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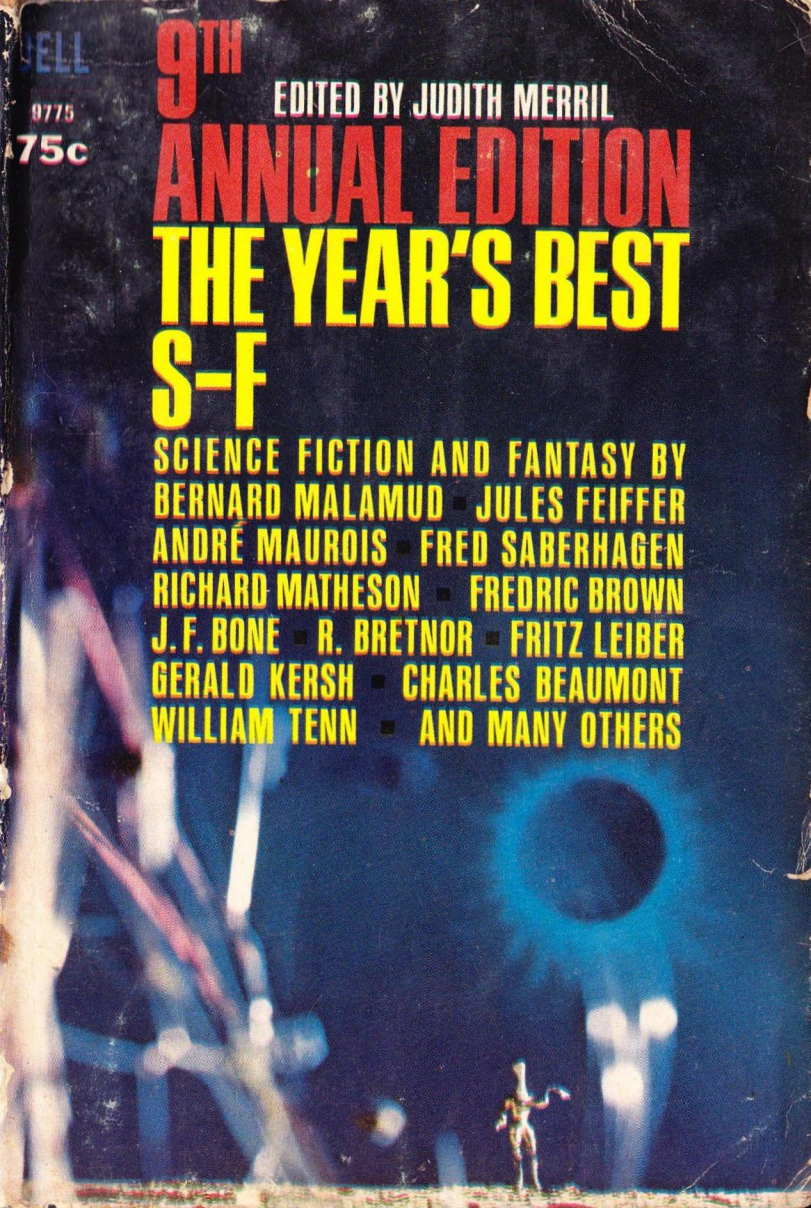
EDITED BY JUDITH MERRIL

ANNUAL EDITION

THE YEAR'S BEST

S-F

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY BY  
BERNARD MALAMUD ■ JULES FEIFFER  
ANDRÉ MAUROIS ■ FRED SABERHAGEN  
RICHARD MATHESON ■ FREDRIC BROWN  
J. F. BONE ■ R. BRETNOR ■ FRITZ LEIBER  
GERALD KERSH ■ CHARLES BEAUMONT  
WILLIAM TENN ■ AND MANY OTHERS





# ULTIMATE POSSIBILITIES

What you read about in today's newspapers—the space race, alien life, the population explosion, doomsday, genetic control, automation, psychochemicals, humanics, ESP—were once just ultimate possibilities. Now their reality or near-reality has forced creative imaginations to project other ultimate possibilities. Here are twenty-eight new and wildly unconventional projections into the future from twenty-eight of the most inventive writers in the world.

**"WILD-EYED STUFF"**

—San Francisco Chronicle

100

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**9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL EDITION**  
**THE YEAR'S BEST S-F**

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**Edited by JUDITH MERRIL**

**A DELL BOOK**

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1963 was the year of the first rocket probe to Venus and the year in which Medgar Evers and John F. Kennedy were shot to death in the streets of American cities. A complex new electronic brain began translating Chinese, and the proud new atomic submarine, Thresher, sank with more than two hundred men on board.

By the time you read this, the record on 1964 will be almost or altogether complete—and we may confidently expect even more contradictions and internal frictions: not in any one country, or in any one field of endeavor, or on any particular economic or social level, religious or political grouping, but within almost all such groups, and between many of them.

There has probably never been so much disagreement among respectable people about morals; among educators about schooling and parents about child rearing; among scientists about basic theories or engineers about specific applications, or doctors about the causes, treatment, or diagnosis of anything from the common cold to terminal cancer.

And it will not get more settled before it is more upset.

Imaginative literature today is preoccupied—necessarily—with the same stirrings, the same conflicts, visions of greatness and of doom that are acting on the imaginations of philosophers, scientists, teachers, industrial and political leaders, throughout the world.

On the brink of more dramatic physical explorations and discoveries than ever before, we find ourselves facing, first and most urgently, a different kind of great unknown: the nature of cultural man; the odds (no less than life and death) on his ability to coexist with cultures other than his own; or the likelihood that natural man can or will learn to adapt to his own technological culture.

In a forum published last year in *Playboy*, "1984 and Beyond," dozen top writers of science fantasy argued the probable future of man. William Tenn concluded a discussion on future social trends by saying:

"Thoreau wrote over a hundred years ago that 'the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.' Well, the world has changed fantastically since then, but the mass of men still do. History always repeats itself, but on another step of the spiral. We are a wildly imaginative, inordinately idealistic, incredibly persistent, hopelessly naive, incurably corrupt species, and no matter what we do we always seem to wind up somehow or other in the same position on the tree, except that occasionally it's a different tree. Tomorrow we'll be looking for the mechanical bananas in a nickel-plated jungle."

# BERNIE THE FAUST

William Tenn

from *Playboy*

That's what Ricardo calls me. I don't know what I am.

Here I am. I'm sitting in my little nine-by-six office. I'm reading notices of Government-surplus sales. I'm trying to decide where lies a possible buck and where lies nothing but more headaches.

So the office door opens. This little guy with a dirty face, wearing a very dirty, very wrinkled Palm Beach suit, he walks into my office, and he coughs a bit and he says:

"Would you be interested in buying a twenty for a five?"

That was it. I mean, that's all I had to go on.

I looked him over and I said, "*Wha-at?*"

He shuffled his feet and coughed some more. "A twenty," he mumbled. "A twenty for a five."

I made him drop his eyes and stare at his shoes. They were lousy, cracked shoes, lousy and dirty like the rest of him. Every once in a while, his left shoulder hitched up in a kind of tic. "I give you twenty," he explained to his shoes, "and I buy a five from you with it. I wind up with five, you wind up with twenty."

"How did you get into the building?"

"I just came in," he said, a little mixed up.

"You just *came in*." I put a nasty, mimicking note in my voice. "Now you just go right back downstairs and come the hell out. There's a sign in the lobby—NO BEGGARS ALLOWED."

"I'm not begging." He tugged at the bottom of his jacket. It was like a guy trying to straighten out his slept-in pajamas. "I want to sell you something. A twenty for a five. I give you—"

"You want me to call a cop?"

He looked very scared. "No. Why should you call a cop? I haven't done anything to make you call a cop!"

"I'll call a cop in just a second. I'm giving you fair warning. I just phone down to the lobby and they'll have a cop up here fast. They don't want beggars in this building. This is a building for business."

He rubbed his hand against his face, taking a little dirt off, then he rubbed the hand against the lapel of his jacket and left the dirt there. "No deal?" he asked. "A twenty for a five? You buy and sell things. What's the matter with my deal?"

I picked up the phone.

"All right," he said, holding up the streaky palm of his hand. "I'll go. I'll go."

"You better. And shut the door behind you."

"Just in case you change your mind." He reached into his dirty, wrinkled pants pocket and pulled out a card. "You can get in touch with me here. Almost any time during the day."

"Blow," I told him.

He reached over, dropped the card on my desk, on top of all the surplus notices, coughed once or twice, looked at me to see if maybe I was biting. No? No. He trudged out.

I picked the card up between the nails of my thumb and forefinger and started to drop it into the wastebasket.

Then I stopped. A card. It was just so damned out of the ordinary—a slob like that with a card. A card, yet.

For that matter, the whole play was out of the ordinary. I began to be a little sorry I hadn't let him run through the whole thing. After all, what was he trying to do but give me an offbeat sales pitch? I can always use an offbeat sales pitch. I work out of a small office, I buy and sell, but half my stock is good ideas. I'll use ideas, even from a bum.

The card was clean and white, except where the smudge from his fingers made a brown blot. Written across it in a kind of ornate handwriting were the words *Mr. Ogo Eksar*. Under that was the name and the telephone number of a hotel in the Times Square area, not far from my office.



I knew that hotel: not expensive, but not a fleabag either—somewhere just under the middle line.

There was a room number in one corner of the card. I stared at it and I felt kind of funny. I really didn't know.

Although, come to think of it, why couldn't a panhandler be registered at a hotel? "Don't be a snob, Bernie," I told myself.

Twenty for five. What kind of panhandling pitch would follow it? I couldn't get it out of my mind!

There was only one thing to do. Ask somebody about it. Ricardo? A big college professor, after all. One of my best contacts.

He'd thrown a lot my way—a tip on the college building program that was worth a painless fifteen hundred, an office-equipment disposal from the United Nations, stuff like that. And any time I had any questions that needed a college education, he was on tap. All for the couple, three hundred, he got out of me in commissions.

I looked at my watch. Ricardo would be in his office now, marking papers or whatever it is he does there. I dialed his number.

"Ogo Eksar?" he repeated after me. "Sounds like a Finnish name. Or maybe Estonian. From the eastern Baltic, I'd say."

"Forget that part," I said. "This is all I care about." And I told him about the twenty-for-five offer.

He laughed. "That thing again!"

"Some old hustle that the Greeks pulled on the Egyptians?"

"No. Something the Americans pulled. And not a con game. During the Depression, a New York newspaper sent a reporter around the city with a twenty-dollar bill which he offered to sell for exactly one dollar. There were no takers. The point being that even with people out of work and on the verge of starvation, they were so intent on not being suckers that they turned down an easy profit of nineteen-hundred percent."

"Twenty for one? This was twenty for five."

"Oh, well, you know, Bernie, inflation," he said, laughing

again. "And these days it's more likely to be a television show."

"Television? You should have seen the way the guy was dressed!"

"Just an extra, logical touch to make people refuse to take the offer seriously. University research people operate much the same way. A few years back, a group of sociologists began an investigation of the public's reaction to sidewalk solicitors in charity drives. You know, those people who jingle little boxes on street corners: HELP THE TWO-HEADED CHILDREN, RELIEF FOR FLOOD-RAVAGED ATLANTIS? Well, they dressed up some of their students—"

"You think he was on the level, then, this guy?"

"I think there is a good chance that he was. I don't see why he would have left his card with you, though."

"That I can figure—now. If it's a TV stunt, there must be a lot of other angles wrapped up in it. A giveaway show with cars, refrigerators, a castle in Scotland, all kinds of loot."

"A giveaway show? Well, yes—it could be."

I hung up, took a deep breath, and called Eksar's hotel. He was registered there all right. And he'd just come in.

I went downstairs fast and took a cab. Who knew what other connections he'd made by now?

Going up in the elevator, I kept wondering. How did I go from the twenty-dollar bill to the real big stuff, the TV giveaway stuff, without letting Eksar know that I was on to what it was all about? Well, maybe I'd be lucky. Maybe he'd give me an opening.

I knocked on the door. When he said "Come in," I went in. But for a second or two I couldn't see a thing.

It was a little room, like all the rooms in that hotel, little and smelly and stuffy. But he didn't have the lights on, any electric lights. The window shade was pulled all the way down.

When my eyes got used to the dark, I was able to pick out this Ogo Eksar character. He was sitting on the bed, on the side nearest me. He was still wearing that crazy rumpled Palm Beach suit.

And you know what? He was watching a program on a funny little portable TV set that he had on the bureau. Color TV. Only it wasn't working right. There were no faces, no pictures, nothing but colors chasing around. A big blob of red, a big blob of orange and a wiggly border of blue and green and black. A voice was talking from it, but all the words were fouled up: "*Wah-wah, de-wah de-wah.*"

Just as I went in, he turned it off. "Times Square is a bad neighborhood for TV," I told him. "Too much interference."

"Yes," he said. "Too much interference." He closed up the set and put it away. I wished I'd seen it when it was working right.

Funny thing, you know? I would have expected a smell of liquor in the room, I would have expected to see a couple of empties in the tin trash basket near the bureau. Not a sign.

The only smell in the room was a smell I couldn't recognize. I guess it was the smell of Eksar himself, concentrated.

"Hi," I said, feeling a little uncomfortable because of the way I'd been with him back in the office. So rough I'd been.

He stayed on the bed. "I've got the twenty," he said. "You've got the five?"

"Oh, I guess I've got the five, all right," I said, looking in my wallet hard and trying to be funny. He didn't say a word, didn't even invite me to sit down. I pulled out a bill. "OK?"

He leaned forward and stared, as if he could see—in all that dimness—what kind of a bill it was. "OK," he said. "But I'll want a receipt. A notarized receipt."

Well, what the hell, I thought, a notarized receipt. "Then we'll have to go down. There's a druggist on 45th."

"Let's go," he said, getting to his feet with several small coughs that came one, two, three, four, right after one another.

On the way to the druggist, I stopped in a stationery store and bought a book of blank receipts. I filled out most

of one right there. New York, N. Y., and the date. *Received from Mr. Ogo Eksar the sum of twenty dollars for a five-dollar bill bearing the serial number . . . . .* "That OK?" I asked him. "I'm putting in the serial number to make it look as if you want that particular bill, you know, what the lawyers call the value-received angle."

He screwed his head around and read the receipt. Then he checked the serial number of the bill I was holding. He nodded.

We had to wait for the druggist to get through with a couple of customers. When I signed the receipt, he read it to himself, shrugged and went ahead and stamped it with his seal.

I paid him the two bits; I was the one making the profit.

Eksar slid a crisp new twenty to me along the counter. He watched while I held it up to the light, first one side, then the other.

"Good bill?" he asked.

"Yes. You understand: I don't know you, I don't know your money."

"Sure. I'd do it myself with a stranger." He put the receipt and my five-dollar bill in his pocket and started to walk away.

"Hey," I said. "You in a hurry?"

"No." He stopped, looking puzzled. "No hurry. But you've got the twenty for a five. We made the deal. It's all over."

"All right, so we made the deal. How about a cup of coffee?"

He hesitated.

"It's on me," I told him. "I'll be a big shot for a dime. Come on, let's have a cup of coffee."

Now he looked worried. "You don't want to back out? I've got the receipt. It's all notarized. I gave you a twenty, you gave me a five. We made a deal."

"It's a deal, it's a deal," I said, shoving him into an empty booth. "It's a deal, it's all signed, sealed and delivered. Nobody's backing out. I just want to buy you a cup of coffee."

His face cleared up, all the way through that dirt. "No coffee. Soup. I'll have some mushroom soup."

"Fine, fine. Soup, coffee, I don't care. I'll have coffee."

I sat there and studied him. He hunched over the soup and dragged it into his mouth, spoonful after spoonful, the living picture of a bum who hadn't eaten all day. But pure essence of bum, triple-distilled, the label of a fine old firm.

A guy like this should be lying in a doorway trying to say no to a cop's night stick, he should be coughing his alcoholic guts out. He shouldn't be living in a real honest-to-God hotel, or giving me a twenty for a five, or eating anything as respectable as mushroom soup.

But it made sense. A TV giveaway show, they want to do this, they hire a damn good actor, the best money can buy, to toss their dough away. A guy who'll be so good a bum that people'll just laugh in his face when he tries to give them a deal with a profit.

"You don't want to buy anything else?" I asked him.

He held the spoon halfway to his mouth and stared at me suspiciously. "Like what?"

"Oh, I don't know. Like maybe you want to buy a ten for a fifty. Or a twenty for a hundred dollars?"

He thought about it, Eksar did. Then he went back to his soup, shoveling away. "That's no deal," he said contemptuously. "What kind of deal is that?"

"Excuse me for living. I just thought I'd ask. I wasn't trying to take advantage of you." I lit a cigarette and waited.

My friend with the dirty face finished the soup and reached for a paper napkin. He wiped his lips. I watched him: he didn't smudge a spot of the grime around his mouth. He just blotted up the drops of soup. He was dainty in his own special way.

"Nothing else you want to buy? I'm here, I've got time right now. Anything else on your mind, we might as well look into it."

He balled up the paper napkin and dropped it into the soup plate. It got wet. He'd eaten all the mushrooms and left the soup.

"The Golden Gate Bridge," he said all of a sudden.

I dropped the cigarette. "What?"

"The Golden Gate Bridge. The one in San Francisco. I'll buy that. I'll buy it for..." he lifted his eyes to the fluorescent fixtures in the ceiling and thought for a couple of seconds "... say a hundred and a quarter. A hundred and twenty-five dollars. Cash on the barrel."

"Why the Golden Gate Bridge?" I asked him like an idiot.

"That's the one I want. You asked me what else I wanted to buy—well, that's what else. The Golden Gate Bridge."

"What's the matter with the George Washington Bridge? It's right here in New York, it's across the Hudson River. Why buy something all the way out on the Coast?"

He grinned at me as if he admired my cleverness. "Oh, no," he said, twitching his left shoulder hard. Up, down, up, down. "I know what I want. The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. A hundred and a quarter. Take it or leave it."

"I'll take it. If that's what you want, you're the doctor. But look—all I can sell you is my share of the Golden Gate Bridge, whatever equity in it I may happen to own."

He nodded. "I want a receipt. Put that down on the receipt."

I put it down on the receipt. And back we went. The druggist notarized the receipt, shoved the stamping outfit into the drawer under the counter and turned his back on us. Eksar counted out six twenties and one five from a big roll of bills, all of them starchy new. He put the roll back into his pants pocket and started away again.

"More coffee?" I asked, catching up. "A refill on the soup?"

He turned a very puzzled look at me and kind of twitched all over. "Why? What do you want to sell now?"

I shrugged. "What do you want to buy? You name it. Let's see what other deals we can work out."

This was all taking one hell of a lot of time, but I had no complaints. I'd made a hundred and forty dollars in fifteen minutes. Say a hundred and thirty-eight fifty, if you

deducted expenses such as notary fees, coffee, soup—all legitimate expenses, all low. I had no complaints.

But I was waiting for the big one. There had to be a big one.

Of course, it could maybe wait until the TV program itself. They'd be asking me what was on my mind when I was selling Eksar all that crap, and I'd be explaining, and they'd start handing out refrigerators and gift certificates for Tiffany's and . . .

Eksar had said something while I was away in cloudland. Something damn unfamiliar. I asked him to say it again.

"The Sea of Azov," he told me. "In Russia. I'll give you three hundred and eighty dollars for it."

I'd never heard of the place. I pursed my lips and thought for a second. A funny amount—three hundred and eighty. And for a whole damn sea. I tried an angle.

"Make it four hundred and you've got a deal."

He began coughing his head off, and he looked mad. "What's the matter," he asked between coughs, "three hundred and eighty is a bad price? It's a small sea, one of the smallest. It's only fourteen-thousand square miles. And do you know what the maximum depth is?"

I looked wise. "It's deep enough."

"Forty-nine feet," Eksar shouted. "That's all, forty-nine feet! Where are you going to do better than three hundred and eighty for a sea like that?"

"Take it easy," I said, patting his dirty shoulder. "Let's split the difference. You say three eighty, I want four hundred. How about leaving it at three ninety?" I didn't really care: ten bucks more, ten bucks less. But I wanted to see what would happen.

He calmed down. "Three hundred and ninety dollars for the Sea of Azov," he muttered to himself, a little sore at being a sucker, at being taken. "All I want is the sea itself; it's not as if I'm asking you to throw in the Kerch Strait, or maybe a port like Taganrog or Osipenko . . ."

"Tell you what." I held up my hands. "I don't want to be hard. Give me my three ninety and I'll throw in the Kerch Strait as a bonus. Now how about that?"

He studied the idea. He sniffed. He wiped his nose with the back of his hand. "All right," he said, finally. "It's a deal. Azov *and* the Kerch Strait for three hundred ninety."

Bang! went the druggist's stamp. The bangs were getting louder.

Eksar paid me with six fifties, four twenties and a ten, all new-looking bills from that thick roll in his pants pocket.

I thought about the fifties still on the roll, and I felt the spit start to ball up in my mouth.

"OK," I said. "Now what?"

"You still selling?"

"For the right price, sure. You name it."

"There's lots of stuff I could use," he sighed. "But do I need it right now? That's what I have to ask myself."

"Right now is when you've got a chance to buy it. Later—who knows? I may not be around, there may be other guys bidding against you, all kinds of things can happen." I waited awhile, but he just kept scowling and coughing. "How about Australia?" I suggested. "Could you use Australia for, say, five hundred bucks? Or Antarctica? I could give you a real nice deal on Antarctica."

He looked interested. "Antarctica? What would you want for it? No—I'm not getting anywhere. A little piece here, a little piece there. It all costs so much."

"You're getting damn favorable prices, buddy, and you know it. You couldn't do better buying at wholesale."

"Then how about wholesale? How much for the whole thing?"

I shook my head. "I don't know what you're talking about. What whole thing?"

He looked impatient. "The whole thing. The world. Earth."

"Hey," I said. "That's a lot."

"Well, I'm tired of buying a piece at a time. Will you give me a wholesale price if I buy it all?"

I shook my head, kind of in and out, not yes, not no. Money was coming up, the big money. This was where I was supposed to laugh in his face and walk away. I didn't



even crack a smile. "For the whole planet—sure, you're entitled to a wholesale price. But what is it, I mean, exactly *what* do you want to buy?"

"Earth," he said, moving close to me so that I could smell his stinking breath. "I want to buy Earth. Lock, stock and barrel."

"It's got to be a good price. I'll be selling out completely."

"I'll make it a good price. But this is the deal. I pay two thousand dollars, cash. I get Earth, the whole planet, and you have to throw in some stuff on the Moon. Fishing rights, mineral rights and rights to buried treasure. How about it?"

"It's a hell of a lot."

"I know it's a lot," he agreed. "But I'm paying a lot."

"Not for what you're asking. Let me think about it."

This was the big deal, the big giveaway. I didn't know how much money the TV people had given him to fool around with, but I was pretty sure two thousand was just a starting point. Only what was a sensible, businesslike price for the whole world?

I mustn't be made to look like a penny-ante chiseler on TV. There was a top figure Eksar had been given by the program director.

"You really want the whole thing," I said, turning back to him, "the Earth and the Moon?"

He held up a dirty hand. "Not all the Moon. Just those rights on it. The rest of the Moon you can keep."

"It's still a lot. You've got to go a hell of a lot higher than two thousand dollars for any hunk of real estate that big."

Eksar began wrinkling and twitching. "How—how much higher?"

"Well, let's not kid each other. This is the big time now! We're not talking about bridges or rivers or seas. This is a whole world and part of another that you're buying. It takes dough. You've got to be prepared to spend dough."

"How much?" He looked as if he were jumping up and down inside his dirty Palm Beach suit. People going in and

out of the store kept staring at us. "How *much*?" he whispered.

"Fifty thousand. It's a damn low price. And you know it."

Eksar went limp all over. Even his weird eyes seemed to sag. "You're crazy," he said in a low, hopeless voice. "You're out of your head."

He turned and started for the revolving door, walking in a kind of used-up way that told me I'd really gone over the line. He didn't look back once. He just wanted to get far, far away.

I grabbed the bottom of his filthy jacket and held on tight.

"Look, Eksar," I said, fast, as he pulled. "I went over your budget, way over, I can see that. But you know you can do better than two thousand. I want as much as I can get. What the hell, I'm taking time out to bother with you. How many other guys would?"

That got him. He cocked his head, then began nodding. I let go of his jacket as he came around. We were connecting again!

"Good. You level with me, and I'll level with you. Go up a little higher. What's your best price? What's the best you can do?"

He stared down the street, thinking, and his tongue came out and licked at the side of his dirty mouth. His tongue was dirty, too. I mean that! Some kind of black stuff, grease or grime, was all over his tongue.

"How about," he said, after a while, "how about twenty-five hundred? That's as high as I can go. I don't have another cent."

He was like me: he was a natural bargainer.

"You can go to three thousand," I urged. "How much is three thousand? Only another five hundred. Look what you get for it. Earth, the whole planet, and fishing and mineral rights and buried treasure, all that stuff on the Moon. How's about it?"

"I can't. I just can't. I wish I could." He shook his head as if to shake loose all those tics and twitches. "Maybe this

way. I'll go as high as twenty-six hundred. For that, will you give me Earth and just fishing rights and buried-treasure rights on the Moon? You keep the mineral rights. I'll do without them."

"Make it twenty-eight hundred and you can have the mineral rights, too. You want them, I can tell you do. Treat yourself. Just two hundred bucks more, and you can have them."

"I can't have everything. Some things cost too much. How about twenty-six fifty, without the mineral rights and without the buried-treasure rights?"

We were both really swinging now. I could feel it.

"This is my absolutely last offer," I told him. "I can't spend all day on this. I'll go down to twenty-seven hundred and fifty, and not a penny less. For that, I'll give you Earth and just fishing rights on the Moon. Or just buried-treasure rights. You pick whichever one you want."

"All right," he said. "You're a hard man; we'll do it your way."

"Twenty-seven fifty for the Earth and either fishing or buried-treasure rights on the Moon?"

"No, twenty-seven even, and no rights on the Moon. I'll forget about that. Twenty-seven even, and all I get is the Earth."

"Deal!" I sang out, and we struck hands. We shook on it.

Then, with my arm around his shoulders—what did I care about the dirt on his clothes when the guy was worth twenty-seven hundred dollars to me?—we marched back to the drugstore.

"I want a receipt," he reminded me.

"Right," I said. "But I put the same stuff on it: that I'm selling you whatever equity I own or have a right to sell. You're getting a lot for your money."

"You're getting a lot of money for what you're selling," he came right back. I liked him. Twitches and dirt or not, he was my kind of guy.

We got back to the druggist for notarization, and, honest, I've never seen a man look more disgusted in my life.

"Business is good, huh?" he said. "You two are sure hotting it up."

"Listen, you," I told him. "You just notarize." I showed the receipt to Eksar. "This the way you want it?"

He studied it, coughing. "Whatever equity you own or have a right to sell. All right. And put in, you know, in your capacity as sales agent, your professional capacity."

I changed the receipt and signed it. The druggist notarized.

Eksar brought that lump of money out of his pants pocket. He counted out 54 crisp new 50s and laid them on the glass counter. Then he picked up the receipt, folded it and put it away. He started for the door.

I grabbed up the money and went with him. "Anything else?"

"Nothing else," he said. "It's all over. We made our deal."

"I know, but we might find something else, another item."

"There's nothing else to find. We made our deal." And his voice told me he really meant it. It didn't have a trace of the tell-me-more whine that you've got to hear before there's business.

I came to a stop and watched him push out through the revolving door. He went right out into the street and turned left and kept moving, all fast, as if he was in a hell of a hurry.

There was no more business. OK. I had thirty-two hundred and thirty dollars in my wallet that I'd made in one morning.

But how good had I really been? I mean, what was the top figure in the show's budget? How close had I come to it?

I had a contact who maybe could find out—Morris Burlap.

Morris Burlap is in business like me, only he's a theatrical agent, sharp, real sharp. Instead of selling a load of used copper wire, say, or an option on a corner lot in Brooklyn, he sells talent. He sells a bunch of dancers to a hotel in the mountains, a piano player to a bar, a disc jockey or a comic to late-night radio. The reason he's called Morris

Burlap is because of these heavy Harris-tweed suits he wears winter and summer, every day in the year. They reinforce the image, he says.

I called him from a telephone booth near the entrance and filled him in on the giveaway show. "Now, what I want to find out—"

"Nothing to find out," he cut in. "There's no such show, Bernie."

"There sure as hell is, Morris. One you haven't heard of."

"There's no such show. Not in the works, not being rehearsed, not anywhere. Look: before a show gets to where it's handing out this kind of dough, it's got to have a slot, it's got to have air time all bought. And before it even buys air time, a packager has prepared a pilot. By then I'd have gotten a casting call—I'd have heard about it a dozen different ways. Don't try to tell me my business, Bernie; when I say there's no such show, there's no such show."

So damn positive he was. I had a crazy idea all of a sudden and turned it off. No. Not that. No.

"Then it's a newspaper or college research thing, like Ricardo said?"

He thought it over. I was willing to sit in that stuffy telephone booth and wait; Morris Burlap has a good head. "Those damn documents, those receipts, newspapers and colleges doing research don't operate that way. And nuts don't either. I think you're being taken, Bernie. How you're being taken, I don't know, but you're being taken."

That was enough for me. Morris Burlap can smell a hustle through sixteen feet of rockwool insulation. He's never wrong. Never.

I hung up, sat, thought. The crazy idea came back and exploded.

A bunch of characters from outer space, say they want Earth. They want it for a colony, for a vacation resort, who the hell knows what they want it for? They got their reasons. They're strong enough and advanced enough to come right down and take over. But they don't want to do it cold. They need a legal leg.

All right. These characters from outer space, maybe all

they had to have was a piece of paper from just one genuine, accredited human being, signing the Earth over to them. No, that couldn't be right. *Any* piece of paper? Signed by *any* Joe Jerk?

I jammed a dime into the telephone and called Ricardo's college. He wasn't in. I told the switchboard girl it was very important: she said, all right, she'd ring around and try to spot him.

All that stuff. I kept thinking, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Sea of Azov—they were as much a part of the hook as the twenty-for-a-five routine. There's one sure test of what an operator is really after: when he stops talking, closes up shop and goes away.

With Eksar, it had been the Earth. All that baloney about extra rights on the Moon! They were put in to cover up the real thing he was after, for extra bargaining power.

That's how Eksar had worked on me. It was like he'd made a special study of how I operate. From me alone, he had to buy.

