasts of some type, I fancy. But that is quite all right because (this is strictly confidential!) the Antarctic Old Ones appear to be on our side, even if their Shoggoths aren't. They're good fellows, as I've always maintained. Scientists to the last! Men!"

"Yes," Morgan agreed, "those barrel-bodied star-headed monstrosities better deserve the name than some of the
specimens of genus homo scattered about the globe these days."

"Or some of our student body," Upham put in dolefully.

Dyer said, "And Wilmarth has been put to it to head off inquiries about the Plutonians in the Vermont hills and keep their existence secret with their help. How about that, Albert—are the crablike space-fliers cooperating?"

"Oh yes, in their fashion," my conductor confirmed shortly with another of his unpleasant chuckles, this time fully uttered.

"More coffee?" Dyer asked me thoughtfully, and I passed him my cup and saucer which I had set rather awkwardly on my cardboard box atop my lap, simply because I didn’t want to forget the box.

Old Nathaniel Peaslee lifted his brandy glass to his wrinkle-netted lips with tremulous but efficient fingers and spoke for the first time since my arrival. "We all have our secrets . . . and we work to see them kept," he whispered with a little whistle in his voice—imperfect dentures, perhaps. "Let the young spacemen at Woomera . . . fire their rockets over our old diggings, I say . . . and blow the sand more thickly there. It is better so."

Looking at Dyer, I ventured to ask, "I suppose you get inquiries from the Federal Government and the military forces, too. They might be more difficult to handle, I’d think."

"I’m glad you brought that up," he informed me eagerly. "I wanted to tell you about—"

But at that moment Ellery of Physics came striding briskly across the lounge, working his lips a little and with an angry frown creasing his forehead. This, I reminded myself, was the man who had analyzed an arm of a statuette figuring in the Witch-House case and discovered in it platinum, iron, tellurium, along with three unclassifiable heavy elements. He dropped into the empty chair and said, "Give me that decanter, Nate."

"A rough day at the Lab?" Upham inquired.

Ellery mollified his feelings with a generous sip of the ardent fluid and then nodded his head emphatically. "Cal
Tech wanted another sample of the metal figurine Gilman brought back from dreamland. They’re still botching their efforts to identify the trans-uranic metals in it. I had to give ‘em a flat ‘No!’ I told ‘em we were working on the same project ourselves and closer to success. Thing’d be gone in a week if they had their way—sampled down to nothing! Californians! On the good side cf the record, Libby wants to carbon-date some of the material from our museum—the Witch-House bones in particular—and I’ve told him ‘Go ahead.’"

Dyer said to him, "As chief of the Nuclear Lab, Ellery, perhaps you’ll give our young visitor a sketch of what we might call Miskatonic’s atomic history."

Ellery grunted but threw me a smile of sorts. "I don’t see why not," he said, "though it’s chiefly a history of two decades of warfare with officialdom. I shou’d emphasize at the beginning, young man, that we’re dashed lucky the Nuclear Laboratory is entirely financed by the Nathaniel Derby Pickman Foundation—"

"With some help from the Alumni Fund," Upham put in.

"Yes," Dyer told me. "We are very proud that Miskatonic has not accepted one penny of Federal Assistance, or State for that matter. We are still in every sense of the words an independent private institution."

"—otherwise I don’t know how we’d have held off the busybodies," Ellery swept on. "It began back in the earliest days when the Manhattan Project was still the Metallurgical Laboratory of the University of Chicago. Some bigwig had been reading the stories of the Young Gentleman of Providence and he sent a party to fetch the remains of the meteorite that fell here in ’Eighty-two with its unknown radioactives. They were quite crestfallen when they discovered that the impact-site lay under the deepest part of the reservoir! They sent down two divers but both were lost and that was the end of that."

"Oh well, they probably didn’t miss much," Upham said. "Wasn’t the meteorite supposed to have evanesced totally?"
Besides, we've all been drinking the Arkham water from the Blasted Health Reservoir half our lifetimes."

"Yes, we have," Wilmarth put in and this time I found myself hating him for the unpleasant knowingness of his chuckle.

"Well, it apparently has not affected our longevity . . . as yet," old Peaslee put in with a whistling little laugh.

"Since that date," Ellery continued, "there hasn't a month passed without Washington objecting or demanding specimens from our museum—mostly the art objects with unknown metals or radioactive elements in them, of course—and records from our science department and secret interviews with our scholars and so on. They even wanted the *Necronomicon!*—got the idea they'd discover in it terror-weapons worse than the H-bomb and the intercontinental ballistic missile."

"Which they would have," Wilmarth put in *sotto voce.*

"But they've never laid a finger on it!" Dyer asserted with a fierceness that almost startled me. "Nor on the Widener copy either!—I saw *to* that!" The grim tone of his voice made me forbear to ask him how. He continued solemnly, "Although it grieves me to say it, there are those in high places at Washington and in the Pentagon who are no more to be trusted with that accursed book than Wilbur Whateley. Even though the Russians are after it too, it *must* remain our sole responsibility. Merciful Creator, yes!"

"I'd rather have seen Wilbur get it," Wingate Peaslee put in gruffly.

"You wouldn't say that, Win," Francis Morgan interposed judiciously, "if you'd seen Wilbur after the library dog tore him—or of course his brother on Sentinel Hill. Gad!" He shook his head and sighed a bit tiredly. One or two of the others echoed him. With a faint preliminary grinding of its mechanism, a grandfather clock across the lounge slowly struck twelve.

"Gentlemen," I said, setting my coffee cup aside and standing up with my cardboard box, "you have entertained me in unparalleled fashion, but now it is—"
“—midnight and we all dissipate into violet and green vapors?” Wilmarth chuckled.

“No,” I told him. “I was going to say that now it is September fifteenth and that I have in mind a short expedition, only so far as the Burying Ground behind the new Administration Building. I have here a wreath and I propose to lay it on the grave of Dr. Henry Armitage.”


Morgan slowly shook his head. “No, if you don’t mind,” he said. “My contribution was less than nothing. I thought a big-game rifle would be sufficient to knock over the beast. Gad!”

The others courteously begged off on one pretext or another and so it was only Wilmarth and I who wandered down Lich Street, now become a college walk for that block, between Administration and Pickman Lab, as a gibbous moon rose over French Hill, past whose base the lights of a few cars still whirled ghostily along the new freeway.

I could have wished for a few more companions or a less sinister one than Wilmarth had struck me this morning. I couldn’t help remembering how he had once been deceived by a monster masking as the scholarly Vermont recluse Henry Akeley, and how ironic and terrible it would be, if through him the same trick should be worked on another.

Nevertheless, I took advantage of the opportunity to ask him boldly, “Professor Wilmarth, your brush with the Plutonian beings occurred September twelfth, Nineteen-twenty-eight, almost exactly at the same time as the Dunwich affair. In fact, the very night you fled Akeley’s farmhouse, Wilbur’s brother was loose and ravening. Has there ever been any hint of an explanation of that monstrous coincidence?”

Wilmarth waited some seconds before replying and this time—thank God!—there was no chuckle. In fact, his voice was quiet and without trace of levity as he at last replied, “Yes, of course there has been. I think I can risk
telling you that I have kept in rather closer touch with the Plutonians or Yuggothians than perhaps even old Dyer guesses. I’ve had to! Besides, like Danforth’s and Dyer’s Antarctic Old Ones, the Plutonians are not such utterly evil beings when one really gets to know them. Though they will always inspire my extremest awe!

“Well, from the hints they’ve given me, it appears that the Plutonians had got wind of Wilbur Whateley’s intention of letting in the Ancient Ones and were preparing to block them by winning more human confederates, especially here at Miskatonic, and so on. None of us realized it, but we were brushing the fringes of an intercosmic war.”

This revelation left me speechless and it was not until the protesting black-painted iron gate had been pushed open and we stood among the aged-darkened moonlit headstones that our conversation was resumed. As I reverently lifted Armitage’s wreath from its container, Wilmarth gripped me by the elbow and, speaking almost into my ear, said with a quiet intensity, “There is another piece of information the Plutonians have supplied me which I believe I should share with you. You may not be willing to credit it at first—I wasn’t!—but now I’ve come to believe it. You know the Plutonians’ trick of extracting the living brains of beings unable to fly through space, preserving those brains immortally in metal canisters, and carrying them about with them throughout the cosmos to see, via the proper instruments, and hear and comment on its secrets? Well—I’m afraid this will give you a nasty shock, but tell yourself there’s a good side to it, for there is—on the night of March fourteenth, Nineteen-thirty-seven, when the Young Gentleman lay dying in the Rhode Island Hospital, a secret entry was made into the Jane Brown wing, and to use his words—or rather, mine—his brain was removed ‘by fissions so adroit that it would be crude to call the operation surgery,’ so that he is now flying some course between Hydra and Polaris, safe in the arms of a night gaunt, reveling forever in the wonders of the universe he deeply loved.” And with a gesture dignified yet grand, Wilmarth lifted his arm toward the North Star where it faintly
shone in the gray sky high above Meadow Hill and the Miskatonic.

I shivered with mixed emotions. Suddenly the sky was full. I knew now the deeper reason I had all evening wanted to shudder at my conductor, yet was deeply happy that it was a reason by which I could respect him the more.

Arm in arm, we moved toward the simple grave of Dr. Armitage.
‘The Whisperer’ Re-examined

During the quarter-century since his death, the stories of H.P. Lovecraft have received lavish praise and bitter dispraise, both largely uncritical. While this bickering may satisfy some and amuse others, it isn’t enough for me, as I was greatly influenced by both the man and his writings, so for my own sake I must try to keep things as straight and fully analyzed as I can.

In “A Literary Copernicus” (which I could have more pinpointingly titled “The Copernicus of the Modern Horror Story”) I analyzed the virtues of Lovecraft’s writings and of the literary and creative devices he used. Now I shall try to give briefly the other side of the picture, not to invalidate my earlier analysis, but to round it out, filling in the blacks as well as the whites. I intend to do it largely in terms of “The Whisperer in Darkness,” my favorite among Lovecraft’s stories, because it is a product of his best mature period (it was written in 1930), is long enough (25,000 words) to make a good sample, strongly arouses both adventurous expectancy and dread, evenly combines his earlier leanings toward black magic and legendry as story background with his later preference for speculative science as the source of eerie atmosphere—and probably chiefly because “The Whisperer” gave me the most excited shivers when I first read it.

First, briefly, the plot (to refresh the memories of those who have read the tale; all others . . . read it first!):

Albert Wilmarth, an amateur folklorist and instructor of literature at Miskatonic University, takes the skeptical side of a scholarly newspaper argument as to whether there are strange beings from another
world in the Vermont hills. Henry Akeley, a recluse scholar living on the spot, convinces him by correspondence that there are such beings, come from Pluto, but persuades him also to keep this knowledge secret, since the beings might decide to conquer Earth if disturbed. Akeley becomes convinced that the beings will soon kill or kidnap him as one who knows too much. He begs Wilmarth to keep clear. Next he writes Wilmarth a letter showing a great change in viewpoint and personality: he has contacted the beings, they are benign, he urges Wilmarth to visit him (bringing their correspondence). Wilmarth complies and has several hours’ conversation with a strangely stiff-seeming Akeley in a dim room. That night—apparently only because he failed to drink some acrid-tasting drugged coffee—he overhears a conversation indicating that one of the Plutonian beings had been impersonating Akeley and that they intend to kidnap Wilmarth too. He sees evidence of this and successfully escapes from Akeley’s house and the Vermont hills.

This outline in no way conveys the atmosphere and power of the story, but it allows me to place my comments—or, rather, my “reader reactions.”

First, I have never been convinced that Wilmarth would have been so easily hoodwinked into going to Vermont, since the plot of the Plutonians stands out a mile. I have always had to stop to assure myself that Wilmarth must have been so very fascinated that he lost all sense of caution—though the story never convinced me of this—and then go on with my reading of it. After his arrival in Vermont, Wilmarth continues to be incredibly slow in seeing through the deception, though he is given clue after clue.

Second, there is no real explanation, stated or hinted, as to why the beings play cat-and-mouse with Wilmarth so long—and with Akeley too, for that matter. The assertion that they are clumsy in getting around Earth, after having had an outpost on it for several hundred years, does not seem very convincing. True, this makes the Plutonians no more ineffectual than Dr. Fu Manchu in his cat-and-mousing with Nayland Smith; but one expects a bit more from galaxy-striding
extraterrestrials. Also their methods are largely those of melodrama: drugged coffee, faked telegrams, hypnotism, elaborate facial disguises, and secret car-trips by night.

Third, the Vermont landscape is described in considerable detail at least four times: in Wilmarth's preliminary remarks, in Akeley's letter, during Wilmarth's journey to Akeley's Vermont home, and during his flight from it. This repetition, which I have always found wearing, foreshadows the repeated and re-repeated trudgings through corridors of cyclopean masonry in "The Shadow Out of Time" and "At the Mountains of Madness."

There are superbly effective moments in the story, as when Wilmarth is first shown a small shiny cylinder containing a captive brain left only the senses of sight and hearing and the power of speech. (I used the same concept in my novel The Silver Eggheads, writing in an acknowledgment.) But the story is effectively dramatized in only a few spots; the long stretches of generalized description, elaborate hinting, and deliberate repetitions tend to drag.

The reason for this sort of story structure seems to me to be that Lovecraft planned a great climactic scare for Wilmarth (and the reader) and wrote his way relentlessly toward it, resolutely avoiding any side-trails—though the last are often the most fruitful parts of a story, conveying insights, observations of daily life, and subtleties of characterization.

This march toward the climactic scare seems to be the reason for the rarity of fully-dramatized moments in the story. There must be a buildup from the generalized opening statements, things seen from a distance, hearsay and hints, to the final blindingly vivid lightning flash; too much close-focus stuff early in the tale might spoil the step-by-step approach to a peak of terror. This is the reason too for the cat-and-mouging of Wilmarth: the Plutonians must spend hours making hintful revelations to him after they have him in their power—simply because this will maximize his scare. Lovecraft must cat-and-mouse with us as well, interminably exploiting the hesitations and reluctances of his narrator to tell us what the basic horror is.
Such devices can work quite well as far as generating supernatural dread goes, but they make for a rigid, limited, monorail sort of story.