But why me?

All that stuff on the receipt, about my equity, about my professional capacity, what the hell did it mean? I don't own Earth; I'm not in the planet-selling business. You have to own a planet before you can sell it. That's law.

So what could I have sold Eksar? I don't own any real estate. Are they going to take over my office, claim the piece of sidewalk I walk on, attach the stool in the diner where I have my coffee?

That brought me back to my first question. Who was this "they"? Who the holy hell were "they"?

The switchboard girl finally dug up Ricardo. He was irritated. "I'm in the middle of a faculty meeting, Bernie. Call you back?"

"Just listen a second," I begged. "I'm in something, I don't know whether I'm coming or going. I've got to have some advice."

Talking fast—I could hear a lot of bigshot voices in the background—I ran through the story from the time I'd called him in the morning. What Eksar looked like and

smelled like, the funny portable color-TV he had, the way he'd dropped all those Moon rights and gone charging off once he'd been sure of the Earth. What Morris Burlap had said, the suspicions I'd been building up, everything. "Only thing is," I laughed a little to show that maybe I wasn't really serious about it, "who am I to make such a deal, huh?"

He seemed to be thinking hard for a while. "I don't know, Bernie, it's possible. It does fit together. There's the UN aspect."

"UN aspect? Which UN aspect?"

"The UN aspect of the situation. The—uh—study of the UN on which we collaborated two years ago." He was using double talk because of the college people around him. But I got it, I got it.

Eksar must have known all along about the deal that Ricardo had thrown my way, getting rid of old, used-up office equipment for the United Nations here in New York. They'd given me what they called an authorizing document. In a file somewhere there was a piece of paper, United Nations stationery, saying that I was their authorized sales agent for surplus, secondhand equipment and installations.

Talk about a legal leg!

"You think it'll stand up?" I asked Ricardo. "I can see how the Earth is secondhand equipment and installations. But surplus?"

"International law is a tangled field, Bernie. And this might be even more complex. You'd be wise to do something about it."

"But what? What should I do, Ricardo?"

"Bernie," he said, sounding sore as hell, "I told you I'm in a faculty meeting, damn it! A *faculty* meeting!" And he hung up.

I ran out of the drugstore like a wild man and grabbed a cab back to Eksar's hotel.

What was I most afraid of? I didn't know: I was so hysterical. This thing was too big-time for a little guy like me, too damn dangerously big-time. It would put my name up in lights as the biggest sellout sucker in history. Who

could ever trust me again to make a deal? I had the feeling like somebody had asked me to sell him a snapshot, and I'd said sure, and it turned out to be a picture of the Nike Zeus, you know, one of those top-secret atomic missiles. Like I'd sold out my country by mistake. Only this was worse: I'd sold out my whole goddamn world. I had to buy it back—I had to!

When I got to Eksar's room, I knew he was about ready to check out. He was shoving his funny portable TV in one of those cheap leather grips they sell in chain stores. I left the door open, for the light.

"We made our deal," he said. "It's over. No more deals."

I stood there, blocking his way. "Eksar," I told him, "listen to what I figured out. First, you're not human. Like me, I mean."

"I'm a hell of a lot more human than you, buddy boy."

"Maybe. But you're not from Earth—that's my point. Why you need Earth—"

"I *don't* need it. I'm an agent. I represent someone."

And there it was, straight out, you are right, Morris Burlap! I stared into his fish eyes, now practically pushing into my face. I wouldn't get out of the way. "You're an agent for someone," I repeated slowly. "Who? What do they want Earth for?"

"That's their business. I'm an agent. I just buy for them."

"You work on a commission?"

"I'm not in business for my health."

*You sure as hell aren't in it for your health*, I thought. *That cough, those tics and twitches*—Then I realized what they meant. This wasn't the kind of air he was used to. Like if I go up to Canada, right away I'm down with diarrhea. It's the water or something.

The dirt on his face was a kind of suntan oil! A protection against our sunlight. Blinds pulled down, face smeared over—and dirt all over his clothes so they'd fit in with his face.

Eksar was no bum. He was anything but. I was the bum. Think fast, Bernie, I said to myself. This guy took you, and big!



"How much you work on—ten percent?" No answer: he leaned against me, and he breathed and he twitched. "I'll top any deal you have, Eksar. You know what I'll give you? Fifteen percent! I hate to see a guy running back and forth for a lousy ten percent."

"What about ethics?" he said hoarsely. "I got a client."

"Look who's bringing up ethics! A guy goes out to buy the whole damn Earth for twenty-seven hundred! You call that ethics?"

Now he got sore. He set down the grip and punched his fist into his hand. "No, I call that business. A deal. I offer, you take. You go away happy, you feel you made out. All of a sudden, here you are back, crying you didn't mean it, you sold too much for the price. Too bad! I got ethics: I don't screw my client for a crybaby."

"I'm not a crybaby. I'm just a poor schnook trying to scratch out a living. Here, I'm up against a big-time operator from another world with all kinds of angles and gimmicks going for him."

"You had these angles, these gimmicks, you wouldn't use them?"

"Certain things I wouldn't do. Don't laugh, Eksar, I mean it. I wouldn't hustle a guy in an iron lung. I wouldn't hustle a poor schnook with a hole-in-the-wall office to sell out his entire planet."

"You really sold," he said. "That receipt will stand up anywhere. And we got the machinery to make it stand up. Once my client takes possession, the human race is finished, it's kaput, forget about it. And you're Mr. Patsy."

It was hot in that hotel-room doorway, and I was sweating like crazy. But I was feeling better. All of a sudden, I'd got the message that Eksar wanted to do business with me. I grinned at him.

He changed color a little under all that dirt. "What's your offer, anyway?" he asked, coughing. "Name a figure."

"You name one. You got the property, I got the dough."

"Aah!" he grunted impatiently, and pushed me out of the way. He was *strong*! I ran after him to the elevator.

"How much you want, Eksar?" I asked him as we were going down.

A shrug. "I got a planet, and I got a buyer for it. You, you're in a jam. The one in a pickle is the one who's got to tickle."

The louse! For every one of my moves, he knew the countermove.

He checked out and I followed him into the street. Down Broadway we went, me offering him the thirty-two hundred and thirty he'd paid me, him saying he couldn't make a living out of shoving the same amount of money back and forth all day. "Thirty-four?" he offered. "I mean, you know, thirty-four fifty?" He just kept walking.

If I didn't get him to name a figure, any figure, I'd be dead.

I ran in front of him. "Eksar, let's stop hustling each other. If you didn't want to sell, you couldn't be talking to me in the first place. You name a figure. Whatever it is, I'll pay it."

That got a reaction. "You mean it? You won't try to chisel?"

"How can I chisel? I'm over a barrel."

"OK, then. I'll give you a break and save myself a long trip back to my client. What's fair for you and fair for me and fair all around? Let's say eight thousand even?"

Eight thousand—it was almost exactly what I had in the bank. He knew my bank account cold, up to the last statement.

He knew my thoughts cold, too. "You're going to do business with a guy," he said, between coughs, "you check into him a little. You got eight thousand and change. It's not much for saving a guy's neck."

I was boiling. "Not much? Then let me set you straight, you Florence goddamn Nightingale! You're not getting it! A little skin I know maybe I have to give up. But not every cent I own, not for you, not for Earth, not for anybody!"

A cop came up close to see why I was yelling, and I had to calm down until he went away again. "Help! Police! Aliens invading us!" I almost screamed out. What would

the street we were standing on look like in ten years if I didn't talk Eksar out of that receipt?

"Eksar, your client takes over Earth waving my receipt—I'll be hung high. But I've got only one life, and my life is buying and selling. I can't buy and sell without capital. Take my capital away, and it makes no difference to me who owns Earth and who doesn't."

"Who the hell do you think you're kidding?" he said.

"I'm not kidding anybody. Honest, it's the truth. Take my capital away, and it makes no difference if I'm alive or if I'm dead."

That last bit of hustle seemed to have reached him. Listen, there were practically tears in my eyes the way I was singing it. How much capital did I need, he wanted to know—five hundred? I told him I couldn't operate one single day with less than seven times that. He asked me if I was really seriously trying to buy my lousy little planet back—or was today my birthday and I was expecting a present from him? "Don't give your presents to me," I told him. "Give them to fat people. They're better than going on a diet."

And so we went. Both of us talking ourselves blue in the face, swearing by everything, arguing and bargaining, wheeling and dealing. It was touch and go who was going to give up first.

But neither of us did. We both held out until we reached what I'd figured pretty early we were going to wind up with, maybe a little bit more.

Six thousand, one hundred and fifty dollars.

That was the price over and above what Eksar had given me. The final deal. Listen, it could have been worse.

Even so, we almost broke up when we began talking payment.

"Your bank's not far. We could get there before closing."

"Why walk myself into a heart attack? My check's good as gold."

"Who wants a piece of paper? I want cash. Cash is definite."

Finally, I managed to talk him into a check. I wrote it

out; he took it and gave me the receipts, all of them. Every last receipt I'd signed. Then he picked up his little satchel and marched away.

Straight down Broadway, without even a good-bye. All business, Eksar was, nothing but business. He didn't look back once.

All business. I found out next morning he'd gone right to the bank and had my check certified before closing time. What do you think of that? I couldn't do a damn thing: I was out six thousand, one hundred and fifty dollars. Just for talking to someone.

Ricardo said I was a Faust. I walked out of the bank, beating my head with my fist, and I called up him and Morris Burlap and asked them to have lunch with me. I went over the whole story with them in an expensive place that Ricardo picked out. "You're a Faust," he said.

"What Faust?" I asked him. "Who Faust? How Faust?"

So naturally he had to tell us all about Faust. Only I was a new kind of Faust, a twentieth century-American one. The other Fausts, they wanted to know everything. I wanted to own everything.

"But I didn't wind up owning," I pointed out. "I got taken. Six thousand, one hundred and fifty dollars' worth I got taken."

Ricardo chuckled and leaned back in his chair. "O my sweet gold," he said under his breath. "O my sweet gold."

"What?"

"A quotation, Bernie. From Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*. I forget the context, but it seems apt. 'O my sweet gold.'"

I looked from him to Morris Burlap, but nobody can ever tell when Morris Burlap is puzzled. As a matter of fact, he looks more like a professor than Ricardo, him with those thick Harris tweeds and that heavy, thinking look. Ricardo is, you know, a bit too natty.

The two of them added up to all the brains and sharpness a guy could ask for. That's why I was paying out an arm and a leg for this lunch, on top of all my losses with Eksar.

"Morris, tell the truth. You understand him?"

"What's there to understand, Bernie? A quote about the sweet gold? It might be the answer, right there."

Now I looked at Ricardo. He was eating away at a creamy Italian pudding. Two bucks even, those puddings cost in that place.

"Let's say he was an alien," Morris Burlap said. "Let's say he came from somewhere in outer space. OK. Now what would an alien want with U. S. dollars? What's the rate of exchange out there?"

"You mean he needed it to buy some merchandise here on Earth?"

"That's exactly what I mean. But what *kind* of merchandise, that's the question. What could Earth have that he'd want?"

Ricardo finished the pudding and wiped his lips with a napkin. "I think you're on the right track, Morris," he said, and I swung my attention back to him. "We can postulate a civilization far in advance of our own. One that would feel we're not quite ready to know about them. One that has placed primitive little Earth strictly off limits—a restriction only desperate criminals dare ignore."

"From where come criminals, Ricardo, if they're so advanced?"

"Laws produce lawbreakers, Bernie, like hens produce eggs. Civilization has nothing to do with it. I'm beginning to see Eksar now. An unprincipled adventurer, a star-man version of those cutthroats who sailed the South Pacific a hundred years or more ago. Once in a while, a ship would smash upon the coral reefs, and a bloody opportunist out of Boston would be stranded for life among primitive, backward tribesmen. I'm sure you can fill in the rest."

"No, I can't. And if you don't mind, Ricardo—"

Morris Burlap said he'd like another brandy. I ordered it. He came as close to smiling as Morris Burlap ever does and leaned toward me confidentially. "Ricardo's got it, Bernie. Put yourself in this guy Eksar's position. He wraps up his spaceship on a dirty little planet which it's against the law to be near in the first place. He can make some half-

assed repairs with merchandise that's available here—but he has to buy the stuff. Any noise, any uproar, and he'll be grabbed for a Federal rap in outer space. Say you're Eksar, what do you do?"

I could see it now. "I'd peddle and I'd parlay. Copper bracelets, strings of beads, dollars—whatever I had to lay my hands on to buy the native merchandise, I'd peddle and I'd parlay in deal after deal. Maybe I'd start with a piece of equipment from the ship, then I'd find some novelty item that the natives would go for. But all this is *Earth* business know-how, *human* business know-how."

"Bernie," Ricardo told me, "Indians once traded pretty little shells for beaver pelts at the exact spot where the stock exchange now stands. Some kind of business goes on in Eksar's world, I assure you, but its simplest form would make one of our corporate mergers look like a game of potsy on the sidewalk."

Well, I'd wanted to figure it out. "So I was marked as his fish all the way. I was screwed and blued and tattooed," I mumbled, "by a hustler superman."

Ricardo nodded. "By a businessman's Mephistopheles fleeing the thunderbolts of heaven. He needed to double his money one more time and he'd have enough to repair his ship. He had at his disposal a fantastic sophistication in all the ways of commerce."

"What Ricardo's saying," came an almost soft voice from Morris Burlap, "is the guy who beat you up was a whole lot bigger than you."

My shoulders felt loose, like they were sliding down off my arms. "What the hell," I said. "You get stepped on by a horse or you get stepped on by an elephant. You're still stepped on."

I paid the check, got myself together and went away.

Then I began to wonder if maybe this was really the story after all. They both enjoyed seeing me up there as an interplanetary jerk. Ricardo's a brilliant guy, Morris Burlap's sharp as hell, but so what? Ideas, yes. Facts, no.

So here's a fact.

My bank statement came at the end of the month with

that canceled check I'd given Eksar. It had been endorsed by a big store in the Cortlandt Street area. I know that store. I've dealt with them. I went down and asked them about it.

They handle mostly marked-down, surplus electronic equipment. That's what they said Eksar had bought. A walloping big order of transistors and transformers, resistors and printed circuits, electronic tubes, wiring, tools, gimmicks like that. All mixed up, they said, a lot of components that just didn't go together. He'd given the clerk the impression that he had an emergency job to do—and he'd take as close as he could get to the things he actually needed. He'd paid a lot of money for freight charges: delivery was to some backwoods town in northern Canada.

That's a fact, now, I have to admit it. But here's another one.

I've dealt with that store, like I said. Their prices are the lowest in the neighborhood. And why is it, do you think, they can sell so cheap? There's only one answer: because they buy so cheap. They buy at the lowest prices; they don't give a damn about quality: all they want to know is, how much markup? I've personally sold them job lots of electronic junk that I couldn't unload anywhere else, condemned stuff, badly wired stuff, stuff that was almost dangerous—it's a place to sell to when you've given up on making a profit because you yourself have been stuck with inferior merchandise in the first place.

You get the picture? It makes me feel rosy all over.

There is Eksar out in space, the way I see it. He's fixed up his ship, good enough to travel, and he's on his way to his next big deal. The motors are humming, the ship is running, and he's sitting there with a big smile on his dirty face: he's thinking how he took me, how easy it was.

He's laughing his head off.

All of a sudden, there's a screech and a smell of burning. That circuit that's running the front motor, a wire just got touched through the thin insulation, the circuit tearing the hell out of itself. He gets scared. He turns on the auxiliaries. The auxiliaries don't go on—you know why?

The vacuum tubes he's using have come to the end of their rope, they didn't have much juice to start with. *Blooie!* That's the rear motor developing a short circuit. *Ka-pow!* That's a defective transformer melting away in the middle of the ship.

And there he is, millions of miles from nowhere, empty space all around him, no more spare parts, tools that practically break in his hands—and not a single, living soul he can hustle.

And here am I, in my office, thinking about it, and *I'm* laughing my head off. Because it's just possible, it just could happen, that what goes wrong with his ship is one of the half-dozen or so job lots of really bad electronic equipment that I personally, me, Bernie the Faust, that I sold to that surplus store at one time or another.

That's all I'd ask. Just to have it happen that way.

Faust. He'd have Faust from me then. Right in the face. Faust. On the head, splitting it open, Faust. Faust I'd give him!

The only trouble is I'll never know. All I know for sure is that I'm the only guy in history who sold the whole god-damn planet.

*And bought it back.*

*"What do you consider the raison d'être, the chief value, of science fiction?" The question was asked in a survey of s-f writers and editors in the fan magazine Double Bill last year.*

*Fred Saberhagen's reply: "Ideally, science fiction gives a chance to impose different coordinate systems upon the human condition, and to try to see what will change and what will remain the same."*

*"Coordinate system" is engineerese for "background" or "measurement" or occasionally "viewpoint." The different coordinate system, in a science-fiction story, may be an alien planet, an alien body, an alien culture (past, future, or sidewise-in-time).*

*In this case, the set of coordinate systems is a set of coordinate systems—which is neither a Steinism, nor a typographical error, but a description of a checker game.*



# **FORTRESS SHIP**

**Fred Saberhagen**

*from If*

The machine was a vast fortress, containing no life, set by its long-dead masters to destroy anything that lived. It and a hundred like it were the inheritance of Earth from some war fought between unknown interstellar empires, in some time that could hardly be connected with any Earthly calendar.

One such machine could hang over a planet colonized by men and in two days pound the surface into a lifeless cloud of dust and steam, a hundred miles deep. This particular machine had already done just that.

It used no predictable tactics in its dedicated, unconscious war against life. The ancient, unknown gamesmen had built it as a random factor, to be loosed in the enemy's territory to do what damage it might. Men thought its plan of battle was chosen by the random disintegrations of atoms in a block of some long-lived isotope buried deep inside it, and so was not even in theory predictable by opposing brains, human or electronic.

Men called it a berserker.

Del Murray, sometime computer specialist, had called it other names than that; but right now he was too busy to waste breath, as he moved in staggering lunges around the little cabin of his one-man fighter, plugging in replacement units for equipment damaged by the last near-miss of a small berserker missile. An animal resembling a large dog with an ape's forelegs moved about the cabin too, carrying in its nearly human hands a supply of emergency sealing patches. The cabin air was full of haze. Wherever movement of the haze showed a leak to an unpressurized part of the hull, the dog-ape moved to apply a patch.

"Hello, Foxglove!" the man shouted, hoping his radio was again in working order.

"Hello, Murray, this is Foxglove," said a sudden loud voice in the cabin. "How far did you get?"

Del was too weary to show much relief that his communications were open again. "I'll let you know in a minute. At least it's stopped shooting at me for a while. Move, Newton." The alien animal, pet and ally, called an *aiyan*, moved away from the man's feet and kept single-mindedly looking for leaks.

After another minute's work Del could strap his body into the deep-cushioned command chair again, with something like an operational panel before him. That last near-miss had sprayed the whole cabin with fine penetrating splinters. It was remarkable that man and *aiyan* had come through unwounded.

His radar working again, Del could say: "I'm about ninety miles out from it, Foxglove. On the opposite side from you." His present position was what he had been trying to achieve since the battle had begun.

The two Earth ships and the berserker were half a light year from the nearest sun. The berserker could not leap out of normal space, toward the defenseless colonies on the planets of that sun, while the two ships stayed close to it. There were only two men aboard Foxglove. Though they had more machinery working for them than did Del, both manned ships were mites compared to their opponent.

If a berserker machine like this one, not much smaller in cross-section than New Jersey, had drifted in a century earlier and found men crowded on one planet, there could have been no real struggle and no human survivors. Now, though the impersonal enemy swarmed through the galaxy, men could rise up in a cloud to meet them.

Del's radar showed him an ancient ruin of metal, spread out for a hundred miles before him. Men had blown holes in it the size of Manhattan Island, and melted puddles of slag as big as lakes upon its surface.

But the berserker's power was still enormous. So far no man had fought it and survived. Now, it could squash Del's little ship like a mosquito; it was wasting its unpredictable subtlety on him. Yet there was a special taste of terror in

the very indifference of it. Men could never frighten this enemy, as it frightened them.

Earthmen's tactics, worked out from bitter experience against other berserkers, called for a simultaneous attack by three ships. Foxglove and Murray made two. A third was supposedly on the way, but still about eight hours distant, moving at C-plus velocity, outside of normal space and so out of communication with the others. Until it arrived, Foxglove and Murray must hold the berserker at bay, while it brooded unguessable schemes.

It might attack either ship at any moment, or it might seek to disengage. It might wait hours for them to make the first move—though it would certainly fight if the men attacked it. It had learned the language of Earth—it might try to talk with them. But always, ultimately, it would seek to destroy them and every other living thing it met. That was the basic command given it by the ancient warlords.

A thousand years ago, it would have easily swept ships of the type that now opposed it from its path, whether they carried fusion missiles or not. Now, it was no doubt in some electrical way conscious of its own weakening by accumulated damage. And perhaps in long centuries of fighting its way across the galaxy it had learned to be wary.

Now, quite suddenly, Del's detectors showed force fields forming in behind his ship. Like the encircling arms of a great bear they blocked his path away from the enemy. He waited for some deadly blow, with his hand trembling over the red button that would salvo his atomic missiles at the berserker—but if he attacked alone, or even with Foxglove, the infernal machine would parry their missiles, crush their ships and go on to destroy another helpless planet. Three ships were needed to attack. The red firing button was now only a last desperate resort.

Del was reporting the force-fields to Foxglove when he felt the first hint in his mind of another attack.

"Newton!" he called sharply, leaving the mike to Foxglove open. They would hear and understand what was going to happen.

The *aiyan* bounded instantly from its combat couch to stand before Del as if hypnotized, all attention riveted on the man. Del sometimes bragged: "Show Newton a drawing of different colored lights, convince him it represents a particular control panel, and he'll push buttons or whatever you tell him, until the real panel matches the drawing."

But no *aiyan* had the human ability to learn and to create on an abstract level; which was why Del was now going to put Newton in command of his ship.

He switched off the ship's computers—they were going to be as useless as his own brain, under the attack he felt gathering—and said to Newton: "Situation Zombie."

The animal responded instantly as it had been trained, seizing Del's hands with firm insistence, and dragging them one at a time down beside the command chair to where the fetters had been installed.

Hard experience had taught men something about the berserkers' mind weapon, although its principles of operation were still unknown. It was slow in its onslaught, and its effects could not be steadily maintained for more than about two hours, after which a berserker was evidently forced to turn it off for an equal time. But while in effect, it robbed any human or electronic brain of the ability to plan or to predict—and left it unconscious of its own incapacity.

It seemed to Del that all this had happened before, maybe more than once. Newton, that funny fellow, had gone too far with his pranks; he had abandoned the little boxes of colored beads that were his favorite toys, and was moving the controls around at the lighted panel. Unwilling to share the fun with Del, he had tied the man to his chair somehow. Such behavior was really intolerable, especially when there was supposed to be a battle in progress. Del tried to pull his hands free, and called to Newton.

Newton whined earnestly and stayed at the panel.

"Newt, you dog. Come, lemme loose. I know what I have to say: Four score and seven . . . hey, Newt, where're your toys? Lemme see your pretty beads." There were hundreds

of tiny boxes of the varicolored beads, leftover trade goods that Newton loved to sort out and handle. Del peered around the cabin, chuckling a little at his own cleverness. He would get Newton distracted by the beads, and then . . . the vague idea faded into other crackbrained grotesqueries.

Newton whined now and then but stayed at the panel moving controls in the long sequence he had been taught, taking the ship through the feinting, evasive maneuvers that might fool a berserker into thinking that it was still competently manned. Newton never put a hand near the big red button. Only if he felt deadly pain himself, or found a dead man in Del's chair, would he reach for that.

"Ah, roger, Murray," said the radio from time to time, as if acknowledging a message. Sometimes Foxglove added a few words or numbers that might have meant something. Del wondered what the talking was about.

At last he understood that Foxglove was trying to help maintain the illusion that there was still a competent brain in charge of Del's ship. The fear reaction came when he began to realize that he had once again lived through the effect of the mind weapon. The brooding berserker, half genius, half idiot, had forborne to press the attack when success would have been certain. Perhaps deceived, perhaps following the strategy that avoided predictability at almost any cost.

"Newton." The animal turned, hearing a change in his voice. Now Del could say the words that would tell Newton it was safe to set his master free, a sequence too long for anyone under the mind weapon to recite.

"—shall not perish from the Earth," he finished. With a yelp of joy Newton pulled the fetters from Del's hands. Del turned instantly to the radio.

"Effect has evidently been turned off, Foxglove," said Del's voice through the speaker in the cabin of the larger ship.

The Commander let out a sigh. "He's back in control!"

The Second Officer—there was no Third—said: "That means we've got some kind of fighting chance, for the next two hours. I say let's attack now!"

The Commander shook his head, slowly but without hesitation. "With two ships, we don't have any real chance. Less than four hours until Gizmo gets here. We have to stall until then, if we want to win."

"It'll attack the next time it gets Del's mind scrambled! I don't think we fooled it for a minute . . . we're out of range of the mind beam here, but Del can't withdraw now. And we can't expect that *aiyan* to fight his ship for him. We'll really have no chance, with Del gone."

The Commander's eyes moved ceaselessly over his panel.

The berserker spoke suddenly, its radioed voice plain in the cabins of both ships: "I have a proposition for you, little ship." Its voice had a cracking, adolescent quality, because it strung together words and syllables recorded from the voice of human prisoners of both sexes and different ages, from whom it had learned the language. There was no reason to think they had been kept alive after that.

"Well?" Del's voice sounded tough and capable by comparison.

"I have invented a game which we will play," it said. "If you play well enough, I will not kill you right away."

"Now I've heard everything," murmured the Second Officer.

After three thoughtful seconds the Commander slammed a fist on the arm of his chair. "It means to test his learning ability, to run a continuous check on his brain while it turns up the power of the mind beam and tries different modulations. If it can make sure the mind beam is working, it'll attack instantly. I'll bet my life on it. That's the game it's playing this time."

"I will think over your proposition," said Del's voice coolly.

The Commander said: "It's in no hurry to start. It won't be able to turn on the mind beam again for almost two hours."

"But we need another two hours beyond that."

Del's voice said: "Describe the game you want to play."

"It is a simplified version of the human game called checkers."

The Commander and the Second looked at each other, neither able to imagine Newton able to play checkers. Nor could they doubt that Newton's failure would kill them within a few hours, and leave another planet open to destruction.

After a minute's silence, Del's voice asked: "What'll we use for a board?"

"We will radio our moves to one another," said the berserker equably. It went on to describe a checkers-like game, played on a smaller board with less than the normal number of pieces. There was nothing very profound about it; but of course playing would seem to require a functional brain, human or electronic, able to plan and to predict.

"If I agree to play," said Del slowly, "how'll we decide who gets to move first?"

"He's trying to stall," said the Commander, gnawing a thumbnail. "We won't be able to offer any advice, with that thing listening. Oh, stay sharp, Del boy!"

"To simplify matters," said the berserker, "I will move first in every game."

Del could look forward to another hour free of the mind weapon when he finished rigging the checker board. When the pegged pieces were moved, appropriate signals would be radioed to the berserker; lighted squares on the board would show him where its pieces were moved. If it spoke to him while the mind weapon was on, Del's voice would answer from a tape, which he had stocked with vaguely aggressive phrases, such as: "Get on with the game," or "Do you want to give up now?"

He hadn't told the enemy how far along he was with his preparations because he was still busy with something the enemy must not know—the system that was going to enable Newton to play a game of simplified checkers.

Del gave a soundless little laugh as he worked and glanced over to where Newton was lounging on his couch, clutching toys in his hands as if he drew some comfort from them. This scheme was going to push the *aiyan* near

the limit of his ability, but Del saw no reason why it should fail.

Del had completely analyzed the miniature checker game, and diagramed every position that Newton could possibly face—playing only even-numbered moves, thank the random berserker for that specification!—on small cards. Del had discarded some lines of play that would lead from some poor early moves by Newton, further simplifying his job. Now, on a card showing each possible remaining position, Del indicated the best possible move with a drawn-in arrow. Now he could quickly teach Newton to play the game by looking at the appropriate card and making the move shown by the arrow. The system was not perfect, but—

“Oh, oh,” said Del, as his hands stopped working and he stared into space. Newton whined at the tone in his voice.

Once Del had sat at one board in a simultaneous chess exhibition, one of sixty players opposing the world champion, Blankenship. Del had held his own into the middle game. Then, when the great man paused again opposite his board, Del had shoved a pawn forward, thinking he had reached an unassailable position and could begin a counterattack. Blankenship had moved a rook to an innocent-looking square and strolled on to the next board—and then Del had seen the checkmate coming at him, four moves away but one move too late for him to do anything about it.

The Commander suddenly said a foul phrase in a loud distinct voice. Such conduct was extremely rare, and the Second Officer looked around in surprise. “What?”

“I think we’ve had it.” The Commander paused. “I hoped that Murray could set up some kind of system over there, so that Newton could play the game—or appear to be playing it. But it won’t work. Whatever system Newton plays by rote will always have him thinking the same move in the same position. It may be a perfect system—but a man doesn’t play any game that way, damn it. He makes mistakes, he changes strategy. Even in a game this simple



there'll be room for that. Most of all, a man *learns* a game as he plays it. He gets better as he goes along. That's what'll give Newton away, and that's what our bandit wants. It's probably heard about *aiyans*. Now as soon as it can be sure it's facing a dumb animal over there, and not a man or computer. . . ."

After a little while the Second Officer said: "I'm getting signals of their moves. They've begun play. Maybe we should've rigged up a board so we could follow along with the game."

"We better just be ready to go at it when the time comes." The Commander looked hopelessly at his salvo button, and then at the clock that showed two hours must pass before Gizmo could reasonably be hoped for.

Soon the Second Officer said: "That seems to be the end of the first game; Del lost it, if I'm reading their scoreboard signal right." He paused. "Sir, here's that signal we picked up the last time it turned the mind beam on. Del must be starting to get it again."

There was nothing for the Commander to say. The two men waited silently for the enemy's attack, hoping only that they could damage it in the seconds before it would overwhelm them and kill them.

"He's playing the second game," said the Second Officer, puzzled. "And I just heard him say 'Let's get on with it.'"

"His voice could be recorded. He must have made some plan of play for Newton to follow; but it won't fool the berserker for long. It can't."

Time crept unmeasurably past them.

The Second said: "He's lost the first four games. But he's *not* making the same moves every time. I wish we'd made a board . . ."