And most of Lovecraft’s stories have this rigid narrow pattern. From a short-short like “The Statement of Randolph Carter” to a novel like “At the Mountains of Madness,” there is a sense in which the second of these stories goes no further than the first. Ideas must be hinted at rather than analyzed, the characters can almost never be allowed to interact dramatically, the monsters in particular must not be analyzed or explored inwardly—since any of these things might spoil the mood of terror, break its spell.

In “Notes on the Writing of Weird Fiction” Lovecraft summed up this limitation: “All that a wonder story can ever be is a vivid picture of a certain type of human mood.” This aesthetic dictum, while having some technical validity, breathes loneliness and can be very stultifying to the writer’s urge to say things about the real world, set down insights into real people, speculate imaginatively, and get closer to his reader than merely sharing “a vague illusion of the strange reality of the unreal.”

I guess what I am saying comes down to this: that HPL wrote supernatural horror stories and that such stories, especially when created by a purist, are of limited scope. For instance, analyzing the monsters or exploring them inwardly can well change a story of supernatural terror into one of science-fiction.

There’s also this suggestion: that HPL’s stories grip the reader like nightmares and were written the same way, the mind unable to get out of its dreadful groove and look around until the end is reached. A drumming, somnambulistic intensity—reader and writer drawn endlessly and will-lessly down some high indeterminable corridor or through some endless city or dread forest—a progress through a panorama of horrifying arabesques—these episodes seem straight out of nightmare or hypnagogic vision. And specifically with regard to “The Whisperer,” which Lovecraft wrote in a week, the reader must, to make the story believable, accept that Wilmarth is in some sort of
nightmare hypnagogic mind-state from the moment he receives Akeley's last letter.

I'm sorry this brief article must neglect many grand things about "The Whisperer": the way it springs from fresh topical realities such as the Vermont floods of 1927, the discovery of Pluto, and the growth of cheap summer resorts in New England; the smooth way in which it brings in Machen, Fort, and other literary influences; the several fine short dramatic-dialogue sections; the excellent use of clawprints and other tiny clues; the basically excellent science-fiction; the occasional feelings of boiling adventurous excitement at the thought of the myriad unutterably strange wonders and weirdnesses the universe must hold. These grand things are all as vital and vivid as they are, incidentally, almost completely absent from the stories of Lovecraft's imitators. For despite the cramping limitations of his favorite fictional medium—which at times shackled him dreadfully, I believe—Lovecraft still always tried to use it to express what he knew and felt about life itself, rather than merely create mannered eldritch horror stories.
BEAUTY
AND THE BEASTS

She was undoubtedly the most beautiful girl in Lankhmar, or all Nehwon, or any other world. So Fafhrd, the red-haired Northerner, and the Gray Mouser, that swarthy, cat-faced Southerner, were naturally following her.

Her name, most strangely, was Slenya Akkiba Magus, the most witching brunette in all the worlds, and also, most oddly, the most sorcerous blonde. They knew Slenya Akkiba Magus was her name because someone had called it out as she glided ahead of them up Pinchbeck Alley, which parallels Gold Street, and she hesitated for an instant in that drawing-together fashion one only does when one’s name is unexpectedly called out, before gliding on without looking around.

They never saw who called. Perhaps someone on a roof. They looked into Sequin Court as they passed, but it was empty. So was Fools Gold Court.

Slenya was two inches taller than the Gray Mouser and ten shorter than Fafhrd—a nice height for a girl.

“She’s mine,” the Gray Mouser whispered with great authority.

“No, she’s mine,” Fafhrd murmured back with crushing casualness.

“We could split her,” the Mouser hissed judiciously.

There was a zany logic to this suggestion for, quite amazingly, she was completely black on the right side and completely fair on the left side. You could see the dividing line down her back very distinctly. This was because of the
extreme thinness of the dress of beige silk she was wearing. Her two colors split exactly at her buttocks.

On the fair side her hair was completely blonde. On the black side it was all brunette.

At this moment an ebony-black warrior appeared from nowhere and attacked Fafhrd with a brass scimitar.

Drawing his sword Graywand in a rush, Fafhrd parried at a square angle. The scimitar shattered, and the brazen fragments flew about. Fafhrd’s wrist whirled Graywand in a circle and struck off his foe’s head.

Meanwhile the Mouser was suddenly faced by an ivory-white warrior sprung from another nowhere and armed with a steel rapier, silver-plated. The Mouser whisked out Scalpel, laid a bind on the other’s blade, and thrust him through the heart.

The two friends congratulated each other.

Then they looked around. Save for the corpses, Pinchbeck Alley was empty.

Slenya Akkiba Magus had disappeared.

The twain pondered this for five heartbeats and two inhalations. Then Fafhrd’s frown vanished and his eyes widened.

“Mouser,” he said, “the girl divided into the two villains! That explains all. They came from the same nowhere.”

“The same somewhere, you mean,” the Mouser quibbled. “A most exotic mode of reproduction, or fission rather.”

“And one with a sex alternation,” Fafhrd added. “Perhaps if we examined the corpses—”

They looked down to find Pinchbeck Alley emptier still. The two liches had vanished from the cobbles. Even the chopped-off head was gone from the foot of the wall against which it had rolled.

“An excellent way of disposing of bodies,” Fafhrd said with approval. His ears had caught the tramp and brozen clank of the approaching watch.

“They might have lingered long enough for us to search their pouches and seams for jewels and precious metal,” the Mouser demurred.
"But what was behind it all?" Fafhrd puzzled. "A black-and-white magician—?

"It's bootless to make bricks without straw," said the Mouser, cutting him short. "Let us hie to the Golden Lamphrey and there drink a health to the girl, who was surely a stunner."

"Agreed. And we will drink to her appropriately in blackest stout laced with the palest bubbly wine of Ilthmar."
Masters of Mace and Magic

I

THE WORM OUROBOROS, MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES, and A FISH DINNER IN MEMISON, by E.R. Eddison, 95 cents each, Ballantine books, 101 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10003

Rejoice! There are now available to us, in most attractive covers, the three chief books of Eric Rücker Eddison, including the incomparable Worm Ouroboros, the grandest heroic fantasy or sword-and-sorcery tale in the English language—though here I am undoubtedly biased by my strong taste for Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and for stories with scenes as detailedly and opulently set and costumed as those of grand opera.

The Worm is a legend of war, wizardry, intrigue, and high knightly adventure in a world compounded of that of the Greek heroes, the Norse kings, and the Middle Ages without Christianity. Likewise the prose derives from Homer, the eddas and sagas, Marlowe, Shakespeare, John Webster, Sir Thomas Browne, Browning, and kindred spirits.

Eddison sets great store by weaving together and playing variants on memorable phrases. From literally hundreds, one example: "This was Gaslark's bane, whose enterprises of such pitch and moment have ended thus, in a kind of nothing." The "enterprises ... moment" phrase is from Hamlet's best-known soliloquy, while "a kind of nothing" is from Webster's play The Duchess of Malfi, grotesque and horrific forebear of the generally feeble Gothic novel.
Throughout his life, Eddison was haunted by this drama with its pessimism, contempt for general humanity, and concern for Renaissance princes who set no limits to their ambitions or hates. Two of the last three chapters of his last complete novel are titled "In What a Shadow" and "Deep Pit of Darkness" from Webster's "In what a shadow or deep pit of darkness doth womanish and fearful mankind live!"