"Shut up about the board! We'd be watching it instead of the panel. Now stay alert, Mister."

After what seemed a long time, the Second said: "Well, I'll be!"

"What?"

"Our side got a draw in that game."

"Then the beam can't be on him. Are you sure . . ."

"It is! Look, here, the same indication we got last time. It's been on him the better part of an hour now, and getting stronger."

The Commander stared in disbelief; but he knew and trusted his Second's ability. And the panel indications were convincing. He said: "Then someone—or something—with no functioning mind is learning how to play a game, over there. Ha, ha," he added, as if trying to remember how to laugh.

The berserker won another game. Another draw. Another win for the enemy. Then three drawn games in a row.

Once the Second Officer heard Del's voice ask coolly: "Do you want to give up now?" On the next move he lost another game. But the following game ended in another draw. Del was plainly taking more time than his opponent to move, but not enough to make the enemy impatient.

"It's trying different modulations on the mind beam," said the Second. "And it's got the power turned way up."

"Yeah," said the Commander. Several times he had almost tried to radio Del, to say something that might keep the man's spirits up—and also to relieve his own feverish inactivity, and try to find out what could possibly be happening now. But he could not take the chance. Any interference might upset the miracle.

He could not believe the inexplicable success could last, even when the checker match turned gradually into an endless succession of drawn games between two perfect players. Hours ago the Commander had said good-bye to life and hope, and he still waited for the fatal moment.

And he waited.

"—not perish from the Earth!" said Del Murray, and Newton's eager hands flew to loose his right arm from its shackle.

A game, unfinished on the little board before him, had

been abandoned seconds earlier. The mind beam had been turned off at the same time, when Gizmo had burst into normal space right in position and only five minutes late; and the berserker had been forced to turn all its energies to meet the immediate all-out attack of Gizmo and Foxglove.

Del saw his computers, recovering from the effect of the beam, lock his aiming screen onto the berserker's scarred and bulging midsection, as he shot his right arm forward, scattering pieces from the game board.

"Checkmate!" he roared out hoarsely, and brought his fist down on the big red button.

"I'm glad it didn't want to play chess," Del said later, talking to the Commander in Foxglove's cabin. "I could never have rigged that up."

The ports were cleared now, and the men could look out at the cloud of expanding gas, still faintly luminous, that had been a berserker; metal fire-purged of the legacy of ancient evil.

But the Commander was watching Del. "You got Newt to play by following diagrams, I see that. But how could he *learn* the game?"

Del grinned. "He couldn't. But his toys could. Now wait before you slug me." He called the *aiyan* to him and took a small box from the animal's hand. The box rattled faintly as he held it up. On the cover was pasted a diagram of one possible position in the simplified checker game, with a different-colored arrow indicating each possible move of Del's pieces.

"It took a couple hundred of these boxes," said Del. "This one was in the group that Newt examined for the fourth move. When he found a box with a diagram matching the position on the board, he picked the box up, pulled out one of these beads from inside, without looking—that was the hardest part to teach him in a hurry, by the way," said Del, demonstrating. "Ah, this one's blue. That means, make the move indicated on the corner by a blue arrow. Now the orange arrow leads to a poor position. See?"

Del shook all the beads out of the box into his hand. "No orange beads left; there were six of each color when we started. But every time Newton drew a bead, he had orders to leave it out of the box until the game was over. Then, if the scoreboard indicated a loss for our side, he went back and threw away all the beads he had used. All the bad moves were gradually eliminated. In a few hours, Newt and his boxes learned to play the game perfectly."

"Well," said the Commander. He thought for a moment, then reached down to scratch Newton behind the ears. "I never would have come up with that idea."

"I should have thought of it sooner. The basic idea's a couple of centuries old. And computers are supposed to be my business."

"This could be a big thing," said the Commander. "I mean your basic idea might be useful to any task force that has to face a berserker's mind beam."

"Yeah." Del grew reflective. "Also . . ."

"What?"

"I was thinking of a guy I met once. Named Blankenship. I wonder if I *could* rig something up . . ."

Alien . . .

What does alien mean to you? Alien corn . . . alien concept . . . alien national . . . alien life form?

Bug eyed monsters, giant squid, robots, supermen, fallout mutations? Snakes, cannibals, Communists, sexual deviants? What shape or posture triggers your recoil from stranger-danger?

Alien: alien . . . adj. 1) Belonging or pertaining to another; strange; foreign; esp. not belonging or owing allegiance to the same country; belonging to the citizens of a foreign state. 2) Wholly different in nature; incongruous; . . . n. 1) A person of another family, race or nation. 2) A foreign-born resident of a country in which he does not possess the privileges of a citizen. 3) One excluded from certain privileges; one estranged, as from royal favor. . . .

(Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary)

There were three kinds of aliens in "Fortress Ship": the Berserker, the offstage extraterrestrials, and the dog-ape Newton. The next selection contains still another kind of alienism—and an alienist.

# MR. WATERMAN<sup>1</sup>

## Peter Redgrove

from *The Paris Review*, No 29

*"Now, we're quite private in here. You can tell me your troubles. The pond I think you said . . ."*

"We never really liked that pond in the garden. At times it was choked with a sort of weed, which, if you pulled one thread, gleefully unraveled until you had an empty basin before you and the whole of the pond in a soaking heap at your side. Then at other times it was as clear as gin, and lay in the grass staring upwards. If you came anywhere near, the gaze shifted sideways, and it was you that was being stared at, not the empty sky. If you were so bold as to come right up to the edge, swaggering and talking loudly to show you were not afraid, it presented you with so perfect a reflection that you stayed there spellbound and nearly missed dinner getting to know yourself. It had hypnotic powers."

*"Very well. Then what happened?"*

"Near the pond was a small bell hung on a bracket, which the milkman used to ring as he went to tell us upstairs in the bedroom that we could go down and make the early-morning tea. This bell was near a little avenue of rose trees. One morning, very early indeed, it tinged loudly and when I looked out I saw that the empty bottles we had put out the night before were full of bright green pond-water. I had to go down and empty them before the milkman arrived. This was only the beginning. One evening I was astounded to find a brace of starfish coupling on the ornamental stone step of the pool, and, looking up, my cry to my wife to come and look was stifled by the sight of a light peppering of barnacles on the stems of the rose trees. The vermin had evidently crept there, taking advantage of the thin film of moisture on the ground after the recent

<sup>1</sup> This story also appeared in *The Nature of Cold Weather*, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1961.

very wet weather. I dipped a finger into the pond and tasted it: it was brackish."

*"But it got worse."*

"It got worse: one night of howling wind and tempestuous rain I heard muffled voices outside shouting in rural tones: 'Belay there, you lubbers!' 'Box the foresail capstan!' 'A line! A line! Give me a line there, for Davy Jones' sake!' and a great creaking of timbers. In the morning, there was the garden-seat, which was too big to float, dragged tilting into the pond, half in and half out."

*"But you could put up with all this. How did the change come about?"*

"It was getting playful, obviously, and inventive, if ill-informed, and might have got dangerous. I decided to treat it with the consideration and dignity which it would probably later have insisted on, and I invited it in as a lodger, bedding it up in the old bathroom. At first I thought I would have to run canvas troughs up the stairs so it could get to its room without soaking the carpet, and I removed the flap from the letter box so it would be free to come and go, but it soon learnt to keep its form quite well, and get about in mackintosh and galoshes, opening doors with gloved fingers."

*"Until a week ago . . ."*

"A week ago it started sitting with us in the lounge (and the electric fire had to be turned off, as the windows kept on steaming up). It had accidentally included a goldfish in its body, and when the goggling dolt swam up the neck into the crystal-clear head, it dipped its hand in and fumbled about with many ripples and grimaces, plucked it out, and offered the fish to my wife, with a polite nod. She was just about to go into the kitchen and cook the supper, but I explained quickly that goldfish were bitter to eat, and he put it back. However, I was going to give him a big plate of ice cubes, which he would have popped into his head and enjoyed sucking, although his real tippie is distilled water, while we watched television, but he didn't seem to want anything. I suppose he thinks he's big enough already."

*"Free board and lodging, eh?"*

"I don't know what rent to charge him. I thought I might ask him to join the river for a spell and bring us back some of the money that abounds there: purses lost overboard from pleasure steamers, rotting away in the mud, and so forth. But he has grown very intolerant of dirt, and might find it difficult to get clean again. Even worse, he might not be able to free himself from his rough dirty cousins, and come roaring back as an impossible green seething giant, tall as the river upended, buckling into the sky, and swamp us and the whole village as well. I shudder to think what would happen if he got as far as the sea, his spiritual home: the country would be in danger. I am at my wits' end for he is idle, and lounges about all day."

*"Well, that's harmless enough . . ."*

"If he's not lounging, he toys with his shape, restlessly. Stripping off his waterproof, he is a charming dolls'-house of glass, with doors and windows opening and shutting; a tree that thrusts up and fills the room; a terrifying shark-shape that darts about between the legs of the furniture, or lurks in the shadows of the room, gleaming in the light of the television tube; a fountain that blooms without spilling a drop; or, and this image constantly recurs, a very small man with a very large head and streaming eyes, who gazes mournfully up at my wife (she takes no notice), and collapses suddenly into his tears with a sob and a gulp. Domestic, pastoral-phallic, maritime-ghastly, stately-gracious or grotesque-pathetic: he rings the changes on a gamut of moods, showing off, while I have to sit aside slumped in my armchair unable to compete, reflecting what feats he may be able to accomplish in due course with his body, what titillating shapes impose, what exaggerated parts deploy, under his mackintosh. I dread the time (for it will come) when I shall arrive home unexpectedly early, and hear a sudden scuffle away in the waste pipes, and find my wife ('Just out of the shower, dear') with that moist look in her eyes, drying her hair: and then to hear him swaggering in from the garden drains, talking loudly about his day's excursion, as if nothing at all had been going on. For he learns greater charm each day, this Mr.

Waterman, and can be as stubborn as winter and gentle as the warm rains of spring."

*"I should say that you have a real problem there, but it's too early for a solution yet, until I know you better. Go away, take a week off from the office, spend your time with your wife, relax, eat plenty of nourishing meals, plenty of sex and sleep. Then come and see me again. Good afternoon.*

*"The next patient, nurse. Ah, Mr. Waterman. Sit down, please. Does the gas fire trouble you? No? I can turn it off if you wish. Well now, we're quite private in here. You can tell me your troubles. A married, air-breathing woman, I think you said . . ."*

Part of an editor's job, ordinarily, is to find things that go together.

But it is unusual to find two stories (especially from such widely separate sources) that "go together" (in several senses) quite the way "Mr. Waterman" and "Mrs. Pigafetta" do.

"Mr. Waterman" was called to my attention by Carol Emshwiller (whose work has appeared in earlier annuals); otherwise I should hardly have thought to look for material in the Paris Review. "Mrs. Pigafetta" appeared in Fantasy and Science Fiction—my most frequent source for many volumes.

Peter Redgrove is a British scientist and poet, living in Leeds; Mr. Bretnor is a California litterateur (critic, essayist, fictionist, translator, humorist) and Orientalist (consultant on occasion to the U. S. Government). They have this much in common: both writers' literary interests are divided primarily between the "quality" publications and s-f. In Mr. Redgrove's words: "Science fiction is one of the modes of poetry in our age, and vice versa too, if either has any guts."

## MRS. PIGAFETTA SWIMS WELL

R. Bretnor

from Fantasy and Science Fiction

Mr. Coastguard, this is what has happened to Pietro Pugliese, who is captain of the fishing boat *Il Trovatore*, of Monterey. Me, Joe Tonelli, I am his engineer. I know.



It is because of Mrs. Pigafetta, from Taranto. It is her fault. Also the porpoises. It is also because Pietro has been famous—

You do not know? You have not heard how one time he is the great *tenore*? Yes, in Rome, Naples, Venice—even in La Scala in Milano. *Do, re, mi, fa*—like so, only with more beauty. Caruso, Gigli—those fellows can only make a squeak alongside Pietro, I tell you.

*So what*, you say? It is important. It is why Mrs. Pigafetta becomes his landlady. It is why she hides his clothes so that he cannot run away like her first husband who maybe is in Boston. It is why the porpoises—

Okay, Mr. Coastguard, okay. I will tell one thing at one time. I will begin when first I hear Pietro sing, last Tuesday night.

He calls to me when he is at the wheel. Our hold is full of fish. The sea is smooth. The moon hangs in the sky like a fine oyster. But I can see that he is still not happy. He has not been happy for two months. All the time he shakes his head. He sighs.

I am worried. I ask if maybe he has a bad stomach, but he does not reply. All at once, his head is thrown back—his mouth is open—he sings! It is from the last act of *Tosca*, in the jail. They are going to execute this guy, and he is singing good-bye to the soprano, who is his girl. You know? That is why it is sad.

I am full of surprise. Never have I heard a voice so rich—like the best *zabaglione*, made with egg yolk, sugar, sweet wine. Also it is strong, like a good foghorn. Even the mast trembles.

I listen to the end. I look at him. His face is to the moon. He weeps! Slowly, many tears roll down his cheeks. What would you do? I want him to feel good. I tell him he is great. I cry, *Bravissimo!*

At last he speaks, as from the grave. "Joe, it is as you say. It is true I am a great man. Even the angels do not have a voice like me. And now"—his chest goes up and down—"it is this voice which cooks my goose! Almost, I

lose all hope. But I say, 'Joe is my good friend. Maybe he can help—'”

Then, Mr. Coastguard, I hear the story. His papa is a fisherman. Once, they come to Naples. While Pietro mends the nets, he sings. He is young, handsome. A rich *marchesa* hears him. And it is done! A year—the world is at his feet. He has a palace, a gold watch, mistresses—yes, *principessas*, girls from the ballet, the wives of millionaires! He sings. All—kings, queens, cardinals—they cry with joy. Even the English often clap their hands.

He is an innocent. He does not know the other singers burn with jealousy. He does not know the critics envy him. They plot. Always they say bad things. One day there is no place for him to sing! Ah, he is wounded to the heart. He goes away. He takes a cabin on a little ship. For two days, without a fee, he sings to the waves, the passengers, the crew. But he is betrayed! The sea has envy too. There comes a storm. Those people on the ship are stupid fools. They say it is his fault. They—they throw him overboard!

He tells me this. Again he sighs. “I cannot swim. I fight against the waves. I call aloud the names of many saints. I sink! But I am not afraid. When I come up, I sing! Again the water swallows me. Then—all is black. My friend, when I awake I think that I am dead. But I am not. I am in Mrs. Pigafetta's house.”

Mr. Coastguard, it is a miracle! The ship is near Taranto. There is this island. And on it is the *penzione* of Mrs. Pigafetta, for shipwrecked sailors. She has heard the fine voice of Pietro in the storm. She has rescued him. It is nothing for Mrs. Pigafetta. She swims well.

He wakes—and she is sitting there, all wet. He is surprised to see her. He makes the sign of the cross, but she says nothing. There is love in her eyes.

And she is beautiful. Not thin, like a young girl, but plump and strong, with fine hips—wide like so. Her lips are red. Her hair is black, done up on top. It shines like it has olive oil on it. Besides, she is a woman of experience—

Still, when Pietro tells me this, he grinds his teeth. “Why do I stay with her, my friend? It is because at first I am

in love. It is a madness. All night, all day—such passion. There are two sailors there, Greeks; she does not speak to them. Each month she makes them pay. But me—one month, two months, three—I get no bill. She teaches me to swim. We sit on the rocks in the sun, and we sing to each other—*La Forza del Destino*, *Pagliacci*, *Rigoletto*. My love has made me deaf. I do not notice that her contralto has the sound of brass. Imagine it!”

Then, in one moment, Pietro’s eyes are opened. A day comes when Mrs. Pigafetta pushes him away. She lets him kiss her neck, her ear—that is all! He does not understand. He asks, “*Carissima*, my sweet lobster, what is wrong?”

She pushes him some more. She makes her lips thin. She says, “No, no, Pietro *miol* We must marry in the Church.”

Even as Pietro tells me this, his face is sad. “At once, all is changed. It comes to me that her voice is loud, of poor quality. Besides, I am Pietro Pugliese—there is my public. I must not stay always with one woman. I make a long face. I ask about her first husband, Pigafetta. I ask her, ‘He is dead?’ And she laughs at me. She shrugs. ‘He is in Boston. It is the same.’”

From the wheelhouse of *Il Trovatore*, Pietro looks to port, to starboard. There is light from the moon on the waves. All over, porpoises are playing—

“Ah, she is stubborn! She makes me afraid. I see I have a great problem, with much trouble. Why? You ask me why? Joe, I have one more reason I cannot marry Mrs. Pigafetta in the Church. It is because—”

He moves his hand to show me. His voice shakes.

“—because Mrs. Pigafetta is a woman only from here up. From here down, she is a fish!”

Okay, Mr. Coastguard, you do not believe. It is because, like me, you have never seen a woman like Mrs. Pigafetta. A mermaid? That is what I ask Pietro. He says no, that it is different. Mrs. Pigafetta is a woman of experience—

The days pass. Always she pushes him away. Always she says, “No, we must marry in the Church.”

He argues. "If we are married, sometime we have a son. You think I want my son to be a sturgeon, a big seabass, perhaps a flounder? I do not know your family."

She laughs. She tells him this cannot be. She says, "Our son can be a bosun in the navy, no worse. Even so, he must know his papa. That is why I push you away."

Soon Pietro tries to escape. He sees a sailing boat. He shouts at it, and runs along the shore. After that, Mrs. Pigafetta takes his clothes. She hides them in her house, which is made in a large cave in the rocks.

But he is brave. Twice more he tries. He swims at night. Each time, the porpoises swim with him. They turn him back, like dogs with a sheep. They are her friends.

When he tells this, he shakes his fist at the porpoises in the sea. "That is when I know that I must be more smart than Mrs. Pigafetta. Again, I sing to her. I praise her voice. And all the time I watch. Ah, she is vain! Two, three times a day she puts on her best hat. She sits at her mirror. She looks at herself one way, then another. She smiles. It is a large hat, with many feathers, much fruit on the top."

Mr. Coastguard, you ask why does she want a hat? But why not? Where she puts the hat she is a woman, not a fish.

Okay. Pietro makes a plan. He promises that they will marry in the Church. After that, she does not say, "No, no." She does not push. But every time she asks when they will marry, he delays.

"Now? My pretty perch, my sea anemone! It is the tourist season. You will be kidnaped for your lovely silver tail—sold in the black market to rich Americans!"

For weeks it is like that. At last she loses patience. "You say we go to Rome. You promise a cathedral. You even tell me I will meet this Rossellini. *Bah!* Tomorrow you will swim with me to Taranto. The priest will marry us." She is very angry. "You say it is not safe. All right! There is a church by the water. I will bring a long dress. I will wear perfume. No one will know."

Pietro pretends that he is pleased. He kisses her. Then he looks sad. "But, *cara mia*, there is—there is one small

thing." He points at it. "You cannot possibly be married in this hat."

She weeps. She tells him if he loved her he would like her hat.

He kisses her again. He protests his love. It is only that the hat is out of fashion. The women in the town will laugh at her. Besides, the sea has spoiled it. Then he tells his plan. They will swim together, but she will wait for him in the water. He will buy her a new hat.

"Joe, I am smart," Pietro says. "I know that she is mad with love. In the morning, we swim to Taranto. She gives me back my clothes. I put them on. I leave her in the water. Quickly, I take a train. Then I come to America. I buy this boat, *Il Trovatore*. I make an oath—"

Again the tears fall. "My friend, I know that if I keep this oath I will be safe. Four years, I do not sing. Then, two months ago, you go to visit your papa. While you are gone, I bring a lady on the boat. Ah, she is beautiful—the wife of an old man who has a bank. She gives me wine. And—and for one moment I forget! I sing for her. From *Don Giovanni*, from *La Traviata*. But suddenly she points her finger at the sea. I look—and my heart is dead! I see the porpoises. They, too, are listening!"

That is why there has been a sadness on Pietro's soul. The porpoises are Mrs. Pigafetta's friends. He knows that they will tell her where he is.

I say, "Have courage! Taranto is a long way. The porpoises will not want to go so far. It will take many months for her to come."

His tears fall like rain. "No, no," he cries. "The porpoises shout to each other through the sea. Also, there is the Panama Canal. She swims well. She will be here soon!"

Mr. Coastguard, the sea is full of porpoises. They play. They leap into the air. There are more now. Also they seem more glad.

"Joe, look!" Pietro grabs my arm. "That is how they are when she is near. I tell you, she comes tonight! You must help me, Joe!"

I say to him, "Have no fear. I do not let her take you back. I will do what you want."

He embraces me. He says, "I have a plan. Maybe once more I can be more smart than Mrs. Pigafetta. You remember one week ago, when we are in San Pedro, I go ashore? Okay, I go to buy a hat. It is a fine hat, the new style, green, with bright things that hang down and a long plume from the top."

The box is in the wheelhouse. He opens it. "I have paid eighteen dollars. Maybe when you give her this fine hat she is shamed and will go away."

"Me?" I say.

"Yes, yes! We watch the porpoises so I can tell when she has come real close. We bring Nick from the galley to hold the wheel. You tie me to the mast—"

I ask, "Why must I tie you to the mast?"

He looks over his shoulder. He makes his voice low. "Because it is a smart trick, made by a Greek. You tie me to the mast with lots of rope, good and strong. You wait on deck. She calls out from the sea, Pietro *mio*, where are you? I sing a little bit. She comes more quickly. She grabs the rail. She wants to climb aboard—Joe, that is when you must think well! You must say, 'Mrs. Pigafetta, it is nice meeting you. Pietro has bought for you this hat. It is expensive. It is a token of his love. But he cannot go with you to your house.' Then you must tell her something so she goes away."

For two hours, we talk about what I must tell to Mrs. Pigafetta. Sometimes Pietro weeps. Sometimes he is angry. But at last I get a good thought. I say, "I will tell her that I tie you up because you are crazy in the head with love—that you try to jump into the sea—that you believe a fat porpoise is Mrs. Pigafetta."

It is now very late. The moon has fallen in the sky. There are more porpoises even than before. They swim around *Il Trovatore*. All the time, they look at us.

Suddenly, Pietro starts to tremble. He whispers, "*She is near!*" He crouches by the mast. We call for Nick to hold the wheel. I take the rope—

And then—crash! bang!—something hits *Il Trovatore* a great blow on the bottom. The stern lifts in the air. I fall. Pietro cries aloud.

What is it? A great fish? A whale? I do not know. Next thing, I hear my engine. It runs fast—faster, faster! It screams—

I forget Pietro! I forget all but my engine. I go to it like a mama to her child who is hurt. Nick is there too. He shouts, "What is wrong?" I shout back, "A fish has broken the propeller!" I turn the engine off.

We look to see if there is a bad leak. Maybe for five minutes we look. Then, all at once—I remember! We leap up to the deck—

The boat has stopped in the water. It rocks gently. All is still. The porpoises have gone. I guess the big fish has gone too. And Pietro? He is not there any more.

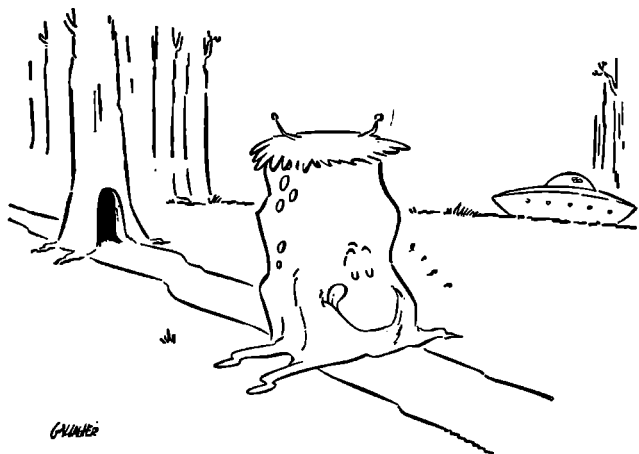
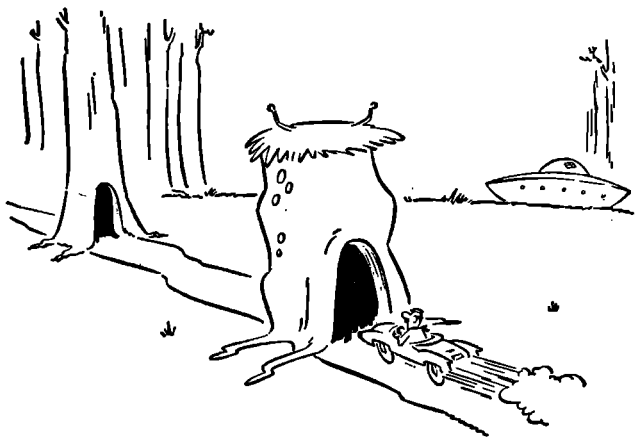
Across the deck, there is sea water. In a strip—wide like so—it is wet. Also, on the deck there is the box. Next to it is a hat. But, Mr. Coastguard, it is not the fine hat Pietro buys down in San Pedro. Here, look at it! See how it is out of fashion? See the flowers, the fruit? See how it has been spoiled by the sea?

Ah, when we see it, we are just like you. At first we have no words. Then, to port, to starboard, we shout loudly, "Pietro! Where are you, Pietro? Answer us! Come back!"

There is no answer. Only, far away, we hear this voice singing. It is strong and full of joy. But it is not Pietro's voice. It is a contralto—with the sound of brass.

No, Mr. Coastguard, I do not think that you will find Pietro. It is too late. Mrs. Pigafetta is a woman of experience. She swims well.

## TREE TRUNKS



GALLAGHER

by John Gallagher

from *The Saturday Evening Post*



**Alien:** Adj. extraneous, strange, foreign, outlandish, exotic, excluded. **Alienated:** disaffected, irreconcilable. **Alienable:** negotiable, transferable, reversional. **N.** heathen, gentile, Nazarene, unbeliever, infidel. **Alienism:** extraneousness, exteriority, mania, paranoia, aberration. **V. alienate:** transfer, convey.

(Roget's Thesaurus)

*In science fiction, the word has come to be almost synonymous with extraterrestrial. In fantasy, most alien beings are terrestrial in origin—very much so. (Demons and leprechauns, trolls, gnomes, and fairies, naiads and dryads: the whole hierarchy of magical descent. The animate plant-being, the possessed animal; the halfway life—were-things, vampires, zombies, et al.) Almost the only non-earthly parts in the supernatural or gothic casts are angels—who, after all, still belong to the cosmology that centers around Earth.*

*Yet the science-fictional alien is rarely as fearsome, and more often "human" in nature than the fantastic one. The difference, I suspect, is that the e-t alien is ordinarily a symbol of the real stranger, the geographical or cultural outsider; while the archetypes of fantasy are, rather, externalized symbols of the dark shapes of the subconscious mind.*

*The "survivor story" which has an honored history in science fiction (Wells, Benét, Stewart, Wylie, and Golding, among others), seldom contains either one of these alien types. It deals instead with the alienated: with "normal" people in a world suddenly turned alien.*

## THEY DON'T MAKE LIFE LIKE THEY USED TO

**Alfred Bester**

*from Fantasy and Science Fiction*

The girl driving the jeep was very fair and very Nordic. Her blonde hair was pulled back in a pony tail, but it was so long that it was more a mare's tail. She wore sandals, a

pair of soiled blue jeans, and nothing else. She was nicely tanned. As she turned the jeep off Fifth Avenue and drove bouncing up the steps of the library, her bosom danced enchantingly.

She parked in front of the library entrance, stepped out, and was about to enter when her attention was attracted by something across the street. She peered, hesitated, then glanced down at her jeans and made a face. She pulled the pants off and hurled them at the pigeons eternally cooling and courting on the library steps. As they clattered up in fright, she ran down to Fifth Avenue, crossed, and stopped before a shop window. There was a plum colored wool dress on display. It had a high waist, a full skirt, and not too many moth holes. The price was \$79.90.

The girl rummaged through old cars skewed on the avenue until she found a loose fender. She smashed the plate glass shop door, carefully stepped across the splinters, entered, and sorted through the dusty dress racks. She was a big girl and had trouble fitting herself. Finally she abandoned the plum colored wool and compromised on a dark tartan, size 12, \$120 reduced to \$99.90. She located a salesbook and pencil, blew the dust off, and carefully wrote: *I.O.U. \$99.90. Linda Nielsen.*

She returned to the library and went through the main doors which had taken her a week to batter in with a sledge hammer. She ran across the great hall, filthied with five years of droppings from the pigeons roosting there. As she ran, she clapped her arms over her head to shield her hair from stray shots. She climbed the stairs to the third floor and entered the Print Room. As always she signed the register: *Date—June 20, 1981. Name—Linda Nielsen. Address—Central Park Model Boat Pond. Business or Firm—Last Man on Earth.*

She had had a long debate with herself about *Business or Firm* the first time she broke into the library. Strictly speaking, she was the last woman on earth, but she had felt that if she wrote that it would seem chauvinistic; and "Last Person on Earth," sounded silly, like calling a drink a beverage.

She pulled portfolios out of racks and leafed through them. She knew exactly what she wanted; something warm with blue accents to fit a twenty-by-thirty frame for her bedroom. In a priceless collection of Hiroshige prints she found a lovely landscape. She filled out a slip, placed it carefully on the librarian's desk, and left with the print.

Downstairs, she stopped off in the main circulation room, signed the register, went to the back shelves and selected two Italian grammars and an Italian dictionary. Then she backtracked through the main hall, went out to the jeep, and placed the books and print on the front seat alongside her companion, an exquisite Dresden china doll. She picked up a list that read:

Jap. print  
Italian  
20 x 30 pict. fr.  
Lobster bisque  
Brass polish  
Detergent  
Furn. polish  
Wet mop

She crossed off the first two items, replaced the list on the dashboard, got into the jeep and bounced down the library steps. She drove up Fifth Avenue, threading her way through crumbling wreckage. As she was passing the ruins of St. Patrick's Cathedral at 50th Street, a man appeared from nowhere.

He stepped out of the rubble and, without looking left or right, started crossing the avenue just in front of her. She exclaimed, banged on the horn which remained mute, and braked so sharply that the jeep slewed and slammed into the remains of a No. 3 bus. The man let out a squawk, jumped ten feet, and then stood frozen, staring at her.

"You crazy jaywalker," she yelled. "Why don't you look where you're going? D'you think you own the whole city?"