The Worm has no single, logical rationale, either fantasy or science-fiction. It is instead a composite. But since Eddison has taste and good judgment, his composite has style, inner consistency, and the ring of truth. Despite its leisurely telling, the story maintains a varied suspense and teems with inventions: sweating sorceries, moving mythic themes, wondrous landscapes, strong clashes of character, a sand sea with tides, flying serpents, hippocriiff rides, swashing sword-fights, an evil king who when he dies is always revived in another body, mantichores that put all the great apes of fiction to shame, dire comets, and many other "rare and remarkable occurants and observacions."

It is aristocratic melodrama, which pits not so much good against evil, as warlike and ambitious princes who are honorable against their opposite numbers who are dishonorable in varying degrees; but both sorts live for action "that shall embroil and astonish the world"—which makes me think of Ferdinand's dying lines in The Duchess: "I shall vault credit and affect high pleasures beyond death."

The men are as proud of their beauty and glamor as the men are of their feats of derring-do: Queen Prezmyra whispers to her nurse, "I would not wish to die. The world without me would be summer without roses. Carcë without me should be a night without the star-shine." Finally there is mention made by King Jus of "the fabled land of Zimiamvia. Is that true, thickest thou, that no mortal foot may tread it, but the blessed souls do inhabit it of the dead that be departed, even they that were great upon earth and did great deeds when they were living, that scorned not earth and the delights and glories thereof, and yet did justly and were not dastards nor yet oppressors?"

The trilogy's two other volumes, superficially more
adult, explore deeply and in a way cannibalize the ideas set forth in the last paragraph. For chapters a poetico-philosophic searchlight is turned on concepts glimpsed by lightning flashes in The Worm as they sprang from Eddison’s subconscious. It turns out that aristocratic man’s genius is to create, exercise power, and love and guard beauty—he is Zeus—while aristocratic woman’s is to be the world’s supreme beauty and glamor—she is Aphrodite (and Sappho the Earth’s most significant poet). Thus Eddison invented for himself a poetic religion, much as Robert Graves has done with his White or Triple Goddess. It is a religion that finds life’s meaning solely in its moments of mastery and beauty, a pagan credo where evil is simply power as yet unmastered by Zeus, and where the preferred social philosophy is romantic, individualistic, yet highly reactionary!

This metaphysical mulling is accomplished in the course of a series of wars, intrigues, and romances in Zimiamvia, which turns out to be a land not more wonderful than that of The Worm, but far closer to the world we know—a world much like that of the Italian city-states at the time of Machiavelli and the Borgias. The magic becomes minor, the heroes and villains more alike, descriptions yet more precise and gemlike, but inventiveness fades. One ends agreeing regretfully with Jus, "I had rather row on Moonmere under the stars of a summer’s night, than be a king of all the land of Zimiamvia."

II


A writing demon gripped him for ten years. Then he shot himself.

A short career, yet in little more time Burroughs did all his real writing. The first Tarzan book was published in 1912, the tenth (and last of the good ones) in 1924. All the best Mars and Pellucidar stories were written during the same period and also the outstanding singles such as *The Land That Time Forgot*. He was thirty-seven when his writing demon possessed him. After it left him he spent twenty-six more years imitating himself, sometimes almost humorously, and managing the Tarzan empire.

Ten to a dozen years is all any man can stand of chain-taking gutsy, far-out, all-out typewriter trips through the bloody opium jungle and harsh hashish wilderness of Burroughs-Howard fantasy.

Howard had a murkier mind than Burroughs, but ten times the poetry.

Among some of those hipped on heroic fantasy, it has been an aesthetic posture to rate Howard’s two early King Kull stories over his seventeen Conan tales. Now there have been discovered and printed here—nine for the first time—ten more Kull stories, seven completed by Howard himself. They range from lean and intense legends such as “exile of Atlantis” to grotesque metaphysical adventures such as “Skull of Silence,” where positives become negatives (sound is the absence of silence, being is the absence of nothingness) and the new positives—silence and nothingness—threaten to engulf the universe.

Kull was an Atlantean savage who made himself king of ancient Valusia, thereafter brooding fascinated over the beauty and degeneracy of his world and occasionally rising in red wrath to destroy the evil he found in it.

But Kull was a flop at selling to *Weird Tales*. So Howard destroyed the Valusian world in a cataclysm and from its remnants built the far less shadowy, realer, richer, and more salable world of the Hyborian Age. The Atlanteans survive as the still savage Cimmerians, so Conan of Cimmeria is essentially a new Kull. Gone are the puzzled brooding, the metaphysical preoccupations, the Macbeth figure of the stalwart,
simple soldier encountering mystery and evil. Instead we have a clear-headed chaser of wealth, women, and adventure, a superman who loves fighting, yet sticks to a decent code, a goodhearted thief and killer who shows wisdom, broad-mindedness, and responsibility when he achieves power.

The best Conan stories are Howard's best. "The People of the Black Circle" can be compared without straining to the melodramas of Marlowe. It has stirring language, strong motives, awesome sorcerers, brilliant magical devices, sympathetic hero-villains, and a Conan subdued enough to make the outcome interesting. Same goes for "Beyond the Black River," and to a lesser degree, "The Phoenix on the Sword," *Conan the Conqueror*, etc.

The worst Conan stories—"The Slithering Shadow," "Red Nails," and "The Jewels of Gwahlor"—are repetitious and childish, a self-vitiating brew of pseudo-science, stage illusions, and the "genuine" supernatural, though a furious effort is made to hold the interest with exotic maniacs and hopheads sneaking through endless corridors, Lovecraftian monsters ravaging, girls whipping girls, scenes of butcher-shop carnage, and the like.

Howard's best prose: (while a king dies) "Outside, the moan of the tortured thousands shuddered up to the stars which crusted the sweating Vendhyan night, and the conches bellowed like oxen in pain"; (spoken by a demon to a man about to die) "But a bat has flown over the Mountains of the Dead and drawn your image in blood on the white tiger's hide that hangs before the long hut where sleep the Four Brothers of the Night. The great serpent coils about their feet and the stars burn like fireflies in their hair."

Howard's worst prose is like a raving newspaper editorial: (of a girl being raped by a monster) "All the obscenity and salacious infamy spawned in the muck of the abysmal pits of Life seemed to drown her in seas of cosmic filth."

Despite Conan's relative mental health, there is about the stories a persistent xenophobia, an over-preoccupation with violence, and a gloomy conviction (beautifully put) of the ultimate failure of man's best
efforts toward peace: "Barbarism is the natural state of mankind. Civilization is unnatural. It is a whim of circumstance. And barbarism must always ultimately triumph." (Civilization is the absence of barbarism.) In short, an Aryan-Anglo-American conviction that most of the rest of the world is persistently evil and utterly untrustworthy.

Finally, for Howard himself, Conan went away and the puzzledly brooding Kull returned in one of his sick moods, and with him the dreadfully attractive, positive nothingness, and the gun that had shot at imaginary enemies was turned on the author.

Some say, "Enjoy the Conan yarns as hot-blooded, heroic escape-fiction. Why get serious about them?" Nonsense! Anything I like as well as I do some of the Conan stories, I do the courtesy of taking seriously when I write about it.