He stared and stammered. He was a big man, with thick, grizzled hair, a red beard, and weathered skin. He was wearing army fatigues, heavy ski boots, and had a bursting

knapsack and blanket roll on his back. He carried a battered shotgun, and his pockets were crammed with odds and ends. He looked like a prospector.

"My God," he whispered in a rusty voice. "Somebody at last. I knew it. I always knew I'd find someone." Then, as he noticed her long, fair hair, his face fell. "But a woman," he muttered. "Just my goddam lousy luck."

"What are you, some kind of nut?" she demanded. "Don't you know better than to cross against the lights?"

He looked around in bewilderment. "What lights?"

"So all right, there aren't any lights, but couldn't you look where you were going?"

"I'm sorry, lady. To tell the truth, I wasn't expecting any traffic."

"Just plain common sense," she grumbled, backing the jeep off the bus.

"Hey lady, wait a minute."

"Yes?"

"Listen, you know anything about TV? Electronics, how they say . . ."

"Are you trying to be funny?"

"No, this is straight. Honest."

She snorted and tried to continue driving up Fifth Avenue, but he wouldn't get out of the way.

"Please, lady," he persisted. "I got a reason for asking. Do you know?"

"No."

"Damn! I never get a break. Lady, excuse me, no offense, but you got any guys in this town?"

"There's nobody but me. I'm the last man on earth."

"That's funny. I always thought I was."

"So all right, I'm the last woman on earth."

He shook his head. "There's got to be other people; there just has to. Stands to reason. South, maybe you think? I'm down from New Haven, and I figured if I headed where the climate was like warmer, there'd be some guys I could ask something."

"Ask what?"

"Aw, a woman wouldn't understand. No offense."

"Well, if you want to head south you're going the wrong way."

"That's south, ain't it?" he asked, pointing down Fifth Avenue.

"Yes, but you'll just come to a dead end. Manhattan's an island. What you have to do is go uptown and cross the George Washington bridge to Jersey."

"Uptown? Which way is that?"

"Go straight up Fifth to Cathedral Parkway, then over to the west side and up Riverside. You can't miss it."

He looked at her helplessly.

"Stranger in town?"

He nodded.

"Oh, all right," she said. "Hop in. I'll give you a lift."

She transferred the books and the china doll to the back seat, and he squeezed in alongside her. As she started the jeep she looked down at his worn ski boots.

"Hiking?"

"Yeah."

"Why don't you drive? You can get a car working, and there's plenty of gas and oil."

"I don't know how to drive," he said despondently. "It's the story of my life."

He heaved a sigh, and that made his knapsack jolt massively against her shoulder. She examined him out of the corner of her eye. He had a powerful chest, a long, thick back, and strong legs. His hands were big and hard, and his neck was corded with muscles. She thought for a moment, then nodded to herself and stopped the jeep.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Won't it go?"

"What's your name?"

"Mayo. Jim Mayo."

"I'm Linda Nielsen."

"Yeah. Nice meeting you. Why don't it go?"

"Jim, I've got a proposition for you."

"Oh?" He looked at her doubtfully. "I'll be glad to listen, lady—I mean Linda, but I ought to tell you, I got something on my mind that's going to keep me pretty busy

for a long t . . ." His voice trailed off as he turned away from her intense gaze.

"Jim, if you'll do something for me, I'll do something for you."

"Like what, for instance?"

"Well, I get terribly lonesome, nights. It isn't so bad during the day, there's always a lot of chores to keep you busy, but at night it's just awful."

"Yeah, I know," he muttered.

"I've got to do something about it."

"But how do I come into this?" he asked nervously.

"Why don't you stay in New York for a while? If you do, I'll teach you how to drive, and find you a car so you don't have to hike south."

"Say, that's an idea. Is it hard, driving?"

"I could teach you in a couple of days."

"I don't learn things so quick."

"All right, a couple of weeks, but think of how much time you'll save in the long run."

"Gee," he said, "that sounds great." Then he turned away again. "But what do I have to do for you?"

Her face lit up with excitement. "Jim, I want you to help me move a piano."

"A piano? What piano?"

"A rosewood grand from Steinway's on 57th Street. I'm dying to have it in my place. The living room is just crying for it."

"Oh, you mean you're furnishing, huh?"

"Yes, but I want to play after dinner, too. You can't listen to records all the time. I've got it all planned; books on how to play, and books on how to tune a piano . . . I've been able to figure everything except how to move the piano in."

"Yeah, but . . . But there's apartments all over this town with pianos in them," he objected. "There must be hundreds, at least. Stands to reason. Why don't you live in one of them?"

"Never! I love my place. I've spent five years decorating it, and it's beautiful. Besides, there's the problem of water."

He nodded. "Water's always a headache. How do you handle it?"

"I'm living in the house in Central Park where they used to keep the model yachts. It faces the boat pond. It's a darling place, and I've got it all fixed up. We could get the piano in together, Jim. It wouldn't be hard."

"Well, I don't know, Lena . . ."

"Linda."

"Excuse me. Linda. I—"

"You look strong enough. What'd you do, before?"

"I used to be a pro rassler."

"There! I knew you were strong."

"Oh, I'm not a rassler any more. I become a bartender and went into the restaurant business. I opened 'The Body Slam' up in New Haven. Maybe you heard of it?"

"I'm sorry."

"It was sort of famous with the sports crowd. What'd you do before?"

"I was a researcher for BBDO."

"What's that?"

"An advertising agency," she explained impatiently. "We can talk about that later, if you'll stick around. And I'll teach you how to drive, and we can move in the piano, and there're a few other things that I—but that can wait. Afterwards you can drive south."

"Gee, Linda, I don't know . . ."

She took Mayo's hands. "Come on, Jim, be a sport. You can stay with me. I'm a wonderful cook, and I've got a lovely guest room . . ."

"What for? I mean, thinking you was the last man on earth."

"That's a silly question. A proper house has to have a guest room. You'll love my place. I turned the lawns into a farm and gardens, and you can swim in the pond, and we'll get you a new Jag . . . I know where there's a beauty up on blocks."

"I think I'd rather have a Caddy."

"You can have anything you like. So what do you say, Jim? Is it a deal?"

"All right, Linda," he muttered reluctantly. "You've a deal."

It was indeed a lovely house with its pagoda roof of copper weathered to verdigris green, fieldstone walls, and deep recessed windows. The oval pond before it glittered blue in the soft June sunlight, and mallard ducks paddled and quacked busily. The sloping lawns that formed a bowl around the pond were terraced and cultivated. The house faced west, and Central Park stretched out beyond like an unkempt estate.

Mayo looked at the pond wistfully. "It ought to have boats."

"The house was full of them when I moved in," Linda said.

"I always wanted a model boat when I was a kid. Once I even—" Mayo broke off. A penetrating pounding sounded somewhere; an irregular sequence of heavy knocks that sounded like the dint of stones under water. It stopped as suddenly as it had begun. "What was that?" Mayo asked.

Linda shrugged. "I don't know for sure. I think it's the city falling apart. You'll see buildings coming down every now and then. You get used to it." Her enthusiasm rekindled. "Now come inside. I want to show you everything."

She was bursting with pride and overflowing with decorating details that bewildered Mayo, but he was impressed by her Victorian living room, *Empire* bedroom, and Country Kitchen with a working kerosene cooking stove. The Colonial guest room, with four-poster bed, hooked rug, and Tole lamps, worried him.

"This is kind of girlie-girlie, huh?"

"Naturally, I'm a girl."

"Yeah. Sure. I mean . . ." Mayo looked around doubtfully. "Well, a guy is used to stuff that ain't so delicate. No offense."

"Don't worry, that bed's strong enough. Now remember, Jim, no feet on the spread, and remove it at night. If your shoes are dirty, take them off before you come in. I got that



rug from the museum and I don't want it messed up. Have you got a change of clothes?"

"Only what I got on."

"We'll have to get you new things tomorrow. What you're wearing is so filthy it's not worth laundering."

"Listen," he said desperately, "I think maybe I better camp out in the park."

"Why on earth?"

"Well, I'm like more used to it than houses. But you don't have to worry, Linda. I'll be around in case you need me."

"Why should I need you?"

"All you have to do is holler."

"Nonsense," Linda said firmly. "You're my guest and you're staying here. Now get cleaned up; I'm going to start dinner. Oh damn! I forgot to pick up the lobster bisque."

She gave him a dinner cleverly contrived from canned goods, and served on exquisite Fornisetti china with Swedish silver flatware. It was a typical girl's meal, and Mayo was still hungry when it was finished, but too polite to mention it. He was too tired to fabricate an excuse to go out and forage for something substantial. He lurched off to bed, remembering to remove his shoes, but forgetting all about the spread.

He was awakened next morning by a loud honking and clatter of wings. He rolled out of bed and went to the windows just in time to see the mallards dispossessed from the pond by what appeared to be a red balloon. When he got his eyes working properly, he saw that it was a bathing cap. He wandered out to the pond, stretching and groaning. Linda yelled cheerfully and swam toward him. She heaved herself up out of the pond onto the curbing. The bathing cap was all that she wore. Mayo backed away from the splash and spatter.

"Good morning," Linda said. "Sleep well?"

"Good morning," Mayo said. "I don't know. The bed put kinks in my back. Gee, that water must be cold. You're all gooseflesh."

"No, it's marvelous." She pulled off the cap and shook her hair down. "Where's that towel? Oh, here. Go on in, Jim. You'll feel wonderful."

"I don't like it when it's cold."

"Don't be a sissy."

A crack of thunder split the quiet morning. Mayo looked up at the clear sky in astonishment. "What the hell was that?" he exclaimed.

"Watch," Linda ordered.

"It sounded like a sonic boom."

"There!" she cried, pointing west. "See?"

One of the west-side skyscrapers crumbled majestically, sinking into itself like a collapsible cup, and raining masses of cornice and brick. The flayed girders twisted and contorted. Moments later they could hear the roar of the collapse.

"Man, that's a sight," Mayo muttered in awe.

"The decline and fall of the Empire City. You get used to it. Now take a dip, Jim. I'll get you a towel."

She ran into the house. He dropped his shorts and took off his socks, but was still standing on the curb, unhappily dipping his toe into the water when she returned with a huge bath towel.

"It's awful cold, Linda," he complained.

"Didn't you take cold showers when you were a wrestler?"

"Not me. Boiling hot."

"Jim, if you just stand there, you'll never go in. Look at you, you're starting to shiver. Is that a tattoo around your waist?"

"What? Oh, yeah. It's a python, in five colors. It goes all the way around. See?" He revolved proudly. "Got it when I was with the Marines in Saigon back in '64. It's a Oriental-type python. Elegant, huh?"

"Did it hurt?"

"To tell the truth, no. Some guys try to make out like it's Chinese torture to get tattooed, but they're just showin' off. It more itches than anything else."

"You were a marine in '64?"

"That's right."

"How old were you?"

"Twenty."

"You're thirty-seven now?"

"Thirty-six going on thirty-seven."

"Then you're prematurely gray?"

"I guess so."

She contemplated him thoughtfully. "I tell you what, if you do go in, don't get your head wet."

She ran back into the house. Mayo, ashamed of his vacillation, forced himself to jump feet first into the pond. He was standing, chest deep, splashing his face and shoulders with water when Linda returned. She carried a stool, a pair of scissors, and a comb.

"Doesn't it feel wonderful?" she called.

"No."

She laughed. "Well, come out. I'm going to give you a haircut."

He climbed out of the pond, dried himself, and obediently sat on the stool while she cut his hair. "The beard, too," Linda insisted. "I want to see what you really look like." She trimmed him close enough for shaving, inspected him, and nodded with satisfaction. "Very handsome."

"Aw, go on," he blushed.

"There's a bucket of hot water on the stove. Go and shave. Don't bother to dress. We're going to get you new clothes after breakfast, and then . . . The Piano."

"I couldn't walk around the streets naked," he said, shocked.

"Don't be silly. Who's to see? Now hurry."

They drove down to Abercrombie & Fitch on Madison and 45th Street, Mayo wrapped modestly in his towel. Linda told him she'd been a customer for years, and showed him the pile of sales slips she had accumulated. Mayo examined them curiously while she took his measurements and went off in search of clothes. He was almost indignant when she returned with her arms laden.

"Jim, I've got some lovely elk moccasins, and a safari suit, and wool socks, and Shipboard shirts, and—"

"Listen," he interrupted, "do you know what your whole tab comes to? Nearly fourteen hundred dollars."

"Really? Put on the shorts first. They're drip-dry."

"You must have been out of your mind, Linda. What'd you want all that junk for?"

"Are the socks big enough? What junk? I needed everything."

"Yeah? Like . . ." He shuffled the signed sales slips. "Like One Underwater Viewer with Plexiglass Lens, \$9.95? What for?"

"So I could see to clean the bottom of the pond."

"What about this Stainless Steel Service for Four, \$39.50?"

"For when I'm lazy and don't feel like heating water. You can wash stainless steel in cold water." She admired him. "Oh, Jim, come look in the mirror. You're real romantic, like the big-game hunter in that Hemingway story."

He shook his head. "I don't see how you're ever going to get out of hock. You got to watch your spending, Linda. Maybe we better forget about that piano, huh?"

"Never," Linda said adamantly. "I don't care how much it costs. A piano is a lifetime investment, and it's worth it."

She was frantic with excitement as they drove uptown to the Steinway showroom, and helpful and underfoot by turns. After a long afternoon of muscle-cracking and critical engineering involving makeshift gantries and an agonizing dollie-haul up Fifth Avenue, they had the piano in place in Linda's living room. Mayo gave it one last shake to make sure it was firmly on its legs, and then sank down, exhausted. "Je-zuz!" he groaned. "Hiking south would've been easier."

"Jim!" Linda ran to him and threw herself on him with a fervent hug. "Jim, you're an angel. Are you all right?"

"I'm okay." He grunted. "Get off me, Linda. I can't breathe."

"I just can't thank you enough. I've been dreaming about this for ages. I don't know what I can do to repay you. Anything you want, just name it."

"Aw," he said, "you already cut my hair."

"I'm serious."

"Ain't you teaching me how to drive?"

"Of course. As quickly as possible. That's the least I can do." Linda backed to a chair and sat down, her eyes fixed on the piano.

"Don't make such a fuss over nothing," he said, climbing to his feet. He sat down before the keyboard, shot an embarrassed grin at her over his shoulder, then reached out and began stumbling through *Minuet in G*.

Linda gasped and sat bolt upright. "You play," she whispered.

"Naw. I took piano when I was a kid."

"But you remember."

"A little bit."

"Can you read music?"

"I used to."

"Could you teach me?"

"I guess so; it's kind of hard. Hey, here's another piece I had to take." He began mutilating *Rustle of Spring*. What with the piano out of tune and his mistakes, it was ghastly.

"Beautiful," Linda breathed. "Just beautiful!" She stared at his back while an expression of decision and determination stole across her face. She arose, slowly crossed to Mayo, and put her hands on his shoulders.

He glanced up. "Something?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered. "You practice the piano. I'll get dinner."

But she was so concentrated and preoccupied for the rest of the evening that she made Mayo nervous. He stole off to bed early.

It wasn't until three o'clock the following afternoon that they finally got a car working, and it wasn't a Caddy, it was a Chevy; a hard top because Mayo didn't like the idea of being exposed to the weather in a convertible. They drove out of the 10th Avenue garage and back to the east side where Linda felt more at home. She confessed that the boundaries of her world were from Fifth Avenue to Third, and from 42nd Street to 86th. She was uncomfortable outside this pale.

She turned the wheel over to Mayo and let him creep up and down Fifth and Madison, practicing starts and stops. He sideswiped five wrecks, stalled eleven times, and reversed through a store front which, fortunately, was devoid of glass. He was trembling with nervousness.

"It's real hard," he complained.

"It's just a question of practice," she reassured him. "Don't worry. I promise you'll be an expert if it takes us a month."

"A whole month!"

"You said you were a slow learner, didn't you? Don't blame me. Stop here a minute."

He jolted the Chevy to a halt. Linda got out.

"Wait for me."

"What's up?"

"A surprise."

She ran into a shop and was gone for half an hour. When she reappeared she was wearing a pencil-thin black sheath, pearls, and high heeled opera pumps. She had twisted her hair into a coronet. Mayo regarded her with amazement as she got into the car.

"What's all this?" he asked.

"Part of the surprise. Turn east on 52nd Street."

He labored, started the car, and drove east. "Why'd you get all dressed up in an evening gown?"

"It's a cocktail dress."

"What for?"

"So I'll be dressed for where we're going. Watch out, Jim!" Linda wrenched the wheel and sheered off the stern of a shattered sanitation truck. "I'm taking you to a famous restaurant."

"To eat?"

"No, silly, for drinks. You're my visiting fireman, and I have to entertain you. That's it on the left. See if you can park somewhere."

He parked abominably. As they got out of the car, Mayo stopped and began to sniff curiously.

"Smell that?" he asked.

"Smell what?"

"That sort of sweet smell."

"It's my perfume."

"No, it's something in the air, kind of sweet and chokey. I know that smell from somewhere, but I can't remember."

"Never mind. Come inside." She led him into the restaurant. "You ought to be wearing a tie," she whispered, "but maybe we can get away with it."

Mayo was not impressed by the restaurant door, but was fascinated by the portraits of celebrities hung in the bar. He spent rapt minutes burning his fingers with matches, gazing at Mel Allen, Red Barber, Casey Stengel, Frank Gifford and Rocky Marciano. When Linda finally came back from the kitchen with a lighted candle, he turned to her eagerly.

"You ever see any of them TV stars in here?" he asked.

"I suppose so. How about a drink?"

"Sure. Sure. But I want to talk more about them TV stars."

He escorted her to a bar stool, blew the dust off, and helped her up most gallantly. Then he vaulted over the bar, whipped out his handkerchief, and polished the mohogany professionally. "This is my specialty," he grinned. He assumed the impersonally friendly attitude of the bartender. "Evening, M'am. Nice night. What's your pleasure?"

"God, I had a rough day in the shop! Dry Martini on the rocks. Better make it a double."

"Certainly, M'am. Twist or olive?"

"Onion."

"Double dry Gibson on the rocks. Right." Mayo searched behind the bar and finally produced whisky, gin, and several bottles of soda, as yet only partially evaporated through their sealed caps. "Afraid we're fresh out of Martinis, M'am. What's your second pleasure?"

"Oh, I like that. Scotch, please."

"This soda'll be flat," he warned, "and there's no ice."

"Never mind."

He rinsed a glass with soda and poured her a drink.

"Thank you. Have one on me, bartender. What's your name?"

"They call me Jim, M'am. No thanks. Never drink on duty."

"Then come off duty and join me."

"Never drink off duty, M'am."

"You can call me Linda."

"Thank you, Miss Linda."

"Are you serious about never drinking, Jim?"

"Yeah."

"Well, Happy Days."

"And Long Nights."

"I like that, too. Is it your own?"

"Gee, I don't know. It's sort of the usual bartender's routine, a specially with guys. You know? Suggestive. No offense."

"None taken."

"Bees!" Mayo burst out.

Linda was startled. "Bees what?"

"That smell. Like inside bee hives."

"Oh? I wouldn't know," she said indifferently. "I'll have another, please."

"Coming right up. Now listen, about them TV celebrities, you actually saw them here? In person?"

"Why of course. Happy Days, Jim."

"May they all be Saturdays."

Linda pondered. "Why Saturdays?"

"Day off."

"Oh."

"Which TV stars did you see?"

"You name 'em, I saw 'em." She laughed. "You remind me of the kid next door. I always had to tell him the celebrities I'd seen. One day I told him I saw Jean Arthur in here, and he said, 'With his horse?'"

Mayo couldn't see the point, but was wounded nevertheless. Just as Linda was about to soothe his feelings, the bar began a gentle quivering, and at the same time a faint subterranean rumbling commenced. It came from a distance, seemed to approach slowly, and then faded away. The vibration stopped. Mayo stared at Linda.

"Je-zus! You think maybe this building's going to go?"



She shook her head. "No. When they go, it's always with that boom. You know what that sounded like? The Lexington Avenue subway."

"The subway?"

"Uh-huh. The local train."

"That's crazy. How could the subway be running?"

"I didn't say it *was*. I said it *sounded* like. I'll have another please."

"We need more soda." Mayo explored and reappeared with bottles and a large menu. He was pale. "You better take it easy, Linda," he said. "You know what they're charging per drink? \$1.75. Look."

"To hell with expense. Let's live a little. Make it a double, bartender. You know something, Jim? If you stayed in town I could show you where all your heroes lived. Thank you. Happy Days. I could take you up to BBDO and show you their tapes and films. How about that? Stars like . . . like Red . . . Who?"

"Barber."

"Red Barber, and Rocky Gifford, and Rocky Casey, and Rocky, the Flying Squirrel."

"You're putting me on," Mayo said, offended again.

"Me, sir? Putting you on?" Linda said with dignity. "Why would I do a thing like that? Just trying to be pleasant. Just trying to give you a good time. My mother told me, Linda, she told me, just remember this about a man, wear what he wants, and say what he likes, is what she told me. You want this dress?" she demanded.

"I like it, if that's what you mean."

"Know what I paid for it? Ninety-nine fifty."

"What? A hundred dollars for a skinny black thing like that?"

"It is not a skinny black thing like that. It is a basic black cocktail frock. And I paid twenty dollars for the pearls. Simulated," she explained. "And sixty for the opera pumps. And forty for the perfume. Two hundred and twenty dollars to give you a good time. You having a good time?"

"Sure."

"Want to smell me?"

"I already did."

"Bartender, give me another."

"Afraid I can't serve you, M'am."

"Why not?"

"You've had enough already."

"I have not had enough already," Linda said indignantly. "Where's your manners?" She grabbed the whisky bottle. "Come on, let's have a few drinks and talk up a storm about TV stars. Happy Days. I could take you up to BBDO and show you their tapes and films. How about that?"

"You already asked me."

"You didn't answer. I could show you movies, too. You like movies? I hate 'em, but I can't knock 'em any more. Movies saved my life when the big bang came."

"How was that?"

"This is a secret, understand? Just between you and me. If any other agency ever found out..." Linda looked around and then lowered her voice. "BBDO located this big cache of silent films. Lost films, see? Nobody knew the prints were around. Make a great TV series. So they sent me to this abandoned mine in Jersey to take inventory."

"In a mine?"

"That's right. Happy Days."

"Why were they in a mine?"

"Old prints. Acetate. Catch fire. Also rot. Have to be stored like wine. That's why. So took two of my assistants with me to spend weekend down there, checking."

"You stayed in the mine, a whole weekend?"

"Uh-huh. Three girls. Friday to Monday. That was the plan. Thought it would be a fun deal. Happy Days. So. Where was I? Oh. So, took lights, blankets, linen, plenty of picnic, the full schmeer, and went to work. I remember exact moment when blast came. Was looking for third reel of an UFA film, *Gekronter Blumenorden an der Pegnitz*. Had reel one, two, four, five, six. No three. Bang! Happy Days."

"Jesus. Then what?"

"My girls panicked. Couldn't keep 'em down there. Never saw them again. But I knew. I knew. Stretched that picnic

forever. Then starved even longer. Finally came up, and for what? For who? Whom?" She began to weep. "For nobody. Nobody left. Nothing." She took Mayo's hands. "Why won't you stay?"

"Stay? Where?"

"Here."

"I am staying."

"I mean for a long time. Why not? Haven't I got lovely home? And there's all New York for supplies. And farm for flowers and vegetables. We could keep cows and chickens. Go fishing. Drive cars. Go to museums. Art galleries. Entertain . . ."

"You're doing all that right now. You don't need me."

"But I do. I do."

"For what?"

"For piano lessons."

After a long pause he said, "You're drunk."

"Not wounded, sire, but dead."

She lay her head on the bar, beamed up at him roguishly, and then closed her eyes. An instant later, Mayo knew she had passed out. He compressed his lips. Then he climbed out of the bar, computed the tab, and left fifteen dollars under the whisky bottle.

He took Linda's shoulder and shook her gently. She collapsed into his arms, and her hair came tumbling down. He blew out the candle, picked Linda up, and carried her to the Chevy. Then, with anguished concentration, he drove through the dark to the boat pond. It took him forty minutes.

He carried Linda into her bedroom and sat her down on the bed which was decorated with an elaborate arrangement of dolls. Immediately she rolled over and curled up with a doll in her arms, crooning to it. Mayo lit a lamp and tried to prop her upright. She went over again, giggling.

"Linda," he said, "you got to get that dress off."

"Mf."

"You can't sleep in it. It cost a hundred dollars."

"Nine'nine-fif'y."

"Now come on, honey."

"Fm."

He rolled his eyes in exasperation, and then undressed her, carefully hanging up the basic black cocktail frock, and standing the sixty-dollar pumps in a corner. He could not manage the clasp of the pearls (simulated) so he put her to bed still wearing them. Lying on the pale blue sheets, nude except for the necklace, she looked like a Nordic odalisque.

"Did you muss my dolls?" she mumbled.

"No. They're all around you."

"Tha's right. Never sleep without them." She reached out and petted them lovingly. "Happy Days. Long Nights."

"Women!" Mayo snorted. He extinguished the lamp and tramped out, slamming the door behind him.

Next morning Mayo was again awakened by the clatter of dispossessed ducks. The red balloon was sailing on the surface of the pond, bright in the warm June sunshine. Mayo wished it was a model boat instead of the kind of girl who got drunk in bars. He stalked out and jumped into the water as far from Linda as possible. He was sluicing his chest when something seized his ankle and nipped him. He let out a yell, and was confronted by Linda's beaming face bursting out of the water before him.

"Good morning," she laughed.

"Very funny," he muttered.

"You look mad this morning."

He grunted.

"And I don't blame you. I did an awful thing last night. I didn't give you any dinner, and I want to apologize."

"I wasn't thinking about dinner," he said with baleful dignity.

"No? Then what on earth are you mad about?"

"I can't stand women who get drunk."

"Who was drunk?"

"You."

"I was not," she said indignantly.

"No? Who had to be undressed and put to bed like a kid?"

"Who was too dumb to take off my pearls?" she coun-

tered. "They broke and I slept on pebbles all night. I'm covered with black and blue marks. Look. Here and here and—"

"Linda," he interrupted sternly, "I'm just a plain guy from New Haven. I got no use for spoiled girls who run up charge accounts and all the time decorate themselves and hang around society-type saloons getting loaded."

"If you don't like my company why do you stay?"

"I'm going," he said. He climbed out and began drying himself. "I'm starting south this morning."

"Enjoy your hike."

"I'm driving."

"What? A kiddie-kar?"

"The Chevvy."

"Jim, you're not serious?" She climbed out of the pond, looking alarmed. "You really don't know how to drive yet."

"No? Didn't I drive you home falling down drunk last night?"

"You'll get into awful trouble."

"Nothing I can't get out of. Anyway, I can't hang around here forever. You're a party girl; you just want to play. I got serious things on my mind. I got to go south and find guys who know about TV."

"Jim, you've got me wrong. I'm not like that at all. Why, look at the way I fixed up my house. Could I have done that if I'd been going to parties all the time?"

"You done a nice job," he admitted.

"Please don't leave today. You're not ready yet."

"Aw, you just want me to hang around and teach you music."

"Who said that?"

"You did. Last night."

She frowned, pulled off her cap, then picked up her towel and began drying herself. At last she said, "Jim, I'll be honest with you. Sure, I want you to stay a while. I won't deny it. But I wouldn't want you around permanently. After all, what have we got in common?"

"You're so damn uptown," he growled.

"No, no, it's nothing like that. It's simply that you're a

guy and I'm a girl, and we've got nothing to offer each other. We're different. We've got different tastes and interests. Fact?"

"Absolutely."

"But you're not ready to leave yet. So I tell you what; we'll spend the whole morning practicing driving, and then we'll have some fun. What would you like to do? Go window-shopping? Buy more clothes? Visit the Modern Museum? Have a picnic?"

His face brightened. "Gee, you know something? I was never to a picnic in my whole life. Once I was bartender at a clambake, but that's not the same thing; not like when you're a kid."

She was delighted. "Then we'll have a real kid-type picnic."

And she brought her dolls. She carried them in her arms while Mayo toted the picnic basket to the Alice in Wonderland monument. The statue perplexed Mayo, who had never heard of Lewis Carroll. While Linda seated her pets and unpacked the picnic, she gave Mayo a summary of the story, and described how the bronze heads of Alice, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare had been polished bright by the swarms of kids playing King of the Mountain.

"Funny, I never heard of that story," he said.

"I don't think you had much of a childhood, Jim."

"Why would you say a—" He stopped, cocked his head, and listened intently.

"What's the matter?" Linda asked.

"You hear that blue jay?"

"No."

"Listen. He's making a funny sound; like steel."

"Steel?"

"Yeah. Like . . . like swords in a duel."

"You're kidding."

"No. Honest."

"But birds sing; they don't make noises."

"Not always. Blue jays imitate noises a lot. Starlings, too. And parrots. Now why would he be imitating a sword fight? Where'd he hear it?"

"You're a real country boy, aren't you, Jim? Bees and blue jays and starlings and all that . . ."

"I guess so. I was going to ask; why would you say a thing like that, me not having any childhood?"

"Oh, things like not knowing Alice, and never going on a picnic, and always wanting a model yacht." Linda opened a dark bottle. "Like to try some wine?"

"You better go easy," he warned.

"Now stop it, Jim. I'm not a drunk."

"Did you or didn't you get smashed last night?"

She capitulated. "All right, I did; but only because it was my first drink in years."

He was pleased by her surrender. "Sure. Sure. That figures."

"So? Join me?"

"What the hell, why not?" He grinned. "Let's live a little. Say, this is one swingin' picnic, and I like the plates, too. Where'd you get them?"

"Abercrombie & Fitch," Linda said, deadpan. "Stainless Steel Service for Four, \$39.50. Skoal."

Mayo burst out laughing. "I sure goofed, didn't I, kicking up all that fuss? Here's looking at you."

"Here's looking right back."

They drank and continued eating in warm silence, smiling companionably at each other. Linda removed her Madras silk shirt in order to tan in the blazing afternoon sun, and Mayo politely hung it up on a branch. Suddenly Linda asked, "Why didn't you have a childhood, Jim?"

"Gee, I don't know." He thought it over. "I guess because my mother died when I was a kid. And something else, too; I had to work a lot."

"Why?"

"My father was a schoolteacher. You know how they get paid."

"Oh, so that's why you're anti-egghead."

"I am?"

"Of course. No offense."