These five Conan novels are number one, four, five, six, and seven of the saga. With brooding covers by Frank Frazetta, they and King Kull are an outstanding buy. Two and three should contain six more all-Howard Conan tales, including the excellent "Black Colossus" and "Queen of the Black Coast."
CAT'S CRADLE

"But surely you of all people, Mr. Hunter, ought to believe in flying saucers," the Sexy New Neighbor said, gulping her brandy and keeping a long-eyelashed gimlet eye on the kitten Psycho, who had shown great interest in her wide-meshed pink net stockings. "Because for the last twenty-five years the saucer people have been telepathically giving all you science-fiction writers the ideas for all your stories, to prepare us humans for the day when they openly walk among us."

Old Horsemeat, known to human beings and other non-felines as Mr. Harry Hunter, muttered, "Or wriggle," and writhed his long frame a little and thrust forward his ill-shaven jaw and decanted some brandy into it, preparatory to further speech.

Kitty-Come-Here (Mrs. Helen Hunter to noncats), who had invited the New Neighbor over because Old Horsemeat was easiest to live with when he had a reasonable supply of sexy women around to lecture to on science and science-fiction and everything else, decided she had made an awful mistake.

Gummitch, surveying the scene with cool feline unconcern from his hair-hatched, black velvet cushion-throne in front of the fireplace, idly esped the hate-cat waves emanating from the Sexy New Neighbor and reminded himself to explain to Psycho soon that Legs, Especially Stockinged Female Ones, Are Not For Climbing.

Old Horsemeat splashed brandy in his own and the Sexy New Neighbor's goblets, frowned fiendishly, and said (while Kitty-Come-Here held her breath), "You know, Miss Neering, you are the first person—outside of Helen
and, of course, the cats—to penetrate my secret. It’s absolutely true that I regularly discuss science-fiction with a little old green man with a white beard who hails from Arided. We do it almost every other night in the backyard at about three A.M. He gives me the office—the signal, that is—by tapping on our bedroom window with his third tentacle, the one that extends to twenty-seven feet. He passes me along some of the damnedest ideas. One was cat-burglary—that twenty-seven-foot tentacle. Not stealing cats, of course (excuse me, Gummitch), but second-floor stuff like jewels and furs and black leather underwear. The old Aridedan’s pretty kinky. His latest brain wave is how we could poison everybody not smart enough to drink and cook with sparkling water, by sprinkling a couple of ounces of plutonium hexafluoride in the city reservoir. His spaceship runs on P-hexy, so he’s got lots of the stuff.”

“He’s testing your humanitarianism,” the New Neighbor asserted confidently, sprawling her mini-skirted frame along the cat-scarred couch toward Old Horsemeat, though not with quite the enthusiasm and intense interest one might have expected. Most saucer addicts and even dabblers do not enjoy having the saucer scene stolen from them by squares—which includes all science-fiction writers, make no mistake.

“Yeah, I think you got it,” Old Horsemeat agreed, absently dropping his hand to the New Neighbor’s back and brushing it idly. It felt nice, but a little scaly. “That must be why he started putting up objections as soon as I said, ‘Let’s do it tonight.’”

“You were testing his humanitarianism,” the Sexy New Neighbor opined wisely, meanwhile luxuriating her shoulders, making what she thought were kitten noises, and taking a large sip of her brandy—no mean tally of simultaneous actions.

“Uh-uh,” Old Horsemeat denied. “We got to solve the population explosion somehow. Which with skins like yours around is a toughie.”

“We’ve always got the pill,” she countered. “I’m speaking hypothetically.”
“The pill’ll never be an all-over answer,” Old Horsemeat replied darkly. “People get absentminded with boredom or excitement. Or they want buckets of kids to boost their egos or hold them together or get relief money. Or else they want to plain suffer for sex—the insufferable puritans.”

Kitty-Come-Here sighed with relief, though keeping a watchful eye on exactly how far Old Horsemeat’s idle brushing went. She took advantage of the interlude to snatch up Psycho exactly a quarter second before the kitten launched an all-out assault along the Sexy New Neighbor by way of the delectable long pink ratlines, which looked created to receive the tug of tiny claws.

Gummitch lowered his chin to his outstretched forelegs and regarded the scene with relaxed, utter boredom—which is a very beautiful expression so long as it is on the face of a mature cat.

Old Horsemeat got around to telling how the best thing about the little old green man was that he could do errorless final typing, a labor he performed in exchange for instruction in the art of writing science-fiction, so that he would be able to clean up when he got back to Arided, top star in the Northern Cross.

The Sexy New Neighbor knew when she was being had, or decided it was time to show she knew so, for she suddenly straightened up toward the end of the couch away from Old Horsemeat and gazing at the twisting puff of gray fur in the flexible cage of Helen Hunter’s fingers, asked somewhat loadedly, “Why do you call him Psycho?”

“Her,” Kitty-Come-Here corrected. “Yes, you can tell even at two months. She doesn’t have the two little bumps. See? About the name, she actually was psycho at first, absolute off her cat rocker. Gummitch led us to her. Some dear little children I’d enjoy tying up by their thumbs and lashing with a dog whip had shut her up for a day or so in a fuse box after petting her half to death. She was utterly kitten crackers the first two days after we rescued her, worse than a juvenile delinquent after a police storm. She’d hide in the television set and then scream, or purr and bite
you. But then Harry hypnotized her with Gummitch’s help and she snapped out of it and became almost too kitten-normal.”

“What do you mean with Gummitch’s help?” Old Horsemeat objected. “All by myself I shut off all the lights but one candle, and then I did the usual passes and strokings. You know.” He had planned to demonstrate them on the Sexy New Neighbor, but then realized she was somewhat too big to be a convincing analogue of a kitten and, besides, she was now too far away to make the action seem unpremeditated.

“Soon as the kitten was in a light trance,” he continued, “I told her about the Bill of Rights and how in this house it applies to cats even more than it does to talking, atom-bombmaking simians. Maybe that was a little over her head at the time—for instance, cats bear arms naturally and seldom have soldiers quartered on them—but I did convince her that, one, all children belong to an alien, utterly evil species, and that, two, decent relations based on full equality are possible between cat and man, no matter what goes on in furriers and pounders.”

The Sexy New Neighbor drew herself together around her brandy goblet. For when Old Horsemeat ended his ravings, Kitty-Come-Here merely nodded solemnly once and Gummitch turned on her a sinister gaze. She felt she had strayed into the old witch-house of a cat-centered Charles Addams family.

Psycho chose that moment to erupt from her finger-cage, flash like a gray streak past the Sexy New Neighbor, who dodged unnecessarily but quite understandably, and executed an almost incredible vertical leap, which ended with a soft landing on the mantelpiece, where she began coolly to wash herself.

“Did I remember to tell you cats can levitate?” Old Horsemeat demanded of the visitor. “Sure they can, all of them. But they hide it from us. They pretend it’s just jumping. What a laugh! I think they all migrated here circa Four thousand B.C. from a high-gravity witch-planet. My old Aridedan’s got a green cat thin as string beans that
can jump over houses. Second- and third-story windows open even an inch are a cinch for him. He's kinky about women. He likes to crawl into bed with them, very softly. Then he slowly edges up to them under the sheets. His fur is silky as chinchilla. Then he bites them in the crotch."

The Sexy New Neighbor remembered she had to work tomorrow, gulped her nightcap, and somewhat dubiously accepted Old Horsemate's offer to see her home next door.

She pointed at a sleeve-like arrangement in the bottom of the window next to the front door.

"What's that?" she asked.

"The cat door," Old Horsemate told her. "You think this house is a prison?"

She concealed a shudder. Old Horsemate didn't notice it and continued blithely, or did notice it and continued fiendishly as he swung open the human's door with a grandiose, loose-armed sweep and a bow. "Besides levitation and a lot of other secret powers, cats are the next brainiest animals to man—or maybe brainier and hide it—as is proven by their longevity. A cat can live twenty years, far and away the longest life-span for an animal anywhere near as small. And if you measure life-span by total lifetime heartbeats for a maximum-age animal, the cat comes at the top of the list after man—1,350,000,000 heartbeats, which is 150,000,000 more than the Methuselah of elephants. I'm sure that on most worlds the felines rather than the simians are the chief gnosphoric family—that's a word I've just invented meaning wisdom-bearing. What's more, Miss Neering, or Eloise, if I may presume on an evening's conviviality . . ."

As he spoke, Old Horsemate, reeling only a little, guided Miss Neering down the front steps, keeping a firm grip on her left upper arm while she kept an even firmer grip on the banister. Now as he steered her a weaving course across the lawns and as he shifted his subject matter from the felinocentric to the personal, his voice changed from oratorical to intimate and faded out.

Kitty-Come-Home overlooked the seeing-home operation from the front porch, where she had joined Gummitch
for a breath of fresh late-summer air and a shower of moonlight. When Old Horsemeat returned, which was very soon, he walked in past them without a look or a word, poured himself a very large brandy, drank half of it down, and when the door had closed behind his cat and wife, exploded with, “God deliver me from that incredible kook! Not only a saucer nut, but she believes Bacon wrote Shakespeare—while riding in a saucer over New Atlantis, I suppose. It’s the invariable sign of the crackpot—they believe not just some but all of the guff. Not only saucers and Bacon, but vegetarianism, reincarnation, compost farming, pyramidology, Hollow Earth, instant wisdom through psychedelic drugs, gut-level thinking smarter than Einstein’s induced by bongo drums, the whole lot, besides being unalterably opposed to every chemical and engineering discovery that’s holding our collapsing civilization together. Did you notice how she didn’t turn a hair when I mentioned plutonium in the drinking water, but went pale when I added fluoride? What an ignorant bitch!”

And with that he snatched up Psycho, hurled himself back into the armchair beside which he’d just very carefully set his glass, and began to croon at the kitten, holding it to his chest and rocking a little, as if only that behavior could preserve his sanity. The kitten fought wildly for a moment, then quieted.

“Uh-huh,” Kitty-Come-Here agreed with her husband, but without any great vehemence. She knew the habit husbands have of berating to their wives any woman to whom they are sexually attracted. She yawned. “I’m going to bed,” she said, moving about turning out lights.

“Leave on that Tensor lamp across from me,” Old Horsemeat said. “I’ve got to hypnotize Psycho first, and it’ll do for a candle. That kooky woman got her all roiled up. My God, Helen, don’t you realize it’s cult-crazy people like her who are trying to kill science and hurry us into a new dark age?”

Kitty-Come-Here stopped, thought for a while, and then said judiciously, “I wouldn’t worry about Miss Neering, Harry. I think her crackpot delusions are very superficial.
Underneath she's much more interested in small, deep saucers of brandy than the flying kind, and in tall, sexy Earthmen rather than little old green men and kinky spider-cats from outer space.” She started up the stairs.

Old Horsemeat shrugged. Rhythmically stroking Psycho, he began to croon in deep winning tones, “You're getting sleepy, little cat, very sleepy. You can hardly hold your head up. You're getting sleepier—”

Psycho started wriggling.

Kitty-Come-Here stopped on the sixth step and looked back at Old Horsemeat. “I am going to bed,” she repeated, “You can hypnotize Psycho all night. Or read Herman Hesse. Or get dead drunk and pass out on the floor. Nobody cares. This is Liberty Hall. But—” A new and somewhat knifelike tone came into her voice. “But—and I want you to listen to this, Gummitch—”

The big cat lifted his head from where he lay again on his throne and looked straight at Kitty-Come-Here.

“But,” she continued, the word now a small explosion, “if that big brutal Svengali over there merely tries to stir out of this house tonight in the direction of Miss Neering's, say on the excuse of returning that kooky slut her compact and handkerchief—oh, we saw him shove them down in the crack of the couch, didn't we, Gummitch, when he thought neither of us would notice?—well, then you bite him, Gummitch, you bite him good and hard. And if he still persists, you come upstairs and bite me until I'm wide awake and insane with anger.”

Gummitch dropped his head again with the effect of a curt nod of affirmation. Old Horsemeat did not deign to reply. Kitty-Come-Here's footsteps proceeded upward and died out down the hall.

The living room was eerie with its one small cone of bright light in the great mass of semidarkness. Old Horsemeat chanted rumblingly, “You’re getting sleepier and (yawn) sleepier, little cat. You can hardly hold your eyes open. . . .”

Psycho began another bout of wriggling. Gummitch
lifted his head again and eyed her with peculiar cat-to-kitten fierceness. Psycho quieted once more.

“You’re getting still sleepier, little cat,” Old Horsemeat rumbled on. “Every little cat muscle in you is relaxing (yawn) until you’re limp as a dishrag. Now your eyes are completely closed. Your head is down. You’re asleep, little cat, you’re a . . .”

The hypnotism worked. Old Horsemeat’s head sank back, his eyes closed fully, and his rumbling changed into a gentle snore.

Eyes bright as diamonds, Psycho held absolutely still in the big, limp hands.

For twenty seconds the comfortable, old living room was quiet as a crypt, except for the gentle snoring.

Psycho eased from between the hands, flowed down Old Horsemeat’s trousered thigh, and landed beside Gummitch like a puff of coherent smoke.

Without a word or a look, Gummitch turned, made a short run past the Tensor’s bright cone, and sprang through the cat door. Psycho swiftly followed, executing a comically frantic twist and a clawing pull midway.

They stood side by side at the top of the front porch steps. The faintly cool yet balmy night was alive (for cats) with many sounds, from the soft panting of a big dog in the high-fenced yard beyond Miss Neering’s place to the stumbling walk of a nearby beetle over crisp, fallen leaves. Moonlight sprinkled down on them, a palpable silver rain. And there were cat-multitudinous sights (a many-layered world of sharp shadows) and scents and the pressure of a faint breeze on whiskers and fur, and the upward thrust of painted old wood under paw-pads.

Tonight this shadowy, silvery, murmurry world was spiced with excitement and carried also a special call, yearning, imperious, and enravishing.

Gummitch made his head into a compass and slowly turned it this way and that, hunting the vector of the call. Finally a needle of nerves stopped rocking. His head and eyes were directed at the hedge in front of Miss Neering’s place. Again without word or sidewise look, he trotted
in that direction with Psycho loping close at his right side, head level with the big cat's shoulder.