"Maybe I am," he conceded. "It sure was a letdown for

my old man, me playing fullback in high school, and him wanting like an Einstein in the house."

"Was football fun?"

"Not like playing games. Football's a business. Hey, remember when we were kids how we used to choose up sides? *Ibbety, bibbety, zibbety, zab?*"

"We used to say, *Eenie, meenie, miney, mo.*"

"Remember: *April Fool, go to school, tell your teacher you're a fool?*"

"*I love coffee, I love tea, I love the boys, and the boys love me.*"

"I bet they did at that," Mayo said solemnly.

"Not me."

"Why not?"

"I was always too big."

He was astonished. "But you're not big," he assured her. "You're just the right size. Perfect. And really built. I noticed when we moved the piano in. You got muscle, for a girl. A specially in the legs, and that's where it counts."

She blushed. "Stop it, Jim."

"No. Honest."

"More wine?"

"Thanks. You have some, too."

"All right."

A crack of thunder split the sky with its sonic boom, and was followed by the roar of collapsing masonry.

"There goes another skyscraper," Linda said. "What were we talking about?"

"Games," Mayo said promptly. "Excuse me for talking with my mouth full."

"Oh yes. Jim, did you play *Drop the Handkerchief* up in New Haven?" Linda sang, "*A tisket, a tasket, a green and yellow basket. I sent a letter to my love, and on the way I dropped it . . .*"

"Gee," he said, much impressed. "You sing real good."

"Oh, go on!"

"Yes you do. You got a swell voice. Now don't argue with me. Keep quiet a minute. I got to figure something out." He thought intently for a long time, finishing his wine



and absently accepting another glass. Finally he delivered himself of a decision. "You got to learn music."

"You know I'm dying to, Jim."

"So I'm going to stay a while and teach you; as much as I know. Now hold it! Hold it!" he added hastily, cutting off her excitement. "I'm not going to stay in your house. I want a place of my own."

"Of course, Jim. Anything you say."

"And I'm still headed south."

"I'll teach you to drive, Jim. I'll keep my word."

"And no strings, Linda."

"Of course not. What kind of strings?"

"You know. Like the last minute you all of a sudden got a Looey Cans couch you want me to move in."

"*Louis Quinze!*" Linda's jaw dropped. "Wherever did you learn that?"

"Not in the Marines, that's for sure."

They laughed, clinked glasses, and finished their wine. Suddenly Mayo leaped up, pulled Linda's hair, and ran to the Wonderland monument. In an instant he had climbed to the top of Alice's head.

"I'm King of the Mountain," he shouted, looking around in imperial survey. "I'm King of the—" He cut himself off and stared down behind the statue.

"Jim, what's the matter?"

Without a word, Mayo climbed down and strode to a pile of debris half hidden inside overgrown forsythia bushes. He knelt and began turning over the wreckage with gentle hands. Linda ran to him.

"Jim, what's wrong?"

"These used to be model boats," he muttered.

"That's right. My God, is that all? I thought you were sick, or something."

"How come they're here?"

"Why, I dumped them, of course."

"You?"

"Yes. I told you. I had to clear out the boathouse when I moved in. That was ages ago."

"You did this?"

"Yes. I—"

"You're a murderer," he growled. He stood up and glared at her. "You're a killer. You're like all women, you got no heart and soul. To do a thing like this!"

He turned and stalked toward the boat pond. Linda followed him, completely bewildered.

"Jim, I don't understand. Why are you so mad?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"But I had to have houseroom. You wouldn't expect me to live with a lot of model boats."

"Just forget everything I said. I'm going to pack and go south, I wouldn't stay with you if you was the last person on earth."

Linda gathered herself and suddenly darted ahead of Mayo. When he tramped into the boathouse, she was standing before the door of the guest room. She held up a heavy iron key.

"I found it," she panted. "Your door's locked."

"Gimme that key, Linda."

"No."

He stepped toward her, but she faced him defiantly and stood her ground.

"Go ahead," she challenged. "Hit me."

He stopped. "Aw, I wouldn't pick on anybody that wasn't my own size." They continued to face each other, at a complete impasse.

"I don't need my gear," Mayo muttered at last. "I can get more stuff somewheres."

"Oh, go ahead and pack," Linda answered. She tossed him the key and stood aside. Then Mayo discovered there was no lock in the bedroom door. He opened the door, looked inside, closed it, and looked at Linda. She kept her face straight but began to sputter. He grinned. Then they both burst out laughing.

"Gee," Mayo said, "you sure made a monkey out of me. I'd hate to play poker against you."

"You're a pretty good bluffer yourself, Jim. I was scared to death you were going to knock me down."

"You ought to know I wouldn't hurt nobody."

"I guess I do. Now, let's sit down and talk this over sensibly."

"Aw, forget it, Linda. I kind of lost my head over them boats, and I—"

"I don't mean the boats; I mean going south. Every time you get mad you start south again. Why?"

"I told you, to find guys who know about TV."

"Why?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"I can try. Why don't you explain what you're after; specifically? Maybe I can help you."

"You can't do nothing for me; you're a girl."

"We have our uses. At least I can listen. You can trust me, Jim. Aren't we chums? Tell me about it."

Well, when the blast come (Mayo said) I was up in the Berkshires with Gil Watkins. Gil was my buddy, a real nice guy and a real bright guy. He took two years from M.I.T. before he quit college. He was like chief engineer or something at WNHA, the TV station in New Haven. Gil had a million hobbies. One of them was spee—speel—I can't remember. It meant exploring caves.

So anyway we were up in this flume in the Berkshires, spending the weekend inside, exploring and trying to map everything and figure out where the underground river come from. We brought food and stuff along, and bedrolls. The compass we were using went crazy for like twenty minutes, and that should have give us a clue, but Gil talked about magnetic ores and stuff. Only when we come out Sunday night, I tell you it was pretty scarey. Gil knew right off what happened.

"By Christ, Jim," he said, "they up and done it like everybody always knew they would. They've blew and gassed and poisoned and radiated themselves straight to hell, and we're going back to that goddam cave until it all blows over."

So me and Gil went back and rationed the food and stayed as long as we could. Finally we come out again and drove back to New Haven. It was dead like all the rest.

Gil put together some radio stuff and tried to pick up broadcasts. Nothing. Then we packed some canned goods and drove all around; Bridgeport, Waterbury, Hartford, Springfield, Providence, New London . . . a big circle: Nobody. Nothing. So we come back to New Haven and settled down, and it was a pretty good life.

Daytime, we'd get in supplies and stuff, and tinker with the house to keep it working right. Nights, after supper, Gil would go off to WNHA around seven o'clock and start the station. He was running it on the emergency generators. I'd go down to "The Body Slam," open it up, sweep it out, and then start the bar TV set. Gil fixed me a generator for it to run on.

It was a lot of fun watching the shows Gil was broadcasting. He'd start with the news and weather, which he always got wrong. All he had was some Farmer's Almanacs and a sort of antique barometer that looked like that clock you got there on the wall. I don't think it worked so good, or maybe Gil never took weather at M.I.T. Then he'd broadcast the evening show.

I had my shotgun in the bar in case of holdups. Anytime I saw something that bugged me, I just up with the gun and let loose at the set. Then I'd take it and throw it out the front door, and put another one in its place. I must have had hundreds waiting in the back. I spent two days a week just collecting reserves.

Midnight, Gil would turn off WNHA, I'd lock up the restaurant, and we'd meet home for coffee. Gil would ask how many sets I shot, and laugh when I told him. He said I was the most accurate TV poll ever invented. I'd ask him about what shows were coming up next week, and argue with him about . . . oh . . . about like what movies or football games WNHA was scheduling. I didn't like Westerns much, and I hated them high-minded panel discussions.

But the luck had to turn lousy; it's the story of my life. After a couple of years I found out I was down to my last set, and then I was in trouble. This night Gil run one of them icky commercials where this smart-alex woman saves a marriage with the right laundry soap. Naturally I reached

for my gun, and only the last minute remembered not to shoot. Then he run an awful movie about a misunderstood composer, and the same thing happened. When we met back at the house, I was all shook up.

"What's the matter?" Gil asked.

I told him.

"I thought you liked watching the shows," he said.

"Only when I could shoot 'em."

"You poor bastard," he laughed, "you're a captive audience now."

"Gil, could you maybe change the programs, seeing the spot I'm in?"

"Be reasonable, Jim. WNHA has to broadcast variety. We operate on the cafeteria basis; something for everybody. If you don't like a show, why don't you switch channels?"

"Now that's silly. You know damn well we only got one channel in New Haven."

"Then turn your set off."

"I can't turn the bar set off, it's part of the entertainment. I'd lose my whole clientele. Gil, do you *have* to show them awful movies, like that army musical last night, singing and dancing and kissing on top of Sherman tanks, for Jezus sake!"

"The women love uniform pictures."

"And those commercials; women always sneering at somebody's girdle, and fairies smoking cigarettes, and—"

"Aw," Gil said, "write a letter to the station."

So I did, and a week later I got an answer. It said: *Dear Mr. Mayo, we are very glad to learn that you are a regular viewer of WNHA, and thank you for your interest in our programing. We hope you will continue to enjoy our broadcasts. Sincerely yours, Gilbert O. Watkins, Station Manager.* There was a couple of tickets for an interview show enclosed. I showed the letter to Gil, and he just shrugged.

"You see what you're up against, Jim," he said. "They don't care about what you like or don't like. All they want to know is are you watching."

I tell you, the next couple of months were hell for me. I couldn't keep the set turned off, and I couldn't watch it

without reaching for my gun a dozen times a night. It took all my will power to keep from pulling the trigger. I got so nervous and jumpy that I knew I had to do something about it before I went off my rocker. So one night I brought the gun home and shot Gil.

Next day I felt a lot better, and when I went down to "The Body Slam" at seven o'clock to clean up, I was whistling kind of cheerful. I swept out the restaurant, polished the bar, and then turned on the TV to get the news and weather. You wouldn't believe it, but the set was busted. I couldn't get a picture. I couldn't even get a sound. My last set, busted.

So you see, that's why I have to head south (Mayo explained); I got to locate a TV repairman.

There was a long pause after Mayo finished his story. Linda examined him keenly, trying to conceal the gleam in her eye. At last she asked with studied carelessness, "Where did he get the barometer?"

"Who? What?"

"Your friend, Gil. His antique barometer. Where did he get it?"

"Gee, I don't know. Antiquing was another one of his hobbies."

"And it looked like that clock?"

"Just like it."

"French?"

"I couldn't say."

"Bronze?"

"I guess so. Like your clock. Is that bronze?"

"Yes. Shaped like a sunburst?"

"No, just like yours."

"That's a sunburst. The same size?"

"Exactly."

"Where was it?"

"Didn't I tell you? In our house."

"Where's the house?"

"On Grant Street."

"What number?"

"Three fifteen. Say, what is all this?"

"Nothing, Jim. Just curious. No offense. Now I think I'd better get our picnic things."

"You wouldn't mind if I took a walk by myself?"

She cocked an eye at him. "Don't try driving alone. Garage mechanics are scarcer than TV repairmen."

He grinned and disappeared; but after dinner the true purpose of his disappearance was revealed when he produced a sheaf of sheet music, placed it on the piano rack, and led Linda to the piano bench. She was delighted and touched.

"Jim, you angel! Wherever did you find it?"

"In the apartment house across the street. Fourth floor, rear. Name of Horowitz. They got a lot of records, too. Boy, I can tell you it was pretty spooky snooping around in the dark with only matches. You know something funny, the whole top of the house is full of glop."

"Glop?"

"Yeah. Sort of white jelly, only it's hard. Like clear concrete. Now look, see this note? It's C. Middle C. It stands for this white key here. We better sit together. Move over . . ."

The lesson continued for two hours of painful concentration, and left them both so exhausted that they tottered to their rooms with only perfunctory good-nights.

"Jim," Linda called.

"Yeah?" he yawned.

"Would you like one of my dolls for your bed?"

"Gee, no. Thanks a lot, Linda, but guys really ain't interested in dolls."

"I suppose not. Never mind. Tomorrow I'll have something for you that really interests guys."

Mayo was awakened next morning by a rap on his door. He heaved up in bed and tried to open his eyes.

"Yeah? Who is it?" he called.

"It's me. Linda. May I come in?"

He glanced around hastily. The room was neat. The

hooked rug was clean. The precious candlewick bedspread was neatly folded on top of the dresser.

"Okay. Come on in."

Linda entered, wearing a crisp seersucker dress. She sat down on the edge of the four-poster and gave Mayo a friendly pat. "Good morning," she said. "Now listen. I'll have to leave you alone for a few hours, I've got things to do. There's breakfast on the table, but I'll be back in time for lunch. All right?"

"Sure."

"You won't be lonesome?"

"Where you going?"

"Tell you when I get back." She reached out and tousled his head. "Be a good boy and don't get into mischief. Oh, one other thing. Don't go into my bedroom."

"Why should I?"

"Just don't anyway."

She smiled and was gone. Moments later, Mayo heard the jeep start and drive off. He got up at once, went into Linda's bedroom, and looked around. The room was neat, as ever. The bed was made, and her pet dolls were lovingly arranged on the coverlet. Then he saw it.

"Gee," he breathed.

It was a model of a full-rigged clipper ship. The spars and rigging were intact, but the hull was peeling, and the sails were shredded. It stood before Linda's closet, and alongside it was her sewing basket. She had already cut out a fresh set of white linen sails. Mayo knelt down before the model and touched it tenderly.

"I'll paint her black with a gold line around her," he murmured, "and I'll name her the *Linda N.*"

He was so deeply moved that he hardly touched his breakfast. He bathed, dressed, took his shotgun and a handful of shells and went out to wander through the park. He circled south, passed the playing fields, the decaying carousel, and the crumbling skating rink, and at last left the park and loafed down Seventh Avenue.

He turned east on 50th Street and spent a long time trying to decipher the tattered posters advertising the last



performance at Radio City Music Hall. Then he turned south again. He was jolted to a halt by the sudden clash of steel. It sounded like giant sword blades in a titanic duel. A small herd of stunted horses burst out of a side street, terrified by the clangor. Their shoeless hooves thudded bluntly on the pavement. The sound of steel stopped.

"That's where that blue jay got it from," Mayo muttered. "But what the hell is it?"

He drifted eastward to investigate, but forgot the mystery when he came to the diamond center. He was dazzled by the blue-white stones glittering in the showcases. The door of one jewel mart had sagged open, and Mayo tiptoed in. When he emerged it was with a strand of genuine matched pearls which had cost him an I.O.U. worth a year's rent on "The Body Slam."

His tour took him to Madison Avenue where he found himself before Abercrombie & Fitch. He went in to explore and came at last to the gun racks. There he lost all sense of time, and when he recovered his senses he was walking up Fifth Avenue toward the boat pond. An Italian Cosmi automatic rifle was cradled in his arms, guilt was in his heart, and a sales slip in the store read: *I.O.U. 1 Cosmi Rifle, \$750.00. 6 Boxes Ammo. \$18.00. James Mayo.*

It was past three o'clock when he got back to the boat-house. He eased in, trying to appear casual, hoping the extra gun he was carrying would go unnoticed. Linda was sitting on the piano bench with her back to him.

"Hi," Mayo said nervously. "Sorry I'm late. I... I brought you a present. They're real." He pulled the pearls from his pocket and held them out. Then he saw she was crying.

"Hey, what's the matter?"

She didn't answer.

"You wasn't scared I'd run out on you? I mean, well, all my gear is here. The car, too. You only had to look."

She turned. "I hate you!" she cried.

He dropped the pearls and recoiled, startled by her vehemence. "What's the matter?"

"You're a lousy, rotten liar!"

**"Who? Me?"**

**"I drove up to New Haven this morning." Her voice trembled with passion. "There's no house standing on Grant Street. It's all wiped out. There's no Station WNHA. The whole building's gone."**

**"No."**

**"Yes. And I went to your restaurant. There's no pile of TV sets out in the street. There's only one set, over the bar. It's rusted to pieces. The rest of the restaurant is a pigsty. You were living there all the time. Alone. There was only one bed in back. Lies! All lies!"**

**"Why would I lie?"**

**"You never shot any Gil Watkins."**

**"I sure did. Both barrels. He had it coming."**

**"And you haven't got any TV set to repair."**

**"Yes I do."**

**"And even if it is repaired, there's no station to broadcast."**

**"Talk sense," he said angrily. "Why would I shoot Gil if there wasn't any broadcast."**

**"If he's dead, how can he broadcast?"**

**"See? And you just now said I didn't shoot him."**

**"Oh, you're mad! You're insane!" she sobbed. "You just described that barometer because you happened to be looking at my clock. And I believed your crazy lies. I had my heart set on a barometer to match my clock. I've been looking for years." She ran to the wall arrangement and hammered her fist alongside the clock. "It belongs right here. Here. But you lied, you lunatic. There never was a barometer."**

**"If there's a lunatic around here, it's you," he shouted. "You're so crazy to get this house decorated that nothing's real for you any more."**

**She ran across the room, snatched up his old shotgun and pointed it at him. "You get out of here. Right this minute. Get out or I'll kill you. I never want to see you again."**

**The shotgun kicked off in her hands, knocking her backwards, and spraying shot over Mayo's head into a corner**

bracket. China shattered and clattered down. Linda's face went white.

"Jim! My God, are you all right? I didn't mean to . . . It just went off . . ."

He stepped forward, too furious to speak. Then, as he raised his hand to cuff her, the sound of distant reports came, BLAM-BLAM-BLAM. Mayo froze.

"Did you hear that?" he whispered.

Linda nodded.

"That wasn't any accident. It was a signal."

Mayo grabbed the shotgun, ran outside, and fired the second barrel into the air. There was a pause. Then again came the distant explosions in a stately triplet, BLAM-BLAM-BLAM. They had an odd sucking sound, as though they were implosions rather than explosions. Far up the park, a canopy of frightened birds mounted into the sky.

"There's somebody," Mayo exulted. "By God, I told you I'd find somebody. Come on."

They ran north, Mayo digging into his pockets for more shells to reload and signal again.

"I got to thank you for taking that shot at me, Linda."

"I didn't shoot at you," she protested. "It was an accident."

"The luckiest accident in the world. They could be passing through and never know about us. But what the hell kind of guns are they using? I never heard no shots like that before, and I heard 'em all. Wait a minute."

On the little piazza before the Wonderland monument, Mayo halted and raised the shotgun to fire. Then he slowly lowered it. He took a deep breath. In a harsh voice he said, "Turn around. We're going back to the house." He pulled her around and faced her south.

Linda stared at him. In an instant he had become transformed from a gentle teddy bear into a panther.

"Jim, what's wrong?"

"I'm scared," he growled. "I'm goddam scared, and I don't want you to be, too." The triple salvo sounded again. "Don't pay any attention," he ordered. "We're going back to the house. Come on!"

She refused to move. "But why? Why?"

"We don't want any part of them. Take my word for it."

"How do you know? You've got to tell me."

"Christ! You won't let it alone until you find out, huh? All right. You want the explanation for that bee smell, and them buildings falling down, and all the rest?" He turned Linda around with a hand on her neck, and directed her gaze at the Wonderland monument. "Go ahead. Look."

A consummate craftsman had removed the heads of Alice, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare, and replaced them with towering Mantis heads, all sabre mandibles, antennae, and faceted eyes. They were of a burnished steel, and gleamed with unspeakable ferocity. Linda let out a sick whimper and sagged against Mayo. The triple report signaled once more.

Mayo caught Linda, heaved her over his shoulder, and loped back toward the pond. She recovered consciousness in a moment and began to moan. "Shut up," he growled. "Whining won't help." He set her on her feet before the boathouse. She was shaking but trying to control herself. "Did this place have shutters when you moved in? Where are they?"

"Stacked." She had to squeeze the words out. "Behind the trellis."

"I'll put 'em up. You fill buckets with water and stash 'em in the kitchen. Go!"

"Is it going to be a siege?"

"We'll talk later. Go!"

She filled buckets, and then helped Mayo jam the last of the shutters into the window embrasures. "All right, inside," he ordered. They went into the house and shut and barred the door. Faint shafts of the late afternoon sun filtered through the louvers of the shutters. Mayo began unpacking the cartridges for the Cosmi rifle. "You got any kind of gun?"

"A .22 revolver somewhere."

"Ammo?"

"I think so."

"Get it ready."

"Is it going to be a siege?" she repeated.

"I don't know. I don't know who they are, or what they are, or where they come from. All I know is, we got to be prepared for the worst."

The distant implusions sounded. Mayo looked up alertly, listening. Linda could make him out in the dimness now. His face looked carved. His chest gleamed with sweat. He exuded the musky odor of caged lions. Linda had an overpowering impulse to touch him. Mayo loaded the rifle, stood it alongside the shotgun, and began padding from shutter to shutter, peering out vigilantly, waiting with massive patience.

"Will they find us?" Linda asked.

"Maybe."

"Could they be friendly?"

"Maybe."

"Those heads looked so horrible."

"Yeah."

"Jim, I'm scared. I've never been so scared in my life."

"I don't blame you."

"How long before we know?"

"An hour, if they're friendly; two or three, if they're not."

"W-Why longer?"

"If they're looking for trouble, they'll be more cautious."

"Jim, what do you really think?"

"About what?"

"Our chances."

"You really want to know?"

"Please."

"We're dead."

She began to sob. He shook her savagely. "Stop that. Go get your gun ready."

She lurched across the living room, noticed the pearls Mayo had dropped, and picked them up. She was so dazed that she put them on automatically. Then she went into her darkened bedroom and pulled Mayo's model yacht away from the closet door. She located the .22 in a hatbox on the closet floor, and removed it along with a small carton of cartridges. She realized that a dress was unsuited to this

emergency. She got a turtleneck sweater, jodhpurs, and boots from the closet. Then she stripped naked to change. Just as she raised her arms to unclasp the pearls, Mayo entered, paced to the shuttered south window, and peered out. When he turned back from the window, he saw her.

He stopped short. She couldn't move. Their eyes locked, and she began to tremble, trying to conceal herself with her arms. He stepped forward, stumbled on the model yacht, and kicked it out of the way. The next instant he had taken possession of her body, and the pearls went flying, too. As she pulled him down on the bed, fiercely tearing the shirt from his back, her pet dolls also went into the discard heap along with the yacht, the pearls, and the rest of the world.

*It is not only the creatures of the Earth that can turn suddenly from what is known and natural to what is fearful and alien. In some ways, we know less about the ball of rock beneath our feet than about space itself; certainly far less than we should consider safe or reasonable for a house, a car, or spaceship. And for all our terrible armament, for all our incipient Doomsdays, we have not yet created any weapon as potentially destructive as Earth itself.*

*Gravity alone is the greatest killer we know. Usually, it works its damage slowly and all but unnoticed. But from time to time—just as the unremitting stress eventually fells the man, brings him to Earth—the slow accumulation of its internal stresses causes the surface of Earth itself to buckle and break.*

*Mr. Danzig's detailed "future history" of an Earth spasm is his first published story. The author is an English teacher at City College in New York City.*

## THE GREAT NEBRASKA SEA

Allan Danzig

from *Galaxy*

Everyone—all the geologists, at any rate—had known about the Kiowa Fault for years. That was before there was anything very interesting to know about it. The first survey of

Colorado traced its course north and south in the narrow valley of Kiowa Creek about twenty miles east of Denver; it extended south to the Arkansas River. And that was about all even the professionals were interested in knowing. There was never so much as a landslide to bring the Fault to the attention of the general public.

It was still a matter of academic interest when in the late '40s geologists speculated on the relationship between the Kiowa Fault and the Conchas Fault farther south, in New Mexico, and which followed the Pecos as far south as Texas.

Nor was there much in the papers a few years later when it was suggested that the Niobrara Fault (just inside and roughly parallel to the eastern border of Wyoming) was a northerly extension of the Kiowa. By the mid-sixties it was definitely established that the three Faults were in fact a single line of fissure in the essential rock, stretching almost from the Canadian border well south of the New Mexico-Texas line.

It is not really surprising that it took so long to figure out the connection. The population of the states affected was in places as low as five people per square mile! The land was so dry it seemed impossible that it could ever be used except for sheep farming.

It strikes us today as ironic that from the late '50s there was grave concern about the level of the water table throughout the entire area.

The even more ironic solution to the problem began in the summer of 1973. It had been a particularly hot and dry August, and the Forestry Service was keeping an anxious eye out for the fires it knew it could expect. Dense smoke was reported rising above a virtually uninhabited area along Black Squirrel Creek, and a plane was sent out for a report.

The report was—no fire at all. The rising cloud was not smoke, but dust. Thousands of cubic feet of dry earth rising lazily on the summer air. Rock slides, they guessed; certainly no fire. The Forestry Service had other worries at the moment, and filed the report.

But after a week had gone by, the town of Edison, a good twenty miles away from the slides, was still complaining of the dust. Springs were going dry, too, apparently from underground disturbances. Not even in the Rockies could anyone remember a series of rock slides as bad as this.

Newspapers in the mountain states gave it a few inches on the front page; anything is news in late August. And the geologists became interested. Seismologists were reporting unusual activity in the area, tremors too severe to be rock slides. Volcanic activity? Specifically, a dust volcano? Unusual, they knew, but right on the Kiowa Fault—could be.

Labor Day crowds read the scientific conjectures with late summer lassitude. Sunday supplements ran four-color artists' conceptions of the possible volcano. "Only Active Volcano in U. S.?" demanded the headlines, and some papers even left off the question mark.

It may seem odd that the simplest explanation was practically not mentioned. Only Joseph Schwartzberg, head geographer of the Department of the Interior, wondered if the disturbance might not be a settling of the Kiowa Fault. His suggestion was mentioned on page nine or ten of the Monday newspapers (page 27 of the *New York Times*). The idea was not nearly so exciting as a volcano, even a lava-less one, and you couldn't draw a very dramatic picture of it.

To excuse the other geologists, it must be said that the Kiowa Fault had never acted up before. It never side-stepped, never jiggled, never, never produced the regular shows of its little sister out in California, which almost daily bounced San Francisco or Los Angeles, or some place in between. The dust volcano was on the face of it a more plausible theory.

Still, it was only a theory. It had to be proved. As the tremors grew bigger, along with the affected area, as several towns including Edison were shaken to pieces by incredible earthquakes, whole bus- and plane-loads of geologists set out for Colorado, without even waiting for their university and government departments to approve budgets.



They found, of course, that Schwartzberg had been perfectly correct.

They found themselves on the scene of what was fast becoming the most violent and widespread earthquake North America—probably the world—has ever seen in historic times. To describe it in the simplest terms, land east of the Fault was settling, and at a precipitous rate.

Rock scraped rock with a whining roar. Shuddery as a squeaky piece of chalk raked across a blackboard, the noise was deafening. The surfaces of the land east and west of the Fault seemed no longer to have any relation to each other. To the west, tortured rock reared into cliffs. East, where sharp reports and muffled wheezes told of continued buckling and dropping, the earth trembled downward. Atop the new cliffs, which seemed to grow by sudden inches from heaving rubble, dry earth fissured and trembled, sliding acres at a time to fall, smoking, into the bucking, heaving bottom of the depression.

There the devastation was even more thorough, if less spectacular. Dry earth churned like mud, and rock shards weighing tons bumped and rolled about like pebbles as they shivered and cracked into pebbles themselves. "It looks like sand dancing in a child's sieve," said the normally impassive Schwartzberg in a nationwide broadcast from the scene of disaster. "No one here has ever seen anything like it." And the landslip was growing, north and south along the Fault.

"Get out while you can," Schwartzberg urged the population of the affected area. "When it's over you can come back and pick up the pieces." But the band of scientists who had rallied to his leadership privately wondered if there would be any pieces.

The Arkansas River, at Avondale and North Avondale, was sluggishly backing north into the deepening trough. At the rate things were going, there might be a new lake the entire length of El Paso and Pueblo counties. And, warned Schwartzberg, this might only be the beginning.

By 16 September the landslip had crept down the Huer-

fano River past Cedarwood. Avondale, North Avondale and Boone had totally disappeared. Land west of the Fault was holding firm, though Denver had recorded several small tremors; everywhere east of the Fault, to almost twenty miles away, the now-familiar lurch and steady fall had already sent several thousand Coloradans scurrying for safety.

All mountain climbing was prohibited on the eastern slope because of the danger of rock slides from minor quakes. The geologists went home to wait.

There wasn't much to wait for. The news got worse and worse. The Platte River, now, was creating a vast mud puddle where the town of Orchard had been. Just below Masters, Colorado, the river leaped seventy-foot cliffs to add to the heaving chaos below. And the cliffs were higher every day as the land beneath them groaned downward in mile-square gulps.

As the Fault moved north and south, new areas quivered into unwelcome life. Fields and whole mountainsides moved with deceptive sloth down, down. They danced "like sand in a sieve"; dry, they boiled into rubble. Telephone lines, railroad tracks, roads snapped and simply disappeared. Virtually all east-west land communication was suspended, and the President declared a national emergency.

By 23 September the Fault was active well into Wyoming on the north, and rapidly approaching the border of New Mexico to the south. Trinchera and Branson were totally evacuated, but even so the over-all death toll had risen above one thousand.

Away to the east the situation was quiet but even more ominous. Tremendous fissures opened up perpendicular to the Fault, and a general subsidence of the land was noticeable well into Kansas and Nebraska. The western borders of these states, and soon of the Dakotas and Oklahoma as well, were slowly sinking.

On the actual scene of the disaster (or the *scenes*; it is impossible to speak of anything this size in the singular) there was a horrifying confusion. Prairie and hill cracked open under intolerable strains as the land shuddered down-

ward in gasps and leaps. Springs burst to the surface in hot geysers and explosions of steam.

The downtown section of North Platte, Nebraska, dropped eight feet, just like that, on the afternoon of 4 October. "We must remain calm," declared the Governor of Nebraska. "We must sit this thing out. Be assured that everything possible is being done." But what could be done, with his state dropping straight down at a mean rate of a foot a day?

The Fault nicked off the southeast corner of Montana. It worked its way north along the Little Missouri. South, it ripped past Roswell, New Mexico, and tore down the Pecos toward Texas. All the upper reaches of the Missouri were standing puddles by now, and the Red River west of Paris, Texas, had begun to run backward.

Soon the Missouri began slowly slipping away westward over the slowly churning land. Abandoning its bed, the river spread uncertainly across farmland and prairie, becoming a sea of mud beneath the sharp new cliffs which rose in rending line, ever taller as the land continued to sink, almost from Canada to the Mexican border. There were virtually no floods, in the usual sense. The water moved too slowly, spread itself with no real direction or force. But the vast sheets of sluggish water and jellylike mud formed deathtraps for the countless refugees now streaming east.