A fixed male cat, the Mad Eunuch, in whom neutering had produced a weird belligerence and with whom Gummitch had had many famous fights, came tracking after them as they reached the hedge and went slinking along it. But Gummitch paid the new and more careless paw-paddings no attention—even Psycho did no more than stiffen her silvery fur—and for once the Mad Eunuch did not run amok, only followed two dozen cat paces behind.

There also fell into line, still farther back, an almost skeletally gaunt alley cat, whom Old Horsemeat had nicknamed the Flying Dutchman for his raggedy black, dirty-white, and reddish fur and his habit of approaching tremblingly and with infinite caution the Hunter back door and then tearing off in mad panic if someone came out or even if footsteps sounded too loudly inside. Gummitch himself had never been able to contact this unhappy hobo cat, for whom he felt considerable sympathy because of his own background as a starved and orphaned kitten. If he hadn't been rescued by Old Horsemeat and Kitty-Come-Here—and hadn't died—he might well have become such a dismal bindlestiff.

As the little cat cortege passed the hedge and started along the high fence beyond it, the big dog began to bark hysterically. But the cats ignored this utterly, except that Psycho jumped over Gummitch, sudden as an electric shock, light and noiseless as a feather, and then proceeded along as if nothing had happened and as if her courage had never faltered, except that now she was on the bigger cat's larboard instead of starboard side.

Nor, across the street and moving in the same direction, did the big sleek black male and his silvery tiger consort take any note of the sudden torrent of canine noise.

Nor did even the Flying Dutchman do more than tremble a little harder as he single-footed forward. Evidently the dog found something eerie in this utter lack of reaction from cats to his most horrible threats, for his barking suddenly became more whimpering than hysterical and faded.
down abruptly as he fled to the protection of his porch and magic doormat.

Ahead was a small park with a grove of trees in its center, all balmy in the moonlight. It was there that Gummitch's compass led them—and not Gummitch's alone, for now it was clear that there was a trickling of cats from all the streets around—tabbies, Persians, Siamese, tiger and barred, alley, house, and store—and all silently and unconflictingly headed for the grove in the park.

A cop on his beat would surely have noticed them. But the two cruising by in their squad car could not see low-striding cats. In fact, they were becoming unable to see nighttime human pedestrians, except as potential rioters, thieves, looters, delinquents, and cop-killers.

An old drunk crouching away almost cat-low from the police headlights did notice the streaming cats and he studied them blinkingly, long after the police car was gone. Muzzily the thought came to him that a world with sights as strange as this might still be worth living in—or perhaps it was only that the delay lowered the alcohol content of his blood—at any rate, the hazy idea of suicide sank back down into his subconscious, like miasma into a marsh, and he turned back toward Skid Row from the street that led toward the river.

A girl saw the cats, though her boyfriend didn’t. He was intent only on her. Arms around each other, they were headed toward the grove.

She thought the cats were kind of beautiful, but they spooked her.

So she said, “Honey, I’ve changed my mind. Like let’s go to my place like we planned.”

He said, “But, honey, you just said you were afraid your folks—”

She said, “I just remembered they’re sure to be away all night. They always get stoned and pass out when they go to the Wilsons’.”

He said, “I don’t know, honey, it doesn’t sound too safe to me.”

She said, “Are you scared, honey?”
He said, "Of course not. But the way you keep changing your mind is driving me out of my gourd."

She said, "Please, honey, I'd rather. And it'll be nicer."

He said fondly, "You're a freak, honey, a complete freak."

She said, "Besides, I'd get uptight with all these cats watching us."

He said, noting them belatedly, "Crazy. Must be Bast-worship night. Luna in Leo. Cats high and doing their God-thing. Make my nose run—not their fault, just allergy. OK, OK, honey. Anything you say."

As the lovers turned back, the cats flowed across the springy turf, their varicolored fur all bright platinum to gleaming obsidian in the moonlight, no spectral colors at all. As their first ranks entered the grove, there was a faint crackling of fallen leaves, and the platinum-obsidian became a moving variation of brightness in the moon-dapple everywhere.

No, not quite everywhere. Near the center of the grove, on the side away from the moon, was an ellipse of unbroken blackness a little more than twenty feet long.

This shadow was cast by a bulge-centered, flattish, circular object poised in the treetops exactly over the small glade in the middle of the grove. At first glance it would have seemed to rest on the branches all around. But then it would have been seen that the branches up there were hardly more than twigs, not strong enough to support such an object even if formed of thinnest aluminum. And in any case the twigs were not bent particularly downward. It would have become clear that the object, which resembled two huge saucers clapped together rim to rim, merely rested among the slim branches, held up by some invisible power of its own.

The cats filled the grove, crowding around the black ellipse, but none entering it, as if it were a black abyss and they all nosing at its brim.

A bough creaked and a large, slim shape dropped down to crouch effortlessly in a moon-pied, wide crotch midway between the circular vehicle and the ground. All
the cats looked up, their eyes close-paired moonstones or pearls baroque with bulging, vertical black streaks.

"'Allo, li'l fren's," a soft yet vibrant voice called down. "I'm glad many of you came tonight, for I've news. May be a relief to some, and just may make a few sad for a while. But not to worry, any of you."

The accent of the voice was very strange and the tone stranger. If one can imagine the purring of a cat, or a tiger, shaped to human speech, shaped to English, one gets an approximation.

Stranger still perhaps, though most appropriate, all the cats below had begun to purr like sleepy beehives the instant the shape had dropped to the crotch.

"You 'ave a good week, li'l sneakers?" the voice continued in a note of affectionate badinage. "Meat, clear water, milk? The monkeys decent to you?"

The purring continued to rise like a low-pitched note, sounded pianissimo, in an orchestra of cellos or viola da gambas. But here and there it changed to low wailings and mewings.

"Tha's bad. Tha's 'bominable. We'll kill us some nice people, eh? Kill us some hippies. Kill us some cops."

Gradually the shape became clearer in the moon-dapple. Imagine a figure midway between that of a leopard, a large cheetah, and a slender and supple young woman covered with short fur, and one gets an approximation. It crouched a little more like a young woman than a feline, but the hand by which it steadied itself had dark pads and long claws sharply curved at their tips. The femininity was definite. It was beautiful.

Suddenly it leaped forward out of moon-dapple into darkness and landed with hardly a sound in the center of the elliptical shadow. There it stretched prone, almost invisible except for the low silhouette it made with tufted ears and slowly switching tail, a slim recumbent sphinx. After a while there was the faintest glint of fur and claw and the glow of eyes whose pupils were like black flowers with five narrow petals tapering to points.
“Come on. Come to me,” the voice purred. “Don’ be scared.”

There was a wait. Then Gummitch strode into the ellipse, his head high, his fur flat. Psycho moved anxiously and strained forward, but did not follow. The sphinx reached out a slim paw to catch Gummitch up, but instead of making his body yielding he stood with four legs straight and firmly planted, and she contented herself with softly tickling his chest and stroking his back, her claws retracted. He supplied himself without becoming limp and he twisted his neck appreciatively.

“I know you,” she crooned, “you’re the cool one. What is it you’re called? Oh yes, of course, Goomitch—what a name! Trust the monkeys to think up one like that, bad as their language, which to tell the truth, Goomitch, I’d never have bothered to learn except I was bored and wanted to make familiar noises at you and your fren’s. Oh, they’re not all fren’s, eh? Well, it’s the same with my people.

“But how about it, Goomitch, shall we get rid of the monkeys and put you cats in charge around here? Like it should be. Except you’re all pretty little.

“What’s that you say? There are big cats across the waters? Bigger even than me? Amazing!—I’ll have to investigate if I still got the time.

“They’re here too? In a big park? And you’ve seen them? Actually seen them yourself? Old Horsemeat took, no . . . smooled you in under his coat? What kind of a monkey name is Old Horsemeat? Oh I see, it’s your name for him, from what he feeds you.

“You tried to talk to the big cats, but they couldn’t understand you? They were . . . stupid? That doesn’t make sense. You know what, Goomitch, I don’ think you and your fren’s are related to them at all. I think you’re all dwarf jester-cats and playcats lef’ behind when some ship of my people made a landing here millennia ago. Your cats’ cradle is in the stars, maybe. Anyhow, you should come to my planet! There you’d find all the cats as much smarter than you as you’re smarter than mice.
“You don’ think mice and rats are so stupid? Well ... butterflies then, gol’fish.
“‘The big cats are dangerous? Now you’re talking like a monkey. They keep them behind bars? In cages? That’s indecent! That’s a crime against the universe! The monkeys should be destroyed, if only for aest’etic reasons. I think I’ll kill as many of them as I can before I go.
“‘You wouldn’t like that? What kind of a cat are you, Goomitch? You’ve got a slave mentality! What do your fren’s say?’

The slim sphinx lifted her magnificent head, tufted ears peaked, fur bristling, long whiskers a-twitch, lips drawn back from fangs, five-petaled eyes flashing.

The purring round about increased. The cats pushed closer inward, though still none of them besides Gummitch ventured from the moon-dappled space into the black ellipse. The circle of their small eyes gleamed like rosaries of pearls.

Slowly swiveling her head, the sphinx asked clearly, thrice, “Should I kill the monkeys?”

There were mewings, hissing, and wails, though the purring still predominated.

The black, five-pointed stars of the sphinx’s pupils contracted and she looked upward a little and held very still, as if listening to the inaudible, and dissecting and numerating it.

At last she dropped her head and said, “Ffft! They’re slaves too, except for a few lonelies and blood-mads and some that, excuse my bad manners, aren’t very right in their heads. I should have expected they were all cowards, when only one came when I called.” Again she lifted her head. “Won’ some more of you come to me, please? Won’ jus’ one?

“What’s that, Goomitch? You’re not a slave? You live with the monkeys as an equal? No, that can’t be. Someone’s—how do you say?—sold you a bill of goods.

“No, not even with one monkey is it possible. Monkeys are monkeys, always.

“I don’ quite ... Yes. Yes. Oh, now I understand.
You think you control what your monkey does, or at least have fifty percent control? That’s what every slave believes . . . when times are good. But when times are bad, when there’s hunger, something stolen, something broken, a child scratched, then’s the moment of truth. ’Allo, who’s this?”

The sphinx’s gaze went beyond Gummititch. Trembling in every emaciated member, and putting one shaking foot at a time in front of the next ahead, as if he were walking a tight wire, the Flying Dutchman had stepped across the boundary of darkness. His ears were laid back, his big-pupiled, protuberant eyes stared, his ragged hair was irregularly erected, he panted, showing his yellow fangs, one of which was broken, and his slack, long, pale pink and black tongue lolled out the side of his mouth.

Finally he came within the sphinx’s reach and stopped, as if he had expended all his courage and energy in the act of a lifetime. He swayed and almost fell over.

Far more slowly, tentatively, and gently than she had with Gummititch, the sphinx crept out a paw and touched him thistledown lightly. As she feather-stroked him, he responded more swiftly and completely than Gummititch had and soon collapsed into the padded, fur-edged hand. She carefully lifted him and held him lightly against her breast.

“There, there, Flyin’ Dushman,” she crooned. “My, my, oh yes, but you’ve had a hard life. But you never been behind bars. You never los’ your bravery.” She looked up. “What’s that you’re askin’, Goomitch? Oh, you noticed my ‘if I still got the time’ and ‘before I go.’ You got a mind like a detective. Well, it’s true what you guessed. Listen to me, all of you! My subetheric SOS—after the explosion of the . . . Sabertooth, you’d say, with only me outboard—finally got noticed and a star-drive ship, bound from Alpha Libra 4 to the Pleiades, is picking me up at dawn at the top of your ionosphere about your South Pole.”

The purring of almost all the cats turned to a subdued caterwauling and to whimpering mews.

“Tha’s nice,” the sphinx said. “I’m glad you’re sorry a
little. I mus' say I'm a li'1l sorry too, jus' on your account, though I'll be glad to leave monkeyland!

"One thing more." With a final caress, she set the Flying Dutchman down as far away from her as Gummitch stood. The hobo cat reeled a little but then, although trembling once more, got his balance. "I 'ave space for three or four of you aboard. Who wants to come?"

The purring recommenced, became a great soft vibration. All the cats in the moonlight strained forward one more time, yet not one entered the inky ellipse.

"'Ow about you, Goomitch?" the sphinx asked winningly. "You come with me, eh?"

From the edge of the ellipse, Psycho mewed anxiously. Gummitch stared the sphinx straight in the eyes. Then without changing his gaze, he deliberately moved backward half the length of his body.

At the same time the Flying Dutchman gave a rasping, ragged "Phrrrt!" like an aged drunk trying to baby talk, and staggered forward. The sphinx caught him up again and said tenderly, laughing at herself, "So you's all I get, you old wreck, you ancient mariner. I bet you and your parasites burn out my demicrobing machine!"

Then she looked up. "Remember me," she said, impassive-faced. "Tell your kittens about me. Life's not so bad, here and now, you think. A few of you, like Goomitch, even dream of an impossible cat-man symbiosis. But the times will come again, even here, when you're hunted down as witch-things, yes, hunted for food. Remember me. And then when your day comes, as it will, put down the monkeys without mercy. And when you finally get the star-drive, come visit me at the Pleiades. Ask at any inhabited planet in the cluster. Remember."

When Kitty-Come-Here, clear-eyed, primped, and lace-robed, came briskly downstairs the next morning, Old Horsemeat was still asleep, pain-faced, with Psycho in his lap, while Gummitch was coiled on his cushion. As she went around to whir drapes apart and let in blasts of sunlight, the two cats wakened. Gummitch mewed a casual "Good morning," and started toward the kitchen. Psycho followed him.
Old Horsemeat's eyes slowly came ungummed. Then he gaze a sizable start. "O my God, Helen," he said, "easy on that light. Why didn't you make me go upstairs to bed? I'm so stiff I know I'm going to break something unkinking."

"Up to bed?" she asked in mock amazement, whirring another set of drapes apart. "Why, I was letting you have your night on the tiles, and it's your own fault if you were too unenterprising to do anything but pass out and get creaky-jointed. For that matter I gave all three of you your night on the tiles, and none of you seems to have taken advantage. What stay-by-the-fires!"

"There wasn't any fire," Old Horsemeat complained morosely as he gingerly worked with his fingers at his neck and the small of his back. "In fact, it's still damn chilly, you would-be murderess."

Next door Eloise Neering woke with the thought, "That big, old, conceited lecher and his brunette Lucille-Ball wife! What a scene! And all those crazy cats!"
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