Perhaps the North Platte disaster had been more than anyone could take. One hundred ninety-three people had died in that one cave-in. Certainly by 7 October it had to be officially admitted that there was an exodus of epic proportion. Nearly two million people were on the move, and the U. S. was faced with a gigantic wave of refugees. Rails, roads and airplanes were jammed with terrified hordes who had left everything behind to crowd eastward.

All through October hollow-eyed motorists flocked into Tulsa, Topeka, Omaha, Sioux Falls and Fargo. St. Louis was made distributing center for emergency squads which flew everywhere with milk for babies and dog food for evacuated pets. Gasoline trucks boomed west to meet the

demand for gas, but once inside the "zone of terror," as the newspapers now called it, they found their route blocked by eastbound cars on the wrong side of the road. Shops left by their fleeing owners were looted by refugees from further west; an American Airlines plane was wrecked by a mob of would-be passengers in Bismarck, North Dakota. Federal and state troops were called out, but moving two million people was not to be done in an orderly way.

And still the landslip grew larger. The new cliffs gleamed in the autumn sunshine, growing higher as the land beneath them continued its inexorable descent.

On 21 October, at Lubbock, Texas, there was a noise variously described as a hollow roar, a shriek and a deep musical vibration like a church bell. It was simply the tortured rock of the substrata giving way. The second phase of the national disaster was beginning.

The noise traveled due east at better than eighty-five miles per hour. In its wake the earth to the north "just seemed to collapse on itself like a punctured balloon," read one newspaper report. "Like a cake that's failed," said a Texarkana housewife who fortunately lived a block *south* of Thayer Street, where the fissure raced through. There was a sigh and a great cloud of dust, and Oklahoma subsided at the astounding rate of about six feet per hour.

At Biloxi, on the Gulf, there had been uneasy shufflings under foot all day. "Not tremors, exactly," said the captain of a fishing boat which was somehow to ride out the coming flood, "but like as if the land wanted to be somewhere else."

Everyone in doomed Biloxi would have done well to have been somewhere else that evening. At approximately 8:30 P.M. the town shuddered, seemed to rise a little like the edge of a hall carpet caught in a draft, and sank. So did the entire Mississippi and Alabama coast, at about the same moment. The tidal wave which was to gouge the center from the U. S. marched on the land.

From the north shore of Lake Ponchartrain to the Ap-

palachicola River in Florida, the Gulf coast simply disappeared. Gulfport, Biloxi, Mobile, Pensacola, Panama City; two hundred miles of shoreline vanished, with over two and a half million people. An hour later a wall of water had swept over every town from Dothan, Alabama, to Bogalusa on the Louisiana-Mississippi border.

"We must keep panic from our minds," said the Governor of Alabama in a radio message delivered from a hastily arranged all-station hookup. "We of the gallant southland have faced and withstood invasion before." Then, as ominous creakings and groanings of the earth announced the approach of the tidal wave, he flew out of Montgomery half an hour before the town disappeared forever.

One head of the wave plunged north, eventually to spend itself in the hills south of Birmingham. The main sweep followed the lowest land. Reaching west, it swallowed Vicksburg and nicked the corner of Louisiana. The whole of East Carroll Parish was scoured from the map.

The Mississippi River now ended at about Eudora, Arkansas, and minute by minute the advancing flood bit away miles of riverbed, swelling north. Chicot, Jennie, Lake Village, Arkansas City, Snow Lake, Elaine, Helena and Memphis felt the tremors. The tormented city shuddered through the night. The earth continued its descent, eventually tipping  $2\frac{1}{2}$  degrees down to the west. The "Memphis Tilt" is today one of the unique and charming characteristics of the gracious Old Town, but during the night of panic Memphis residents were sure they were doomed.

South and west the waters carved deeply into Arkansas and Oklahoma. By morning it was plain that all of Arkansas was going under. Waves advanced on Little Rock at almost one hundred miles an hour, new crests forming, overtopping the wave's leading edge as towns, hills and the thirst of the soil temporarily broke the furious charge.

Washington announced the official hope that the Ozarks would stop the wild gallop of the unleashed Gulf, for in northwest Arkansas the land rose to over two thousand feet. But nothing could save Oklahoma. By noon the water reached clutching fingers around Mt. Scott and Elk Moun-

tain, deluging Hobart and almost all of Greer County.

Despite hopeful announcements that the wave was slowing, had virtually stopped after inundating Oklahoma City, was being swallowed up in the desert near Amarillo, the wall of water continued its advance. For the land was still sinking, and the floods were constantly replenished from the Gulf. Schwartzberg and his geologists advised the utmost haste in evacuating the entire area between Colorado and Missouri, from Texas to North Dakota.

Lubbock, Texas, went under. On a curling reflex the tidal wave blotted out Sweetwater and Big Spring. The Texas panhandle disappeared in one great swirl.

Whirlpools opened. A great welter of smashed wood and human debris was sucked under, vomited up and pounded to pieces. Gulf water crashed on the cliffs of New Mexico and fell back on itself in foam. Would-be rescuers on the cliffs along what had been the west bank of the Pecos River afterward recalled the hiss and scream like tearing silk as the water broke furiously on the newly exposed rock. It was the most terrible sound they had ever heard.

"We couldn't hear any shouts, of course, not that far away and with all the noise," said Dan Weaver, Mayor of Carlsbad. "But we knew there were people down there. When the water hit the cliffs, it was like a collision between two solid bodies. We couldn't see for over an hour, because of the spray."

*Salt spray.* The ocean had come to New Mexico.

The cliffs proved to be the only effective barrier against the westward march of the water, which turned north, gouging out lumps of rock and tumbling down blocks of earth onto its own back. In places scoops of granite came out like ice cream. The present fishing town of Rockport, Colorado, is built on a harbor created in such a way.

The water had found its farthest westering. But still it poured north along the line of the original Fault. Irresistible fingers closed on Sterling, Colorado, on Sidney, Nebraska, on Hot Springs, South Dakota. The entire tier of states settled, from south to north, down to its eventual place of stability one thousand feet below the level of the new sea.

Memphis was by now a seaport. The Ozarks, islands in a mad sea, formed precarious havens for half-drowned humanity. Waves bit off a corner of Missouri, flung themselves on Wichita. Topeka, Lawrence and Belleville were the last Kansas towns to disappear. The Governor of Kansas went down with his State.

Daniel Bernd of Lincoln, Nebraska, was washed up half-drowned in a cove of the Wyoming cliffs, having been sucked from one end of vanished Nebraska to the other. Similar hairbreadth escapes were recounted on radio and television.

Virtually the only people saved out of the entire population of Pierre, South Dakota, were the six members of the Creeth family. Plucky Timothy Creeth carried and dragged his aged parents to the loft of their barn on the outskirts of town. His brother Geoffrey brought along the younger children and what provisions they could find—"Mostly a ham and about half a ton of vanilla cookies," he explained to his eventual rescuers. The barn, luckily collapsing in the vibration as the waves bore down on them, became an ark in which they rode out the disaster.

"We must of played cards for four days straight," recalled genial Mrs. Creeth when she afterwards appeared on a popular television spectacular. Her rural good humor undamaged by an ordeal few women can ever have been called on to face, she added, "We sure wondered why flushes never came out right. Jimanettly, we'd left the king of hearts behind, in the rush!"

But such lightheartedness and such happy endings were by no means typical. The world could only watch aghast as the water raced north under the shadow of the cliffs which occasionally crumbled, roaring, into the roaring waves. Day by day the relentless rush swallowed what had been dusty farmland, cities and towns.

Some people were saved by the helicopters which flew mercy missions just ahead of the advancing waters. Some found safety in the peaks of western Nebraska and the Dakotas. But when the waters came to rest along what is roughly the present shoreline of our inland sea, it was esti-

mated that over fourteen million people had lost their lives.

No one could even estimate the damage to property; almost the entirety of eight states, and portions of twelve others, had simply vanished from the heart of the North American continent forever.

It was in such a cataclysmic birth that the now-peaceful Nebraska Sea came to America.

Today, nearly one hundred years after the unprecedented—and happily unrepeated—disaster, it is hard to remember the terror and despair of those weeks in October and November, 1973. It is inconceivable to think of the United States without its beautiful and economically essential curve of interior ocean. Two-thirds as long as the Mediterranean, it graduates from the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico through the equally blue waves of the Mississippi Bight, becoming cooler and greener north and west of the pleasant fishing isles of the Ozark Archipelago, finally shading into the gray-green chop of the Gulf of Dakota.

What would the United States have become without the 5,600-mile coastline of our inland sea? It is only within the last twenty years that any but the topmost layer of water has cleared sufficiently to permit a really extensive fishing industry. Mud still held in suspension by the restless waves will not precipitate fully even in our lifetimes. Even so, the commercial fisheries of Missouri and Wyoming contribute no small part to the nation's economy.

Who can imagine what the Middle West must have been like before the amelioration of climate brought about by the proximity of a warm sea? The now-temperate state of Minnesota (to say nothing of the submerged Dakotas) must have been Siberian. From contemporary accounts Missouri, our second California, was unbelievably muggy, almost uninhabitable during the summer months. Our climate today, from Ohio and North Carolina to the rich fields of New Mexico and the orchards of Montana, is directly ameliorated by the marine heart of the continent.

Who today could imagine the United States without the



majestic sea cliffs in stately parade from New Mexico to Montana? The beaches of Wyoming, the American Riviera, where fruit trees grow almost to the water's edge? Or incredible Colorado, where the morning skier is the afternoon bather, thanks to the monorail connecting the highest peaks with the glistening white beaches?

Of course there have been losses to balance slightly these strong gains. The Mississippi was, before 1973, one of the great rivers of the world. Taken together with its main tributary, the Missouri, it vied favorably with such giant systems as the Amazon and the Ganges. Now, ending as it does at Memphis and drawing its water chiefly from the Appalachian Mountains, it is only a slight remnant of what it was. And though the Nebraska Sea today carries many times the tonnage of shipping in its ceaseless traffic, we have lost the old romance of river shipping. We may only guess what it was like when we look upon the Ohio and the truncated Mississippi.

And transcontinental shipping is somewhat more difficult, with trucks and the freight-railroads obliged to take the sea ferries across the Nebraska Sea. We shall never know what the United States was like with its numerous coast-to-coast highways busy with trucks and private cars. Still, the ferry ride is certainly a welcome break after days of driving, and for those who wish a glimpse of what it must have been like, there is always the Cross-Canada Throughway and the magnificent U. S. Highway 73 looping north through Minnesota and passing through the giant port of Alexis, North Dakota, shipping center for the wheat of Manitoba and crossroad of a nation.

The political situation has long been a thorny problem. Only tattered remnants of the eight submerged states remained after the flood, but none of them wanted to surrender its autonomy. The tiny fringe of Kansas seemed, for a time, ready to merge with contiguous Missouri, but following the lead of the Arkansas Forever faction, the remaining population decided to retain political integrity. This has resulted in the continuing anomaly of the seven

"fringe states" represented in Congress by the usual two senators each, though the largest of them is barely the size of Connecticut and all are economically indistinguishable from their neighboring states.

Fortunately it was decided some years ago that Oklahoma, only one of the eight to have completely disappeared, could not in any sense be considered to have a continuing political existence. So, though there are still families who proudly call themselves Oklahomans, and the Oklahoma Oil Company continues to pump oil from its submerged real estate, the state has in fact disappeared from the American political scene.

But this is by now no more than a petty annoyance, to raise a smile when the talk gets around to the question of States' rights. Not even the tremendous price the country paid for its new sea—fourteen million dead, untold property destroyed—really offsets the asset we enjoy today. The heart of the continent, now open to the shipping of the world, was once dry and landlocked, cut off from the bustle of trade and the ferment of world culture.

It would indeed seem odd to an American of the '50s or '60s of the last century to imagine sailors from the merchant fleets of every nation walking the streets of Denver, fresh ashore at Newport, only fifteen miles away. Or to imagine Lincoln, Fargo, Kansas City and Dallas as world ports and great manufacturing centers. Utterly beyond their ken would be Roswell, New Mexico; Benton, Wyoming; Westport, Missouri; and the other new ports of over a million inhabitants each which have developed on the new harbors of the inland sea.

Unimaginable too would have been the general growth of population in the states surrounding the new sea. As the water tables rose and manufacturing and trade moved in to take advantage of the just-created axis of world communication, a population explosion was touched off of which we are only now seeing the diminution. This new westering is to be ranked with the first surge of pioneers which created the American west. But what a difference! Vacation paradises bloom, a new fishing industry thrives;

her water road is America's main artery of trade, and fleets of all the world sail . . . where once the prairie schooner made its laborious and dusty way west!

*The Great Disaster may be natural or man-made; the new environment to which men must adjust may be created by the still untamed forces of gravity, of flood, fire, ice age, sunspots, or meteorites. It may be the by-product of thoughtless technology, or it may be a planned holocaust, the ultimate atomic war, bringing with it such chemical changes in atmosphere, soil, or genes as will change the face (and bowels) of the Earth itself.*

*But there might also be a new kind of disaster, a trouble truly alien in origin. . . .*

## THE FACES OUTSIDE

**Bruce McAllister**

*from If*

I wanted to call her Soft Breast, because she is soft when I hold her to me. But the Voice told me to call her Diane. When I call her Diane, I have a pleasant feeling, and she seems closer to me. She likes the name "Diane." The Voice knew what was best, of course, as it always does.

I must mate with her every day, when the water is brightest. The Voice says so. It also says that I am in a "tank," and that the water is brightest when the "sun" is over the "tank." I do not understand the meaning of "sun," but the Voice says that "noon" is when the "sun" is over the "tank." I must mate with Diane every "noon."

I *do* know what the "tank" is. It is a very large thing filled with water, and having four "corners," one of which is the Cave where Diane and I sleep when the water is black like the ink of the squid and cold like dead fish. But we stay warm. There is the "floor" of the "tank," the "floor" being where all the rock and seaweed is, with all the crawling fish and crabs, where Diane and I walk and

sleep. There are four "sides." "Sides" are smooth and blue walls, and have "view-ports"—round, transparent areas—on them. The Voice says that the things in the "view-ports" are Faces. I have a face, as does Diane. But the cracked, flat things with small lights circling about them are not pretty like Diane's face. The Voice says that the Faces have bodies, like myself, and Diane. No body could be like Diane's. I think I should be quite sick if I saw the bodies of the Faces.

The Voice then says that the Faces are watching us, as we sometimes watch the porpoises. It took a very long time to grow used to having the Faces watch us, as Diane and I came together, but we learned to do it as simply as we swim and sleep.

But Diane does not have babies. I am very sad when I see the porpoises and whales with their young. Diane and I sleep together in the Cave; Diane is very warm and soft. We sleep in happiness, but when we are awake, we are lonely. I question the Voice about a baby for Diane, but the Voice is always silent.

I grow to hate the Faces in the "view-ports." They are always watching, watching. The Voice says that they are enemies, and bad. The Faces have not tried to hurt me; but I must think of them as enemies because the Voice says so. I ask, bad, like the shark? The Voice says, no, worse than the sharks and eels. It says that the Faces are evil.

The "tank" must be high, because the water is high. I have gone once to the surface, and, although I could get used to it, the light was too much for my eyes. It took me two hundred and seventy kicks to the surface; it took me three thousand steps from our Cave to the opposite "side." The "tank" is very large, otherwise the whales would not be happy.

The fish are many, but the dangers are few. I have seen the sharks kill. But the shark does not come near me if I see it and am afraid. Sometimes I have caught it sneaking up behind me, but when I turn it leaves quickly. I have questioned the Voice about why the sharks leave. It does not know. It has no one to ask.

Today the "sun" must be very large, or powerful, or bright, because the water is brighter than most days.

When I awoke Diane was not beside me. The rock of the Cave is jagged, so as I make my way from our bed of cool and slick seaweed, toward the entrance, I scrape my leg on the fifth kick. Not much blood comes from the cut. That is fortunate, because when there is blood the sharks come.

Diane has grabbed the tail of a porpoise, and both are playing. Diane and I love the porpoises. Sometimes we can even hear their thoughts. They are different from the other fish; they are more like us. But they have babies and we do not.

Diane sees me and, wanting to play, swims behind a rock and looks back, beckoning. I make a grab at her as I sneak around the rock. But she darts upward, toward the surface, where her body is a shadow of beauty against the lighter water above her. I follow her, but she ducks and I sail past her. Diane pulls up her legs, knees under her chin, and puts her arms around them. She then drops like a rock toward the "floor."

I have caught a porpoise by his top fin. He knows my wish, so he speeds toward Diane, circles her and butts her soft thighs with his snout. She laughs, but continues to stay in a ball, her black hair waving. She is very beautiful.

I try to pry her arms from around her legs gently, but she resists. I must use force. Diane does not mind when I do: because she knows I love her.

I pull her arms away, and slip my arms under hers, kissing her on the lips for a long time. Struggling to free herself, laughing again, she pokes me sharply with her elbow and escapes my arms. I am surprised. She quickly puts her arms around my neck, pulls herself to my back and links her slim legs around my middle. She is pretending that I am a porpoise. I laugh. She pinches me to go ahead. I swim upward, but her thoughts tell me she wants to go to the Cave.

I understand. I carry her through the water very slowly, feeling the warmth and nipples of her breasts pressed

against my back as she rests her head on my shoulder and smiles.

The Faces continue to stare. Many times I have searched for a word to show my hatred for them. I shall find it somehow, though. Sooner or later.

"What count of planets had the Terrans infested?" The furry humanoid leaned over the desk and stared, unblinking, at the lesser humanoid in the only other chair in the room. His gaze was dropped as he scratched informally at the heavy fur at his wrist. He raised his gaze again.

"Forty-three is the count, *beush*," replied the other.

"And the count of planets destroyed?"

"Forty-three planetoid missiles were sent and detonated simultaneously without resistance or losses on our part, *beush*," the assistant *beush* answered indirectly.

The room was hot, so the *beush* lazily passed his hand over a faintly glowing panel.

The room was cooled, and a large-eyed female with silky, ochrous fur—very desirable to the majority of humanoids—entered with two flared glasses of an odorless transparent liquid—very desirable to the majority of humanoids. The lesser humanoid was being treated exceptionally well.

The room was momentarily silent as the two sipped at their drinks with black lips. The *beush*, as customary, spoke first. "Inform me of the pre-espionage intelligence accomplishments contra-Energi. I have not been previously informed. Do not spare the details."

"Of certainty, *beush*," began the assistant with all the grace of an informer. "The Light and Force Research of the Energi is executed in one center of one planet, the planet being Energa, as our intelligence service has conveniently listed it. The Energi have negative necessity for secrecy in their Light and Force Research, because, first, all centers are crusted and protected by Force Domes. Second, it is near impossibility that one could so self-disguise that he would negatively be detectable." He hesitated.

"And these Energi," queried the *beush*, "are semi-telepathic or empathic?"

"Affirmative," the assistant mumbled.

"Then you have there a third reason," offered the *beush*.

"Graces be given you, *beush*."

The *beush* nodded in approval. "Continue, but negatively hesitate frequently or it will be necessary to discuss this subject post-present."

His assistant trembled slightly. "Unequivocally affirmative. *Beush*, your memory relates that five periods antepresent, when there existed the Truce inter Energi, Terrans and ourselves, there was a certain period during which gifts of the three nucleus-planets were exchanged in friendship. The Terrans were self-contented to donate to the Energi an immense 'aquarium'—an 'aquarium' consisting of a partly transparent cell in which was placed a collection of Terran life-forms that breathed their oxygen from the dense atmosphere of Terran seas. But, as a warp-space message from the Terran Council indirectly proclaimed, the degenerate Terrans negatively possessed a ship of any Space type large or powerful enough to transport the 'aquarium' to Energa. Our ships being the largest of the Truce, we were petitioned by the Terrans to transport it. These events developed before the Terrans grew pestiferous to our cause. We obliged, but even our vastest ship was slow, because the physical power necessary to bring the weight of the cell through warp-space quickly was too great for the solitary four generators. It was imperative that the trip be on a longer trajectory arranged through norm-space. During the duration of the trip, feelings of suspicion arose inter Three Truce Races. As your memory also relates, the 'aquarium' was still in space when we found it necessary to obliterate the total race of Terrans. The message of the annihilation arrived in retard to the Energi, so Time permitted us to devise a contra-Energi intelligence plan, a necessity since it was realized that the Energi would be disturbed by our action contra-Terrans and would, without doubt, take action, contra-ourselves.

"Unknown to you, *beush*, or to the masses and higher, an insignificant pleasure craft was extracted from Terran Space and negatively consumed with a planet when the bombs were detonated. The ship accommodated two Terrans. Proper Terrans by birth, negatively by reference. One was male, other female. The two had been in their culture socially and religiously united in a ceremony called 'matrimony.' Emotions of sex, protection and an emotion we have negatively been able to analyze linked the two, and made them ideal for our purpose."

The assistant looked at the *beush*, picked up his partially full glass and, before he could sip it, was dashed to the floor beside the *beush* himself. The former helped the higher to his unstable legs, and was commented to by the same, "Assistant, proceed to the protecroom."

They entered the well-illuminated closet and immediately slipped into the unwieldy metallic suits. Once again they took their seats, the *beush* reflecting and saying, "As your memory relates, that explosion was a bomb-drop concussion from the Rebels. We must now wear anti-radiation protection. For that reason, and the danger of the Energi, you *do* see why we need the formulae of the Force Domes, *immediately*."

There was menace in his voice. The assistant trembled violently. Using the rare smile of that humanoid race, the *beush* continued. "Do negatively self-preoccupy. Resume your information, if contented."

"Contented," came the automatic reply, and the assistant began, "The two humans were perfect for the Plan, I repeat. Before the Energi received the message of the race destruction, it was imperative that we establish an agent on Energa, near the Force Domes. We assumed that the 'aquarium' would be placed on Energa, in the greatest center. That was correct, but negatively yet knowing for certainty, we perpetuated the Plan, with the 'aquarium' as the basis.

"One of our most competent protoplasmic computers stabilized the final steps of the Plan. We were to subject the two Terrans to radiation and have as a result two Ter-



rans who could breathe their normal oxygen from  $H_2O$ —the atmosphere of the 'aquarium,' I repeat. We were then to deprive them of memory, except of the inter-attracting emotions, to allow them to live in harmony. Thirdly, we were to place them in the 'aquarium' and have them forwarded under the reference of semi-intelligent aqua-beings from Terran seas. A simple, but quite effective plan, your opinion, *beush*?"

"Quite," was the reply. "And concerning the method of info-interception?"

The assistant continued without hesitation, embarrassed by his incompetency, "A hyper-complex spheroid with radio interceptors, a-matter viewers and recorders and the general intelligence instruments of micro-size was placed in the cranium of the male mutant. The spheroid has negative direct control over the organism. Size was too scarce for use on trivialities. Then an agent was placed behind the larger controls at our end of the instruments."

"And you are the agent?"

"Hyper-contentedly affirmative."

I have done two things today. I have found the word for my hatred of the Faces. The Voice gave it to me. When I asked the Voice, it laughed and told me the word to use was "damn." So today I have thrice said, "Damn the Faces. Damn them."

Diane and I have decided that we *want* a baby. Maybe the other fish *wanted* them, so they got them. We *want* a baby.

"The two Terrans were so biologically mutated and are so nearly robotic, that it is physically impossible for reproduction on their part, *beush*."

The *beush* ignored the assistant's words and said, "I have received copies of the thought-patterns and translations. There was something strange and very powerful about the meaning of the male's thought, 'want.' I query."

"Be assured without preoccupation that there exists negative danger of reproduction."

The name I wanted to call Diane was not good, because her breasts are hard and large, as is her stomach. I think she is sick.

I do not think Diane is sick. I think she is going to have a baby.

"Entities, assistant! On your oath-body you proclaimed that there is negative danger of reproduction."

"Rest assured, peace, *beush*."

"But his thoughts!"

"Rest assured, peace, *beush*."

There is much blood in the water today. Diane is having a baby; sharks have come. I have never seen so many sharks, and as big as they are I have never seen. I am afraid, but still some sneak among us near Diane.

We love the porpoises, so they help us now. They are chasing the sharks away, injuring and killing some.

"Entities, Warp-spaced Entities! There has been reproduction."

"*Yorbeush*," cried the assistant in defense. "It is physically impossible. But they are mutants. It is negatively impossible that they possess Mind Force to a degree."

"To what degree? What degree could produce reproduction when it is physically impossible?" The *beush* was sarcastic. "How far can they go?"

"There is negatively great amount they can do. Negative danger, because we have studied their instincts and emotions and found that they will not leave the 'aquarium,' their 'home,' unless someone tells them to. But there is no one to do so."

Today I damned the Faces nine times and finally *wanted* them to go away. The "view-ports" went black. It was like the sharks leaving when I wanted them to. I still do not understand.

There has been much useless noise and senseless talk from the Voice these days. It is annoying because I must concentrate on loving Diane and caring for the baby. So I *wanted* the Voice to leave. It left.

"Entities Be Simply Damned! The spheroid ceased to exist, assistant. How far can they go, assistant?" The *beush* rose, screamed hysterically for three seconds and then fired the hand weapon point-blank at the neck of his assistant.

The sharks come today, because Diane is having another baby. Diane hurts, and there is more blood than last time. Her face is not pretty when she hurts, as it is pretty when she sleeps. So I *want* her to sleep. Her face is pretty now with the smile on her lips.

"Fourteen thousand Energi ceased to exist, spheroid ceased to exist, and another reproduction. Warp-space! How far will they go?"

It has been hundreds of days. Faces keep appearing, but I continue to *want* them to go away. Diane has had eighteen babies. The oldest are swimming around and playing with the porpoises. Diane and I spend most of the time teaching the children by showing them things, and by giving them our thoughts by touching them.

Today I found that none of the children have Voices. I could *want* them to have Voices, but the children's thoughts tell me that it is not right to have a Voice.

The eldest boy says that we should leave the tank, that a greater "tank" is around us, and that it is easier to move around in that greater tank. He also says that we must guard ourselves against Faces outside. That is strange, but the boy is a good boy. Many times he knows that things will happen before they do. He is a good boy.

He is almost as tall as I am. The eldest girl is pretty like Diane, her body very white and soft but, since I

*wanted* it so, her hair is golden, instead of dark. The boy likes her very much, and I have seen them together, touching.

Tomorrow I will explain to him that if he *wants* something, he will get it. So he must *want* a baby.

"Query? The Energi will bomb-drop the 'aquarium'? War declared against us? War declared? Entities be wholly damned! Negative! Negativevv!" The disintegrator was fired once more, this time into the orange eye of the *beush* himself, by himself, and for the good of himself.

When, if I ever do *want* the Voice to come back, it will be very surprised to know that Diane has had twenty-four babies; that the three eldest boys have mated twice, once and twice, and have had four babies. The Voice will also be surprised to know that it took all twenty-nine of us to *want* all the Faces around the tank to die, as the eldest boy said to do. We could not tell, but the boy said that six million Faces were dead. That seems impossible to me, but the boy is always right.

Tomorrow we are leaving the tank. We will *want* to leave it; it is getting crowded. The boy says that beyond the greater tank, which we will also leave, there is enough space for all the babies Diane could have if she lived forever.

Forever, he said. It would be nice to live forever. I think I'll *want* . . .

*Ten years or more ago, John W. Campbell opened an editorial in (what was then) Astounding Science Fiction by stating that the first immortal man had probably already been born. His thesis was that medical science and biochemical research were advancing at a sufficient rate of acceleration so that death, at least by decay or disease, might be averted indefinitely.*

*Last year, in Worlds of Tomorrow, Frederik Pohl published an article by R. C. W. Ettinger, which began flatly: "Most of us now living have a chance for personal physical immortality," and went on to argue the*

*immediate feasibility of deep-freezing, at the instant of death, for re-vivification and treatment as soon as medical arts make it possible.*

*To me, the idea is no less staggering than, and in its way not too different from, the complete-opposite concept of Doomsday destruction. Everything in our psychology stems, I am convinced, from the essential drive of mortal man to survive the disintegration of his body: in the spirit (religion); in name (fame and power); in artifacts and products (art, science, the bulk of "civilization"); in a continuation of the flesh (children, family, clan, nation).*

*I was impressed by the exposition of this philosophy in "The Faces Outside." I was more impressed when I found out it was the author's first published story; and more again when he wrote me about himself.*

*The first part is a deceptively typical writer's history: Has lived in Florida, Virginia, Italy. Now in California. Interested in "international relations, languages, all sciences, art, and writing." Participated in recent sleep-deprivation experiments. Currently doing a study of "symbolism from the writer's point of view, rather than the critic's." (Among seventy-odd authors: Aldiss, Budrys, Ellison, Golding, Heinlein, Leiber, McCarthy, Merrill, Sturgeon.) One summer in Italy spent studying art at the Belle Arti Institute in Florence. Now supports himself in part, at Claremont Men's College, by "doing 'crazy' drawings and paintings that scare enough people into buying."*

*It is his first year at college. He is now seventeen. (The story was written two years ago.)*

*I do not know whether Mr. McAllister has decided, yet, to want to live forever. But I think I do know in Dr. Biggle's case. (No. Not medicine. Musicology.)*

## A SLIGHT CASE OF LIMBO

Lloyd Biggle, Jr.

from *Analog*

The wind's shrill moaning sank suddenly to a muted whisper, and above the clatter of rain on the corrugated roof George Cramer thought he heard a scream. He opened the door and peered doubtfully into the rain-lashed night.

At his feet the swollen river swished and gurgled

around the pilings. The rowboat, swinging with the current, struck the side of the dock with loud, irregular thuds. Cramer aimed a flashlight at the distant shore, but the blackness casually swallowed up the beam. He could see nothing.

Suddenly the cry came again, a long, sobbing scream that hung convulsively over the river until a fresh surge of wind twisted it into silence. Cramer did not hesitate. He grabbed his oars and leaped into the boat, and seconds later he was headed out into the current, rowing frantically.

He shouted over his shoulder, but if there was an answering cry the wind wrenched it away from him. The chill, driving rain instantly drenched his head and clothing and left him shudderingly cold even as he panted and perspired at the oars. His erratic old heart filled his chest with its relentless pounding; his swollen arthritic hands brought gasps of pain to his clenched lips as he worked the oars. He shouted again as he turned the boat into the rampaging current, and paused to flash his light. An answering call came from far down the river. Cramer bent his exhausted body to the oars, and sent the boat rocking forward.

Long before he neared that struggling, helplessly bobbing figure in the water Cramer knew that he was dying, and that knowledge brought a half-smile to his taut face. It would be a good trade, he thought—his own feebleness and disease, his aged, worn-out life, for a young, healthy life with direction, and purpose and meaning. Instead of a wretched end in the sordid loneliness of his cramped cabin, this unexpected twitch of destiny offered an embattled death that he could welcome and embrace fully. His sobs of pain were fervent hosannas as he drove the boat forward, punishing himself, struggling to focus his last flickers of life into one memorable conflagration.

And he reached his objective. A hand clutched the side of the boat. Cramer turned to assist, and at that instant his heart exploded.

He opened his eyes to the bare rafters of his cabin. An elongated patch of sunlight lay against the far wall. Beyond

his window birds sang, and a light breeze caressed the trees overhead. He tried to move his arms, to sit up.

A voice came from far off, deep, softly soothing, pleasingly musical. "Easy! Easy! You need rest. Sleep . . . sleep . . . sleep."

Cramer slept.

When he awoke a man was bending over him. Cramer watched the round, placid face for a moment before he became aware of the dexterous fingers that applied a bandage to his chest.

"You're a doctor?" Cramer whispered.

"No," the voice sang. "No. I am not a doctor."

"A nurse, then." The idea seemed incongruous with this monstrous hulk of a man, but the fingers were infinitely gentle. "I was dying," Cramer said. "I died, and you . . . was it you—"

"Quiet!" the voice sang. "It was you, friend Cramer, who saved my life. And you need sleep . . . sleep . . ."

The next time Cramer awoke he was alone. He edged himself cautiously into a sitting position. The room was just as he'd left it when he dashed out into the storm, and that was—at least a couple of days ago, he thought, fingering his beard. But he felt fine. He felt wonderful until he moved his legs and his arthritis reminded him painfully that he hadn't been taking his medicine.

He hobbled over to the medicine cabinet for his pills, and then he decided to dress. His bandage-swathed chest puzzled him. The strips of pink cloth were soft as the softest gauze, yet they resisted his tugging. He left them in place, and pulled on his clothes. He eased himself into the chair outside his door, and leaned back to enjoy the bright sunshine.

"So you are up, friend Cramer!" the voice sang. "It is well. It is proper."

Cramer's nurse approached along a forest path, tremendous in height and bulk, walking with a rolling gait that made Cramer want to ask if he'd been a sailor. He stood looking down at Cramer, round face expressionless, eyes

darkly solemn, a small tuft of hair ridiculously isolated on the top of his head.

But his voice was warmly musical. "How are you this morning, friend Cramer?"

"Oh, I feel fine. Just a little weak, yet. Thank you. May I ask who you are?"

"Who . . . you mean you would like my name. That is proper." He seemed to ponder the question. "Perhaps you would prefer to call me Joe?"

"Certainly, Joe," Cramer said.

"And now you are well. Now we shall remove the bandage."

The long fingers quickly opened Cramer's shirt, and expertly unwound the encircling strips of cloth. The fingers paused as the bandage fell away. Joe's round face assumed a blank expression that Cramer could not interpret.

"You have not healed as quickly as I expected," he announced.

Cramer stared at the open incision above his heart. "You had to operate?"

"Yes, operate. You would call it that."

"Oh! You massaged my heart to get it going again."

"No," Joe said. "Your heart would not go again. It was a very bad heart."

"I don't understand," Cramer faltered.

"I'll show you. But first, the bandage."

Joe quickly bound the bandage into place, and rocked away into the woods. Twenty minutes passed, a half hour, and he came rocking back. He held a transparent, flasklike object up to the light. "You see?" his voice sang. "A very bad heart."

Cramer stared incredulously. The flask did, unquestionably, contain a human heart.

"Very bad," Joe said again.

"You mean . . . my heart—"

"Yours. Certainly."

Cramer started to laugh. This Joe, he thought, was all the character he looked to be. "What's keeping me alive?" he asked, wiping his eyes. He pressed his hand to his chest,



felt for his wrist, and stopped laughing. He had no heart-beat, no pulse.

Joe said seriously, "But I gave you another."

"You said you weren't a doctor," Cramer said.

"But the heart is no problem for a doctor! It is more . . . I think you would call it an engineering problem."

"I suppose," Cramer said. "It's just a pump."

"That is correct. So I have given you another pump."

"A better one, I hope," Cramer said, feeling again for his pulse. He could not find it.

"Much better. This one does not wear out."

"All right. Whatever you did, I thank you. If this is a gag, as it has to be, I still thank you. Out there on the water I didn't much care if I lived or not, but sitting here with the sun shining I'd just as soon stick around for a while. So I thank you."

"And I, friend Cramer, thank you. There is a bond between us, because we have saved each other's lives. But I think my debt greater than yours. I'll come again this evening."

He rocked away, carrying the flask.

Cramer's strength returned slowly. He knew that exercise would have helped him, but his arthritis seemed worse each day, and the few hobbling steps he took about his cabin were searing torment.

Joe appeared punctually in the fading light of evening, songfully inquired as to his health, and soberly examined his chest, where the incision was healing in a neat scar line.

"I'll have to get into town," Cramer told him one evening.

"But why not?" Joe sang. "You are almost well."

Cramer lifted a swollen foot. "I can hardly walk. If I don't get some medicine quickly, I won't be able to walk at all."

"Myself, I do not go into this town. But if I can help—"

"If you can get me as far as the Mortons' farm, Ed or Ruth will take me into town."

"Do you wish to go now?"

"Tomorrow," Cramer said. "Tomorrow afternoon. The doctor isn't in his office in the morning."

"Tomorrow," Joe agreed.

He carried Cramer in his arms, as easily as he might have carried a child, and deposited him on the Mortons' front porch. Before Cramer had finished knocking he had disappeared. Ruth Morton drove Cramer to town, and helped him hobble up the steps to the doctor's office.

Old Doc Franklin, who was some ten years younger than Cramer, looked at the swollen feet and ankles and scowled. "I thought we had this controlled."

"So did I," Cramer said.

"But you insist on living out there in that damp hole."

"I ran out of pills," Cramer said.

"Let's see your hands. Is it bothering anywhere else?"

"My knees. My wrists, a little, and—"

"Elbows and shoulders," Dr. Franklin said. "In short, in just about every joint in your body. Going without your pills for a few days wouldn't make it spread that quickly. Let's see those knees."

He took one look and tilted back to stare morosely at the ceiling. "I'll give you something different," he said. "We'll see what happens. I'd just as soon leave the shots as a last resort, but the way this thing is progressing that last resort isn't very far off. Now—will you move into town where someone can look after you?"

Cramer shook his head. "Not now. Later—"

"If you wait much longer, you'll be totally disabled, and you'll have a choice between being moved or starving to death. If you don't starve first, before anyone notices. For a supposedly intelligent man, and a retired college professor, you are the most pig-headed—"

Cramer listened with a grin. He'd heard this little sermon before—he heard it, in fact, every time he saw Doc.

"Stop smirking," the doctor said. "So you love fussing around the water. How much fussing will you do when you can't get out of bed?"

"I can still look at it."

The doctor snorted.

On an impulse, Cramer said, "How about checking my heart?"

The doctor turned quickly. "Heart acting up, too? Darned if you aren't just a walking corpse."

He reached for his stethoscope.

"Never mind," Cramer said hastily, pushing himself to his feet. "There's nothing wrong with my heart."

"There's plenty wrong with your heart. Unbutton your shirt."

"No. I never felt better in my life—except for this." Cramer waved a swollen hand.

"Eighty per cent of the coronary victims say the same thing, just before they keel over. Unbutton your shirt."

Cramer picked up the prescription form, and took two painful steps toward the door. "I'll give these pills a try."

"You," Dr. Franklin said, "are stubbornner than any jackass I've ever met, and I've met a lot of them. Talk about spoiled children! Sadie Brian is bringing that brat of hers in this afternoon for a polio shot, and after seeing you I can look forward to it. You don't need pills, you need a good kick in the pants, and I have half a notion—"

Cramer closed the office door behind him and leaned against it, breathing heavily, shaken by the narrowness of his escape. A few more seconds in Doc's chair, and he'd have found himself attempting to explain a scar on his chest that assuredly had not been there the last time Doc examined him—and a heart that did not beat.

"Ready to go?" Ruth Morton asked.

"I certainly am," Cramer said.

Ruth left him on a bench in the sunshine while she got his prescription filled and did his shopping for him. They drove back to the Morton farm, and Ed took charge of getting Cramer and his supplies down to his cabin.

It was evening, by then. Dusk pointed long-fingered shadows out across the water. Cramer sat tilted back in his chair by the dock, waiting for Joe.

He came swinging out of the forest, his large face white,

almost luminous in the growing darkness, his voice songful as always.

"So you have returned, friend Cramer. I was concerned for you."

Cramer nodded, wondering how to say what he had to say. He pointed at the sky, where one star winked timidly through the overcast. "You come from there, don't you?"

Joe hesitated. "Not there," he said finally, and pointed at the horizon. "That way. How did you know?"

"Lots of things. Your giving me a new heart. The fact that you have too many fingers, which I noticed several days ago, but didn't want to believe. And then—"

Joe held up a seven-fingered hand. "I would have said that you have too few fingers!"

"Why are you here?"

"To study, to collect specimens—"

"To prepare for an invasion?"

"Friend Cramer! Why would my people want your distant world? There are so many closer worlds, unoccupied worlds. No, I come only to study and to collect, and when I leave it may be that none of my people will ever come here again."

"I see. When you fixed my heart, did you do anything else?"

"But I did not fix it! It could not be fixed. I had to give you a new one, and other than that I added only a few things to your blood so the new pump could operate. Your blood was much too susceptible to what you call clotting. Now that will not happen."

"But if my blood won't clot, one small cut—"

"It will clot when that is necessary. It will do it better than before. But in the veins and arteries, and in the pump, it will not clot. Do you understand?"

"I hope so. You know so much, and yet you say you aren't a doctor."

"I am not a doctor! The blood—that is merely chemistry. Engineering and chemistry I understand. But not medicine."

"It must be those things you added to my blood that have made my arthritis worse."

"What is this arthritis?" Joe asked.

Cramer explained, exhibiting his swollen hands. "Maybe the new medicine will help," he said.

Joe was preparing for his departure. He had been on this world for a long time, he told Cramer. For many years, the way Cramer measured time. His studies were completed, and his collecting, also, except for some suitable specimens of larger animals. He asked Cramer's help, and Cramer talked with Ed Morton and gave him a wild tale about starting a new business. He began buying cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, goats, even a few stray dogs and cats. Joe furnished whatever money was needed. Cramer wondered where he'd gotten it, but thought it impolite to ask.

Joe put up a small corral for the animals, and he would take them, one or two at a time, away down the forest path. After Cramer watched the twentieth cow disappear in that direction, he remarked, "You must have a large ship."

"Not very large," the complacent Joe replied.

"Then how do you get them all into it?"

"That is only a small problem in packing," Joe said. And left with the first of an entire flock of sheep.

The new pills did not help. The arthritis became an incessant torment that intensified daily. Cramer kept to his bed, moving his pain-wracked body as little as possible. Joe looked in frequently. His placid expression never changed, but his actions, his questions, betrayed a fumbling concern.

He opened cans and prepared Cramer's meals, and as the arthritis became worse he also helped him to eat. While he worked about the corner of the cabin Cramer called his kitchen, they talked.

"This arthritis," Joe said. "Such a thing does not occur among my people. I find no mention of it in my books."

Cramer nodded dully, and concealed his disappointment. Somehow he had hoped—he had confidently expected—that Joe could do something for him. A man who could casually supply a substitute heart and change the chemical

makeup of one's blood should be able to handle a little thing like arthritis.

"I am sorry the things I added to your blood have done this to you," Joe said. "But I cannot help. I just do not understand it."

"Will it keep getting worse?"

"I do not know."

Cramer nodded again. "With this new pump, and the new chemicals in my blood, how long can I expect to live?"

"Who can say? Life is a fragile flame that flickers in the winds of chance. My own life would have ended in your river had you not generously saved me."

"Yes, yes," Cramer said impatiently. "But without accidents, how long will I live?"

"But without accidents, you will not die! You will not die at all. This pump does not wear out or stop."

Cramer lay staring silently at the ceiling contemplating eternal life with eternal pain.

"Could you remove those chemicals from my blood?" he asked.

"Perhaps. It would be difficult. And soon the new pump would not work. It would—"

"Clog up?" Cramer suggested.

"Yes."

"I don't suppose you could give me back my old heart."

"But that one would not work at all!"

Cramer lifted a hand, now puffed to twice its normal size. "Soon," he said, "perhaps as soon as tomorrow, and certainly within a week, the pain will be so bad that I won't be able to move. I won't be able to do a thing for myself. Perhaps I won't even be able to sit up. I'll have to go into a nursing home, and be waited on as long as I live. I haven't enough money for that."

"This money—I can give you as much money as you wish to have."

"Even with enough money, can you imagine what kind of life that would be? Flat on my back, and in agony every time I move a finger. And it would go on, and on, and

on. Very few accidents happen in nursing homes. But it seems that I have no choice."

Joe said nothing.

"Only I do have a choice," Cramer went on. "I can have you put my old heart back, so an autopsy wouldn't stir up a fuss—they could think what they liked about the incision—and end things immediately, as should have happened that night on the river. Or I can take as much money as you can give me, and go into a nursing home where I would live indefinitely but helplessly in fairly comfortable torment. It isn't much of a choice, but it is a choice."

Joe still said nothing.

"And," Cramer said, "I'll have to decide before you leave. When will that be?"

"I had thought—tomorrow. Tomorrow night. But since you have such a difficult choice to make, I could wait another day. Or two."

"If I can't decide by tomorrow," Cramer said dryly, "I won't be able to decide at all."

In the morning Joe carried him outside, and he sat cushioned by pillows and blankets and looked out at the river. Soon it would be summer, with the grating song of frogs at night, and leaping fish, and the sullen old turtle that always sunned itself on the big log a few yards upstream. He loved it all, and now, whatever he decided, it was lost to him.

But perhaps, if he entered a nursing home, medical science would eventually be able to do something for this synthetically intensified arthritis—or perhaps not. That would be a frightening gamble, because he would be doomed to endless pain if he lost. Lying helpless, closely watched in a nursing home, he would not even have the choice of taking his own life. And the first time he was examined there would be embarrassing questions about his heart. He would be a medical freak.

Even so, sitting there looking at the sun on the rippling water, life seemed good to him—until he attempted to move.

Joe came to prepare his lunch, maintaining a sympathetic silence. He came again at dusk for the final time. A last meal, and then he would deliver Cramer to the Mortons, with enough money to last him an eternity of lifetimes; or he would replace his new heart with the worn-out one and leave his body in the cabin, to be found as chance might decide. Joe fed him—a simple meal, for a last meal—canned beans, canned hash, canned fruit, plenty of hot coffee. Cramer ate slowly savoring each mouthful.

"Well, friend Cramer?" Joe asked, when he had finished.

"If I could use my hands," Cramer said, "I could flip a coin."

"I admire your courage, friend Cramer."

"I have no courage, Joe. Flipping a coin may be the only answer, because I haven't decided."

"If you'd like to wait another day—"

"That wouldn't help. If it were a question of *doing something*, then I could decide, I think. I had no trouble deciding that night on the river. But to sit here calmly in a chair and make a choice between living, even though in agony, and dying, is something I cannot do. So I'm going to leave the choice to you."

"To *me*?"

Cramer nodded.

For the first time Joe's round face registered a discernible emotion. He was shocked. More than that—he was staggered. "Friend Cramer . . . I cannot make that kind of decision for you! You have no right to ask."

"Every right," Cramer said calmly. "The whole business is your fault. If I hadn't saved your life, and then if you hadn't saved mine, there wouldn't be a problem. So it's up to you to decide. If *you* want to flip a coin, I won't mind."

Joe gazed down at him helplessly. A many-fingered gesture underscored his consternation. He attempted to speak, and sputtered inanely.

"I'm waiting," Cramer said.

"Very well." Joe's voice was no longer songful. It rasped hideously. "Very well. I shall decide for you—now."



He seized Cramer roughly, ignoring his gasps of pain, and rushed him away up the forest trail.

Professor Zukoquol, Chairman of Gwarz University's Department of Exotic Zoology, watched in fascination as a foot-long statue of a sheep rode the conveyor through the Life Rehabilitator. A full-sized sheep staggered forth at the other end, baaing lustily. A twenty-inch cow followed, to emerge as a slobbering, foul-smelling horned monster.

Professor Zukoquol's eyes gleamed with excitement. "An amazing collection!" he exclaimed. "Friend Joruloq, you have done a splendid piece of work. And you brought a full load?"

"Full to capacity," Joruloq said modestly.

"Splendid. You are to be heartily complimented. Except for your encounter with the human, of course. That disturbs me."

"It disturbs me, also," Joruloq said.

"Did he truly ask you to decide his destiny for him?"

"He truly did," Joruloq said.

"Horrifying, is it not, that a supposedly civilized creature should have no developed sense of ethics. I should not have blamed you if you had smashed him on the spot."

"But that would have been deciding for him!" Joruloq protested.

"Or gone off and left him."

"That likewise would have been deciding for him!"

"True. This is why we sternly advise our field workers to avoid contacts with intelligent beings. Their moralities are so unpredictable. All kinds of filthy dilemmas can result."

"I agree," Joruloq said. "But I had no choice, because I was indebted to him."

"I'm almost inclined to believe it would have been best if he had not saved your life. But never mind. Once you allowed yourself to become involved, I must concede that you acted with commendable wisdom. Have you made inquiries at the medical school?"

"I did so at once."

"What did they say?"

"They promise to solve the mystery of the human's arthritis at the earliest opportunity. They do not anticipate any difficulties. Unfortunately, they have many important projects that must be completed first. It will be a thousand or two of his years before they can consider his problem."

"Generous of them to place him so far up on their schedule, considering that the project would be of no importance whatsoever to anyone but him. What will you do with him in the meantime?"

"Nothing."

"You do not intend to rehabilitate him?"

"Certainly not," Joruloq said. From a fold in his cloak he took George Cramer—an eighteen-inch figure that stood in a half crouch with swollen hands upraised, a look of intense surprise on his face. "No, I would not force him to live in pain for a thousand or two of his years while waiting for the medical school to find time for his case. I won't rehabilitate him until they are ready for him."

"You might loan him to the museum."

"I think not," Joruloq said. "I'd much prefer to keep him near me. He did save my life, you know, and I feel both gratitude and fondness for him. Also, he makes an excellent paperweight."

*Mr. Ettinger's article on immortality was completely serious opinion based on available facts; and "Limbo" was at least perfectly rational within its own premises.*

*The next story is totally improbable . . . but it deals with a kind of immortality that I understand—personally, subjectively.*

*Just about here, the words all start to turn inside out: this next story deals with alienation from reality—or deals with realistic alienation between son and father—or really deals out an alien—or perhaps it is just that the son really resolves things with a deal involving alienation. . . .*

## 237 TALKING STATUES, ETC.

**Fritz Leiber**

*from Fantasy and Science Fiction*

During the last five years of his life, when his theatrical career was largely over, the famous actor Francis Legrande spent considerable time making portraits of himself: plaster heads and busts, some larger statues, oil paintings, sketches in various media, and photographic self-studies. Most of them showed him in roles in which he had starred on the stage and screen. Legrande had always been a versatile craftsman and the results were artistically adequate.

After his death, his wife devoted herself to caring for the self-portraits along with other tangible and intangible memories of the great man. Keeping them alive, as it were, or at least dusted and cleaned and even pampered with an occasional change of air and prospect. There were 237 of them on view, distributed throughout Legrande's studio, the living room and halls and bedrooms of the house, and in the garden.

Legrande had a son, Francis Legrande II, who had no more self-content or success in life than most sons of prominent and widely admired men. After the collapse of his third marriage and his eleventh job, young Francis—who was well over forty—retreated for a time to his father's house.

His relations with his mother were amicable but limited: they said loud cheery things to each other when they met, but after a bit they began to keep their daily orbits separate—by accident, as it were.

Young Francis was drinking rather too heavily and trying hard to control it, yet without any definite program for the future—a poor formula for quiet nerves.

After six weeks his father's self-portraits began to talk to him. It came as no great surprise, since they had been

following him with their eyes for at least a week, and for the past two days they had been frowning and smiling at him—critically, he was certain—glaring and smirking—and this morning the air was full of ominous hangoverish noises on the verge of intelligibility.

He was alone in the studio. In fact he was alone in the whole house, since his mother was calling on a neighbor. There came a tiny but nerve-rasping dry grating sound, exactly as if chalk were coughing or plaster had cleared its throat. He quickly glanced at a white bust of his father as Julius Caesar and he distinctly saw the plaster lips part a little and the tip of a plaster tongue come out and quickly run around them. Then—

FATHER: I irritate you, don't I? Or perhaps I should say *we* irritate you?

SON (*startled but quickly accepting the situation and deciding to speak frankly*): Well, yes, you do. Most sons are bugged by their fathers—any psychologist who knows his stuff will tell you that. By the actual father or by his memory. If the father happens to be a famous man, the son is that much more intimidated and inhibited and overawed. And if, in addition, the father leaves behind dozens of faces of himself, created by himself, if he insists on going on living after death . . . (*He shrugs.*)

FATHER (*smiling compassionately from a painting of himself as Jesus of Nazareth*): In short, you hate me.

SON: Oh, I wouldn't go as far as that. It's more that you weary me. Seeing you around everywhere, all the time, I get bored.

FATHER (*in dark colors, as Strindberg's Captain*): You get bored? You've only been here six weeks. Think of me having nothing to look at for ten whole years but your mother.

SON (*with a certain satisfaction*): I always thought your affection and devotion to Mother were overdone.

FATHER (*as Romeo, a pastel sketch*): No, son, they weren't, but . . .

FATHER (*a head of Don Juan, interrupting*): But it

has been a dull time. There have been exactly three beautiful girls inside this house during the last decade, and one of those was collecting for Community Chest and only stayed five minutes. And none of them got undressed.

FATHER (*as Socrates*): And then there are so many of me to be bored and just one of you. I've sometimes wished I hadn't been quite so enthusiastic about multiplying myself.

SON (*wincing from a crick in the neck got from swiveling his head rapidly from portrait to portrait*): Serves you right! Two hundred and thirty-seven self-portraits!

FATHER: Actually there are about 450, but the others are put away.

SON: Good Lord! Are they alive too?

FATHER: Well, yes, in an imprisoned drugged sort of way . . . (*From various cabinets and drawers comes a low but tumultuous groaning and muttering.*)

SON (*rushing out of the studio into the living room in a sudden spasm of terror which he tries to conceal by speaking loudly and contemptuously*): What colossal vanity! Four hundred and fifty self-portraits! What narcissism!

FATHER (*from a full-length painting of King Lear over the fireplace*): I don't think it was vanity, son, not chiefly. All my life I was used to making up my face and getting into costume. Spending half an hour at it, or if there were something special like a beard (*portrait touches its long white one with wrinkle-painted fingers*) an hour or more. When I retired from the stage, I still had the make-up habit, the itch to work my face over. I took it out in doing self-portraits. It was as simple as that.

SON: I might have known you'd have an innocent fine-sounding explanation. You always did.

FATHER: In an average acting year I made myself up at least 250 times. So even 237 self-portraits are less than a year at the dressing-room table, and 450 less than two years.

SON: You'd never have been able to do so many portraits except you cheated. You worked from photographs and life-masks of yourself.

FATHER (*self-painted as Leonardo da Vinci*): Son, great artists have been cheating that way for five thousand years.

SON: All right, all right!

FATHER (*being very fair about it*): I'll admit that in addition the self-portraits let me relive my triumphs and keep up the illusion I was still acting.

SON (*cruelly*): You never stopped! On the stage or off you were always acting.

FATHER (*as Moses*): That's hardly just. I never talked a great deal. I was never domineering and (*pointedly*) I never ranted.

SON (*stung*): That's right—offstage you preferred the quiet starring roles to the windy ones. Your favorite was a sickeningly noble, serene, infallible, pipe-smoking older hero—a modern Brutus, a worldly Christ, a less folksy Will Rogers. But no matter how restrained your offstage characterizations, you managed to stay stage center.

FATHER (*shrugging pen-and-ink shoulders*): Laymen always accuse actors of acting. Because we can portray genuine emotion, we're supposed to be unable to feel it. It's the oldest charge made against us.

SON: And it's true!

FATHER (*very kindly, from a jaunty portrait of Cyrano de Bergerac*): My child, I do believe you're jealous of me.

SON (*pacing and waving his arms*): Certainly I am! What son wouldn't be?—surrounded, stifled, suffocated by a father disguised as all the great men who ever were or are or will be! All the great sages! All the great adventurers! All the great lovers!

FATHER (*gently, from the gape-mouth of a gaunt plaster head of Lazarus lifting from a plaster grave-hole*): But there's no reason to be jealous of me any longer, son. I'm dead.

SON: You don't act as if you were! You're alive 237 times—450, if we count four reserve battalions. You're all over the place!

FATHER (*as Peer Gynt*): Oh son, these are only poor phantoms, roused for a moment from the nightmarish wak-

ing-sleep of Hell. Only powerless ghosts . . . (*All the portraits cry out softly and confusedly and there comes again the muttering and groaning of the ones shut away in darkness.*)

SON (*overcome by another gust of terror and banging the door as he rushes out into the garden*): They are not! They're all facets of your perfection, damn you! Your miserable perfection, which you spent a lifetime polishing.

FATHER (*from a gaunt-cheeked bas-relief of Don Quixote on the patio wall*): Every human being believes he is perfect in his way, even the most miserable scoundrel or dreamer.

SON: Not to the degree you believed you were perfect. You practiced perfection in front of the mirror. You rehearsed it. You watched your least word and gesture and you never made a slip.

FATHER (*incredulous*): Did I actually seem like that to you?

SON: Seem? My God, if you knew how I prayed for you to make a mistake. Just one, just once. Make it and own up to it. But you never did.

FATHER (*shaking a green-tarnished bronze head across a screen of leaves*): I never suspected you felt that way. Naturally a parent pretends to his child to be a little more perfect than he actually is. To admit any of his real weaknesses would be too much like encouraging vice. He wants to be sure his child is law-abiding during the formative years—later he may be able to stand the truth. Children can't distinguish between black and the palest shade of gray. It's the parent's duty to set as good an example as he can, even if he has to cover up some things and cheat a bit, until the child has mature judgment.

SON: And as a result the child is utterly crushed by this great white marble image of perfection!

FATHER: I suppose that conceivably could happen. Do you mean to tell me, son, that you didn't know your father was as other men?—that he had every last one of their weaknesses?

SON (*a hope dawning*): You really mean that? You're honestly saying . . . (*Then, recovering himself.*) Oh, oh, I smell another of your lily-white, high-sounding explanations coming.

FATHER (*still from bronze head, which is that of Hamlet*): No, son! I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I was very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offenses at my beck than I had thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. I itched to excel at everything. Because my life depended on being the best actor, I was bitterly jealous of everyone's least accomplishments, even your own. I hid my scorn of all mankind under a mask of tolerant serenity—which I had trouble keeping in place, believe me. I lived for applause. During my last years I was bitterly resentful that ill-advised friends and greedy managers did not force me to come out of retirement and make farewell tours. I wronged your mother by lusting after other women, and myself by never having the nerve to yield to temptation—

SON: What, never?

FATHER: Well, hardly ever.

SON: Dad, that's terrific!

FATHER (*modestly*): Well, inspired by the great characters I portray, I sometimes get carried away. A little of them rubs off on me.

SON (*rather breathless*): This puts a different complexion on everything. What a relief! Dad, I feel wonderful. (*He laughs, a touch hysterically.*)

FATHER: Wait, son, I did worse than that. I watched your mother's personality fade, I watched her change into a mere adjunct of myself, and I let it happen, merely because life was a trifle easier for me that way. I watched you blunder along under a load of anxiety and guilt and I never tried to get close to you or tell you the truth about myself, which might have helped you, simply because it would have been difficult and uncomfortable for me to have done so and because I—



SON (*concerned*): Now you are going too far, Dad. You mustn't blame yourself for—

FATHER (*ignoring the sympathy*): —and because I actually enjoyed your awed embittered admiration. You were such a gullible audience! And then during the last years, instead of turning outward, I lost interest in almost everything except the self-portraits. I poured all of myself into them, finally the life-force itself, so that now I live on in them—a solitary self-created Hell. A human being's punishment for his misdeeds is having to watch and sometimes suffer their consequences . . . but to have to watch them minute after minute from 237 vantage points, unable to take the slightest action, unable even to comment, without the boon of a moment's forgetfulness, a moment's nirvana . . . (*His voice grows ghostly.*) Ten years! Thirty-six hundred interminable twilights. Thirty-six hundred empty dawns. To have to watch this house and garden die. To watch your mother mooning about day after day, wasting herself on memories and sentimental bric-a-brac. To watch you narrow your life down as I did mine, but before you've even lived it, and all your sodden drinking. To have to observe in all its loathsome detail the soul-rotting, snail-slow creep of inanition . . .

SON (*angry again, in spite of himself, and once more quite frightened*): Well, don't bellyache to me about it. It's your own fault that there are 237 of you, all corroding with life-force—another man would have been satisfied with being damned just once. There's nothing I can do for you.

FATHER (*grinning evilly from the head of Mephistopheles peering from between bushes opposite Hamlet*): But there is. Break us, burn us, melt us down. Give us oblivion. *Smash us!*

SON (*rushing back into house, partly to grab up poker from fireplace and partly because, all in all, the talking portraits in the house are less eerie than those hidden about the garden*): By God, I'd like to! I don't know how often I've thought of this house as a musty old museum, the lumber room of one man's vanity.

FATHER (*a chorus*): *Strike!*

SON (*hesitating with poker lifted above his head*): But they'd think I was crazy. They'd believe that envy of you pushed me over the line into psychosis. They'd probably put me away.

FATHER (*as Leonardo again*): Nonsense! They'd merely say that you were ridding the world of some amateurish daubs and thumb-scoopings. *Smash us!*

SON (*veering into argument*): Amateurish is too strong a word. They're not that bad, certainly.

FATHER (*pleased*): You think my work has enduring professional quality?

SON (*frowns*): No, that would be going too far in the opposite direction.

FATHER: *Smash us!*

SON (*raises the poker, but again hesitates*): There's another thing: Mother would never forgive me.

FATHER: *Don't bring your mother into this!*

SON: Why not? For that matter, if you've really been wanting oblivion for ten years, why didn't you ask Mother to smash you? Or at least to put you all away, where you'd have something nearer oblivion, I gather. Or *give* you all away to people who would either destroy you or provide you with more diverse environments and a more interesting shadow-life.

FATHER: Son, I've never been able to make things like that clear to your mother. Somehow the more she fitted herself to me, the less she was really in touch with me. She was as close to me and yet as far beyond my ken as . . . my gall bladder. I've tried to talk to her, but she doesn't hear. I don't think she even sees my self-portraits any more, but only the image of me—her own creation—which she carries in her mind. But *you*, at long last, hear me. And I tell you: *smash us!*

FATHER (*as plaster head of Don Juan, calling from studio*): Think of the fiery impetuous philanderer imprisoned in the icy rigid statue he invites for dinner. Three girls glimpsed in ten year! *Smash us!*

FATHER (*as the painted Leonardo*): You were always

scared to take action. I wasn't!—I expressed myself, even in these miserable self-portraits. Now it's your turn—and your opportunity. *Smash us!*

FATHER (*as Peer Gynt*): Plunge me back in the crucible. Melt me down.

FATHER (*as Beethoven*): Strike a great healing discord!

FATHER (*as Jean Valjean*): Explode the prison!

FATHER (*as St. John the Divine*): Unleash the apocalypse!

FATHER (*a muffled chorus of photographs*): Break our glass, shred us, touch a match to us. Destroy us!

FATHER (*all 237 with the dark undertones of the imprisoned ones*): SMASH US!

SON (*swings up the poker a third time, then lowers its tip to the floor with a smile, his manner suddenly easy*): No. Why should I let myself be agitated by a bunch of old pictures and sculptures, even if they do talk? How would destroying them change me? And why should I be intimidated by a dead father, even if he lives on in various obscure ways? It's ridiculous.

FATHER (*once more King Lear*): Have you lost your respect for us? Are you not at least filled with supernatural terror at this morning's events?

SON (*shaking his head*): No. I think it's just my hang-over talking with a strong psychotic accent—or 237 accents. And if it really *is* you, Dad, somehow talking from somewhere, I think you mean me well and so I'm not frightened. And finally, to be very honest with you, I don't think you *really* want to be destroyed, Dad, even in effigy—or effigies. I think you've just been getting your feelings off your chest, especially your boredom.

FATHER (*as Peer Gynt, smiling an inscrutable smile, perhaps of relief, perhaps of triumph, perhaps of resignation*): Well, if you can't bring yourself to destroy us, at least stir up this old house, stir up your own life.

SON (*nodding*): There's something to that, all right, Dad.

FATHER: If you don't take the initiative—and moderate your drinking, too—we'll probably start talking again some

morning or night, and not nearly as pleasantly, or even sanely. So stir things up.

SON (*seriously*): I'll remember that, Dad.

FATHER (*calling as Don Juan, from studio*): Invite some— (*The voice breaks off abruptly.*)

SON *looks around at the portraits. They have suddenly all gone mum. He can detect no movement in any of them, or changes in their features. The front door opens and his mother comes in excitedly with an opened letter in her hand.*

MOTHER: Francis, I've just received the most interesting request. The Merrivale Young Ladies' Academy wants a bust of your father for their library or lounge room. I think we should grant their request—that is, if you agree.

SON (*poking elaborately at the ashes in the fireplace, to account for the poker*): Why not? (*Then getting an inspiration and growing wily.*) How about the Hamlet head?

MOTHER: Out of the question—that's his masterpiece. Besides, it's riveted to its pillar in the garden.

SON: Well, then the Lear.

MOTHER: Certainly not, it's my favorite. Besides, it's a painting, not a bust.

SON (*baiting his trap*): Well, I suppose you could give them . . . No, it's not good enough.

MOTHER (*instantly contentious*): What's not good enough?

SON (*as if reluctantly*): I was going to say the bust of Don Juan, but—

MOTHER: I think that's a very fine piece of work—and an excellent choice in this instance.

SON: Perhaps you're right about that, Mother. In any case, I bow to your judgment.

MOTHER: Thank you, Francis. I've never given any of the statues away before, but I think I should begin to. I'll write Merrivale Young Ladies' Academy they may have the bust of Don Juan. (*Starts out.*)

SON: I think you'll feel happier when you've done this, Mother. And I think Father will feel happier too.

MOTHER (*pausing in doorway*): What's happened to

you, Francis? You're usually so cynical about these matters.

SON (*shrugs*): I don't know. Maybe I'm growing. (*As his mother leaves, he begins to smile. Suddenly he whirls toward the portrait of Peer Gynt. It had seemed to wink, but now it presents only its fixed painted expression. Francis Legrande II continues to smile as he hears someone in the studio begin faintly to hum an air from Don Giovanni.*)

*Some aliens are born. Some are made. Some attain alienness. Some are neither alien in form, nor place of origin, nor status of reality. They are the estranged and excluded; the exotic and unbelievable; the outcast of culture or creed or society.*

## THE JAZZ MACHINE

**Richard Matheson**

*from Fantasy and Science Fiction*

I had the weight that night  
I mean I had the blues and no one hides the blues away  
You got to wash them out  
Or you end up riding a slow drag to nowhere  
You got to let them fly  
I mean you got to

I play trumpet in this barrelhouse off Main Street  
Never mind the name of it  
It's like scumpteen other cellar drink dens  
Where the downtown ofays bring their loot and jive talk  
And listen to us try to blow out notes  
As white and pure as we can never be

Like I told you, I was gully low that night  
Brassing at the great White way  
Lipping back a sass in jazz that Rone got off in words

And died for  
Hitting at the jug and loaded  
Spiking gin and rage with shaking miseries  
I had no food in me and wanted none  
I broke myself to pieces in a hungry night

This white I'm getting off on showed at ten  
Collared him a table near the stand  
And sat there nursing at a glass of wine  
Just casing us  
All the way into the late watch he was there  
He never budged or spoke a word  
But I could see that he was picking up  
On what was going down  
He got into my mouth, man  
He bothered me

At four I crawled down off the stand  
And that was when this ofay stood and put his grabber on  
my arm  
"May I speak to you?" he asked  
The way I felt I took no shine  
To pink hands wrinkling up my gabardine  
"Broom off, stud," I let him know  
"Please," he said, "I have to speak to you."

Call me blowtop, call me Uncle Tom  
Man, you're not far wrong  
Maybe my brain was nowhere  
But I sat down with Mister Pink  
and told him—lay his racket  
"You've lost someone," he said.

It hit me like a belly chord  
"What do you know about it, white man?"  
I felt that hating pick up tempo in my guts again  
"I dōn't know anything about it," he replied  
"I only know you've lost someone  
*"You've told it to me with your horn a hundred times."*

I felt evil crawling in my belly  
"Let's get this straight," I said  
"Don't hype me, man; don't give me stuff"  
"Listen to me then," he said.

"Jazz isn't only music  
"It's a language too  
"A language born of protest  
"Torn in bloody ragtime from the womb of anger and  
despair  
"A secret tongue with which the legions of abused  
"Cry out their misery and their troubled hates."

"This language has a million dialects and accents  
"It may be a tone of bitter-sweetness whispered in a brass-  
lined throat  
"Or rush of frenzy screaming out of reed mouths  
"Or hammering at strings in vibrant piano hearts  
"Or pulsing, savage, under taut-drawn hides  
"In dark-peaked stridencies it can reveal the aching core of  
sorrow  
"Or cry out the new millennium  
"Its voices are without number  
"Its forms beyond statistic  
"It is, in very fact, *an endless tonal revolution*  
"The pleading furies of the damned  
"Against the cruelty of their damnation  
"I know this language, friend," he said.

"What about my—?" I began and cut off quick  
"Your—*what*, friend?" he inquired  
"Someone near to you; I know that much  
"Not a woman though; your trumpet wasn't grieving for a  
woman loss  
"Someone in your family; your father maybe  
"Or your brother."

I gave him words that tiger prowled behind my teeth  
"You're hanging over trouble, man

"Don't break the thread  
"Give it to me straight."  
So Mister Pink leaned in and laid it down  
"I have a sound machine," he said  
"Which can convert the forms of jazz  
"Into the sympathies which made them  
"If, into my machine, I play a sorrowing blues  
"From out the speaker comes the human sentiment  
"Which felt those blues  
"And fashioned them into the secret tongue of jazz."

He dug the same old question stashed behind my eyes  
"How do I know you've lost someone?" he asked  
"I've heard so many blues and stomps and strutting jazzes  
"Changed, in my machine, to sounds of anger, hopelessness  
and joy  
"That I can understand the language now  
"The story that you told was not a new one  
"Did you think you were inviolate behind your tapestry of  
woven brass?"

"Don't hype me, man," I said  
I let my fingers rigor mortis on his arm  
He didn't ruffle up a hair  
"If you don't believe me, come and see," he said  
"Listen to my machine  
"Play your trumpet into it  
"You'll see that everything I've said is true."  
I felt shivers like a walking bass inside my skin  
"Well, will you come?" he asked.

Rain was pressing drum rolls on the roof  
As Mister Pink turned tires onto Main Street  
I sat dummied in his coupe  
My sacked-up trumpet on my lap  
Listening while he rolled off words  
Like Stacy runnings on a tinkle box

"Consider your top artists in the genre



"Armstrong, Bechet, Waller, Hines

"Goodman, Mezzrow, Spanier, dozens more both male and female

"Jew and Negroes all and why?

"Why are the greatest jazz interpreters

"Those who live beneath the constant gravity of prejudice?

"I think because the scaldings of external bias

"Focus all their vehemence and suffering

"To a hot, explosive core

"And, from this nucleus of restriction

"Comes all manner of fissions, violent and slow

"Breaking loose in brief expression

"Of the tortures underneath

"Crying for deliverance in the unbreakable code of jazz."

He smiled. "*Unbreakable till now*," he said.

"Rip bop doesn't do it

"Jump and mop-mop only cloud the issue

"They're like jellied coatings over true response

"Only the authentic jazz can break the pinions of repression

"Liberate the heart-deep mournings

"Unbind the passions, give freedom to the longing essence

"You understand?" he asked.

"I understand," I said, knowing why I came.

Inside his room, he flipped the light on, shut the door

Walked across the room and slid away a cloth that covered  
his machine

"Come here," he said

I suspicioned him of hyping me but good

His jazz machine was just a jungleful of scraggy tubes and  
wheels

And scumpteen wires boogity-boogity

Like a black snake brawl

I double-o'ed the heap

"That's really in there, man," I said

And couldn't help but smile a cutting smile

Right off he grabbed a platter, stuck it down

"Heebie-Jeebies; Armstrong

"First, I'll play the record by itself," he said

Any other time I bust my conk on Satchmo's scatting  
But I had the crawling heavies in me  
And I couldn't even loosen up a grin  
I stood there feeling nowhere  
While Daddy-O was tromping down the English tongue  
*Rip-bip-dee-doo-dee-doot-doot*  
The Satch recited in his Model T baritone  
Then white man threw a switch

In one hot second all the crazy scat was nixed  
Instead, all pounding in my head  
There came a sound like bottled blowtops scuffling up a  
jamboree  
Like twenty tongue-tied hipsters in the next apartment  
Having them a ball  
Something frosted up my spine  
I felt the shakes do get-off chorus in my gut  
And even though I knew that Mister Pink was smiling at me  
I couldn't look him back  
My heart was set to knock a doorway through my chest  
Before he cut his jazz machine

"You see?" he asked.

I couldn't talk. He had the up on me

"Electrically, I've caught the secret heart of jazz

"Oh, I could play you many records

"That would illustrate the many moods

"Which generate this complicated tongue

"But I would like for you to play in my machine

"Record a minute's worth of solo

"Then we'll play the record through the other speaker

"And we'll hear exactly what you're feeling

"Stripped of every sonic superficial. Right?"

I had to know

I couldn't leave that place no more than fly

So, while white man set his record-maker up,  
I unsacked my trumpet, limbered up my lip  
All the time the heebies rising in my craw  
Like ice cubes piling

Then I blew it out again  
The weight  
The dragging misery  
The bringdown blues that hung inside me  
Like twenty irons on a string  
And the string stuck to my guts with twenty hooks  
That kept on slicing me away  
I played for Rone, my brother  
Rone who could have died a hundred different times and  
ways  
Rone who died, instead, down in the Murder Belt  
Where he was born  
Rone who thought he didn't have to take that same old stuff  
Rone who forgot and rumbled back as if he was a man  
And not a spade  
Rone who died without a single word  
Underneath the boots of Mississippi peckerwoods  
Who hated him for thinking he was human  
And kicked his brains out for it

That's what I played for  
I blew it hard and right  
And when I finished and it all came rushing back to me  
Like screaming in a black-walled pit  
I felt a coat of evil on my back  
With every scream a button that held the dark coat closer  
Till I couldn't get the air

That's when I crashed my horn on his machine  
That's when I knocked it on the floor  
And craunched it down and kicked it to a thousand pieces  
"You fool!" That's what he called me  
*"You damned black fool!"*  
All the time until I left

I didn't know it then  
I thought that I was kicking back for every kick  
That took away my only brother  
But now it's done and I can get off all the words  
I should have given Mister Pink

Listen, white man; listen to mè good  
Buddy ghee, it wasn't you  
I didn't have no hate for you  
Even though it was your kind that put my brother  
In his final place  
I'll knock it to you why I broke your jazz machine

I broke it cause I had to  
Cause it did just what you said it did  
And, if I let it stand,  
It would have robbed us of the only thing we have  
That's ours alone  
The thing no boot can kick away  
Or rope can choke

You cruel us and you kill us  
But, listen white man,  
These are only needles in our skin  
But if I'd let you keep on working your machine  
You'd know all our secrets  
And you'd steal the last of us  
And we'd blow away and never be again  
Take everything you want, Man  
You will because you have  
But don't come scuffling for our souls.

*Fritz Leiber, Richard Matheson, and Charles Beaumont—who follows here—form a sort of magic triangle of masters of the macabre moderne. All three live, currently, in the Los Angeles area: two are movie script-writers, the third, the son of a well-known actor. When the classic Leiber witch novel, Conjure Wife, was filmed in Britain a few years ago (under the even more classic Merritt title, Burn, Witch, Burn!) Matheson was one of the scenarists. Beaumont and Matheson have both worked on the recent gaggle of neo-Poe movies. Leiber and Beaumont*

are, separately, authors of two of the finest and most fearfully "real" fantasies of modern city life I have ever read ("The Vanishing American" and "Smoke Ghost").

Each of the three has written across the whole range of science fantasy, and well out of it; in fiction, essay, and dramatic form; from vignette to book length. (Notable novels: Matheson's *I Am Legend*, Beaumont's *The Intruder*, Leiber's *The Wanderer*.) All three were included in the first issue of *Gamma*, a new magazine of imaginative fiction, edited by William Nolan (author of "One of Those Days," in the 8th Annual).

## MOURNING SONG

**Charles Beaumont**

*from Gamma*

He had a raven on his shoulder and two empty holes where his eyes used to be, if he ever had eyes, and he carried a guitar. I saw him first when the snow was walking over the hills, turning them to white velvet. I felt good, I felt young, and, in the dead of winter, the spring wind was in my blood. It was a long time ago.

I remember I was out back helping my daddy chop up firewood. He had the ax up in the air, about to bring it down on the piece of soft bark I was holding on the block, when he stopped, with the ax in the air, and looked off in the direction of Hunter's Hill. I let go of the bark and looked off that way, too. And that's when I saw Solomon for the first time. But it wasn't the way he looked that scared me, he was too far away to see anything except that it was somebody walking in the snow. It was the way my daddy looked. My daddy was a good big man, as big as any I ever met or saw, and I hadn't ever seen him look afraid, but he looked afraid now. He put the ax down and stood there, not moving or saying anything, only standing there breathing out little puffs of cold and looking afraid.

Then, after a while, the man walking in the snow walked up to the road by our house, and I saw him close. Maybe

I wouldn't have been scared if it hadn't been for the way my daddy was acting, but probably I would have been. I was little then and I hadn't ever in my whole life seen anybody without eyes in his head.

My daddy waited until he saw that the blind man wasn't coming to our house, then he grabbed me up off the ground and hugged me so hard it hurt my chest. I asked him what the matter was, but he didn't answer. He just started off down the road after the blind man. I went along with him, waiting for him to tell me to get on home, but he didn't. We walked for over two miles, and every time we came to somebody's house, the people who lived there would stand out in the yard or inside at the window, watching, the way my daddy did, and when we passed, they'd come out and join the parade. Pretty soon there was us and Jake Overton and his wife and Peter Briley and old man Jaspers and the whole Randall family, and more I can't remember, trailing down along the road together, following the blind man.

I thought sure, somebody said.

So did I, my daddy said.

Who you suppose it's going to be? Mr. Briley said.

My daddy shook his head. Nobody knows, he said. Except him.

We walked another mile and a half, cutting across the Pritchetts' field where the snow was up to my knees, and nobody said anything more. I knew the only place there was in this direction, but it didn't mean anything to me because nobody had ever told me anything about Solomon. I know I wondered as we walked how you could see where you were going if you didn't have eyes, and I couldn't see how you could, but that old man knew just exactly where he was going. You knew that by looking at him and watching how he went around stumps and logs on the ground. Once I thought he was going to walk into the plow the Pritchetts left out to rust when they got their new one, but he didn't. He walked right around it, and I kept wondering how a thing like that could be. I closed my eyes and tried it but I couldn't keep them closed more than a couple of seconds. When I opened them, I saw that my daddy and

all the rest of the people had stopped walking. All except the old blind man.

We were out by the Schreiber place. It looked warm and nice inside with all the lamps burning and gray smoke climbing straight up out of the chimney. Probably the Schreibers were having their breakfast.

Which one, I wonder, my daddy said to Mr. Randall.

The old one, Mr. Randall said.

Yes, that's probably right.

He's going on eighty.

My daddy nodded his head and watched as the old blind man walked through the snow to the big pine tree that sat in the Schreibers' yard and lifted the guitar strap over his head.

Going on eighty, Mr. Randall said again.

Yes.

It's the old man, all right.

Everybody quieted down then. Everybody stood still in the snow, waiting, what for I didn't know. I wanted to pee. More than anything in the world I wanted to pee, right there in the snow, and watch it melt and steam in the air. But I couldn't, any more than I could at church. In a way, this was like church.

Up ahead the old blind man leaned his face next to the guitar and touched the strings. I don't know how he thought he was going to play anything in this cold. It was cold enough to make your ears hurt. But he kept touching the strings, and the sound they made was just like the sound any guitar makes when you're trying to get it tuned, except maybe louder. I tried to look at his face, but I couldn't because of those holes where his eyes should have been. They made me sick. I wondered if they went all the way up into his head. And if they didn't, where did they stop?

He began to play the Mourning Song then. I didn't know that was the name of it, or what it meant, or anything, but I knew I didn't like it. It made me think of sad things, like when I went hunting by myself one time and this doe I shot fell down and got up again and started running around in circles and finally died right in front of me, looking at me.

Or when I caught a bunch of catfish at the slew without bait. I carried them home and everything was fine until I saw that two of them were still alive. So I did what my daddy said was a crazy thing. I put those catfish in a pail of water and carried them back to the slew and dumped them in. I thought I'd see them swim away happy, but they didn't. They sank just like rocks.

That song made me think of things like that, and that was why I didn't like it then, even before I knew anything about it.

Then the old blind man started singing. You wouldn't expect anything but a croak to come out of that toothless old mouth, but if you could take away what he was singing, and the way he looked, you would have to admit he could really sing. He had a high, sweet voice, almost like a woman's, and you could understand every word.

*Long valley, dark valley . . . hear the wind cry! . . . in darkness we're born and in darkness we die . . . all alone, alone, to the end of our days . . . to the end of our days, all alone . . .*

Mr. Schreiber came outside in his shirtsleeves. He looked even more afraid then my daddy had looked. His face was white and you could see, even from where I stood, that he was shaking. His wife came out after a minute and started crying, then his father, old man Schreiber, and his boy Carl who was my age.

The old blind man went on singing for a long time, then he stopped and put the guitar back over his head and walked away. The Schreibers went back into their house. My daddy and I went back to our own house, not following the blind man this time but taking the long way.

We didn't talk about it till late that night. Then my daddy came into my room and sat down on my bed. He told me that the blind man's name was Solomon, at least that was what people called him because he was so old. Nobody knew how he lost his eyes or how he got around without them, but there were lots of things that Solomon could do that nobody understood.

Like what? I asked.



He scratched his cheek and waited a while before answering. He can smell death, he said, finally. He can smell it coming a hundred miles off. I don't know how. But he can.

I said I didn't believe it. My daddy just shrugged his shoulders and told me I was young. When I got older I'd see how Solomon was never wrong. Whenever Solomon walked up to you, he said, and unslung that guitar and started to sing the Mourning Song, you might as well tell them to dig deep.

That was why he had looked so scared that morning. He thought Solomon was coming to our house.

But didn't nothing happen to the Schreibers, I said.

You wait, my daddy said. He'll keep on going there and then one day he'll quit.

I did wait, almost a week, but nothing happened, and I began to wonder if my daddy wasn't getting a little feeble, talking about people smelling death and all. Then on the eighth day, Mr. Randall came over.

The old man? my daddy asked.

Mr. Randall shook his head. Alex, he said, meaning Mr. Schreiber. Took sick last night.

My daddy turned to me and said, You believe it now?

And I said, No, I don't. I said I believed that an old blind man walked up to the Schreibers' house and sang a song and I believed that Mr. Alex Schreiber died a little over a week later but I didn't believe any man could know it was going to happen. Only God could know such a thing, I said.

Maybe Solomon is God, said my daddy.

That dirty old man without any eyes in his head?

Maybe. You know what God looks like?

No, but I know He ain't blind, I know He don't walk around with a bird on His shoulder, I know He don't sing songs.

How do you know that?

I just do.

Well and good, but take heed—if you see him coming, if you just happen to see him coming down from Hunter's Hill

some morning, and he passes near you, don't you let him hear you talking like that.

What'll he do?

I don't know. If he can do what he can do, what can't he do?

He can't scare me, that's what—and he can't make me believe in him! You're crazy! I said to my daddy, and he hit me, but I went on saying it at the top of my voice until I fell asleep.

I saw Solomon again about six months later, or maybe a year, I don't remember. Looking the same, walking the same, and half the valley after him. I didn't go along. My daddy did, but I didn't. They all went to the Briley house that time. And Mrs. Briley died four days afterward. But I said I didn't believe it.

When Mr. Randall himself came running over one night saying he'd had a call from Solomon and him and my daddy got drunk on wine, and Mr. Randall died the next day, even then I didn't believe it.

How much proof you got to have, boy? my daddy said.

I couldn't make it clear then what it was that was tormenting me. I couldn't ask the right questions, because they weren't really questions, then, just feelings. Like, this ain't the world here, this place. People die all over the world, millions of people, every day, every minute. You mean you think that old bastard is carting off all over the world? You think he goes to China in that outfit and plays that guitar? And what about the bird? Birds don't live long. What's he got, a dozen of 'em? And, I wanted to know, *why* does he do what he does? What the hell's the point of telling somebody they're going to die if they can't *do* something about it?

I couldn't believe in Solomon because I couldn't understand him. I did say that, and my daddy said, If you could understand him, he wouldn't be Solomon.

What's that mean?

Means he's mysterious.

So's fire, I said. But I wouldn't believe in it if it couldn't put out heat or burn anything.

You're young.

I was, too. Eleven.

By the time I was grown, I had the questions, and I had the answers. But I couldn't tell my daddy. On my eighteenth birthday, we were whooping it up, drinking liquor and singing, when somebody looked out the window. Everything stopped then. My daddy didn't even bother to go look.

Could be for anybody here, somebody said.

No. I feel it. It's for me.

You don't know.

I know. Lonnie's a man now, it's time for me to move on.

I went to the window. Some of the people we hadn't invited were behind Solomon, gazing at our house. He had the guitar unslung, and he was strumming it.

The people finished up their drinking quietly and looked at my daddy and went back out. But they didn't go home, not until Solomon did.

I was drunk, and this made me drunker. I remember I laughed, but my daddy, he didn't and in a little while he went on up to bed. I never saw him look so tired, so worn out, never, and I saw him work in the field eighteen hours a day for months.

Nothing happened the first week. Nor the second. But he didn't get out of bed that whole time, and he didn't talk. He just waited.

The third week, it came. He started coughing. Next day he called for my mother, dead those eighteen years. Doc Garson came and looked him over. Pneumonia, he said.

That morning my daddy was still and cold.

I hated Solomon then, for the first time, and I hated the people in the valley. But I couldn't do anything about it. We didn't have any money, and nobody would ever want to buy the place. So I settled in, alone, and worked and tried to forget about the old blind man. He came to me at night, in my sleep, and I'd wake up, mad, sometimes, but I knew a dream couldn't hurt you, unless you let it. And I didn't plan to let it.

Etilla said I was right, and I think that's when I first saw her. I'd seen her every Sunday at church, with her ma, when

my daddy and I went there together, but she was only a little thing then. I didn't even know who she was when I started buying grain from her at the store, and when she told me her name, I just couldn't believe it. I don't think there's been many prettier girls in the world. Her hair wasn't golden, it was kind of brown, her figure wasn't skinny like the pictures, but full and lush and she had freckles, but I knew, in a hurry, that she was the woman I wanted. I hadn't ever felt the way she made me feel. Excited and nervous and hot.

It's love, Bundy Matthews said. He was my best friend. You're in love.

How do you know?

I just do.

But what if she ain't in love with me?

You're a fool.

How can I find out?

You can't, not if you don't do anything except stand there and buy grain off of her.

It was the hardest thing I'd ever done, asking her to walk with me, but I did it, and she said yes, and that's when I found out that Bundy was right. All the nervousness went away, but the excitement and heat, they stayed. I felt wonderful. Every time I touched her it made my whole life up to then nothing but getting ready, just twenty-four years of getting ready to touch Etila.

Nothing she wouldn't talk about, that girl. Even Solomon, who never was talked about, ever, by anybody else, except when he was traveling.

Wonder where he lives, I'd say.

Oh, probably in some cave somewhere, she'd say.

Wonder *how* he lives.

I don't know what you mean.

I mean, where does he find anything to eat.

I never thought about it.

Stray dogs, probably.

And we'd laugh and then talk about something else. Then, after we'd courted six months, I asked Etila to be my bride, and she said yes.

We set the date for the first of June, and I mean to tell

you, I worked from dawn to dusk, every day, just to keep from thinking about it. I wanted so much to hold her in my arms and wake up to find her there beside me in the bed that it hurt, all over. It wasn't like any other hurt. It didn't go away, or ease. It just stayed inside me, growing, till I honestly thought I'd break open.

I was thinking about that one day, out in the field, when I heard the music. I let go of the plow and turned around, and there he was, maybe a hundred yards away. I hadn't laid eyes on him in six years, but he didn't look any different. Neither did the holes where his eyes used to be, or the raven. Or the people behind him.

*Long valley, dark valley . . . hear the wind cry! . . . in darkness we're born and in darkness we die . . . all alone, alone, to the end of our days . . . to the end of our days, all alone . . .*

I felt the old hate come up then, because seeing him made me see my daddy again, and the look on my daddy's face when he held the ax in the air that first time and when he died.

But the hate didn't last long, because there wasn't any part of me that was afraid, and that made me feel good. I waited for him to finish and when he did, I clapped applause for him, laughed, and turned back to my plowing. I didn't even bother to see when they all left.

Next night I went over to Etila's, the way I did every Thursday night. Her mother opened the door, and looked at me and said, You can't come in, Lonnie.

Why not?

Why not? You know why not.

No, I don't. Is it about me and Etila?

You might say. I'm sorry, boy.

What'd I do?

No answer.

I didn't do anything. I haven't done what you think. We said we'd wait.

She just looked at me.

You hear me? I promised we'd wait, and that's what we're going to do. Now let me in.

I could see Etilla standing back in the room, looking at me. She was crying. But her mother wouldn't open the door any farther.

Tell me!

He called on you, boy. Don't you know that?

Who?

Solomon.

So what? I don't believe in all that stuff, and neither does Etilla. It's a lot of lies. He's just a crazy old blind man. Isn't that right, Etilla!

I got mad then, when she didn't answer, and I pushed the door open and went in. Etilla started to run. I grabbed her. It's lies, I said. We agreed on that!

I didn't think he'd call on you, Lonnie, she said.

Her mother came up. He never fails, she said. He's never been wrong in forty years.

I know, and I know why, too! I told her. Because everybody *believes* in him. They never ask questions, they never think, they just believe, and *that's* why he never fails! Well, I want you to know *I* don't believe and neither does Etilla and that's why this is *one* time he's going to fail!

I could have been talking to cordwood.

Etilla, tell your mother I'm right! Tell her we're going to be married, just like we planned, and we aren't going to let an old man with a guitar spoil our life.

I won't let her marry you, the old woman said. Not now. I like you, Lonnie Younger, you're a good, strong, hard-working boy, and you'd have made my girl a fine husband, but you're going to die soon and I don't want Etilla to be a widow. Do you?

No, you know I don't, but I keep trying to tell you, I'm *not* going to die. I'm healthy, and if you don't believe it, you go ask Doc Garson.

It wouldn't matter. Your daddy was healthy, remember, and so was Ed Kimball and Mrs. Jackson and little Petey Griffin, and it didn't matter. Solomon knows. He smells it.

The way Etilla looked at me, I could have been dead already.

I went home then and tried to get drunk, but it didn't

work. Nothing worked. I kept thinking about that old man and how he took the one thing I had left, the one good, beautiful thing in my whole life, and tore it away from me.

He came every day, like always, followed by the people, and I kept trying to see Etila. But I felt like a ghost. Her mother wouldn't even come to the door.

I'm alive! I'd scream at them. Look at me. I'm alive!

But the door stayed barred.

Finally, one day, her mother yelled at me, Lonnie! You come here getting my Etila upset one more time and I'll shoot you and then see how alive you'll be!

I drank a quart of wine that night, sitting by the window. The moon was bright. You could see like it was day, almost. For hours the field was empty, then they came, Solomon at their head.

His voice might not have been different, but it seemed that way, I don't know how. Softer, maybe, or higher. I sat there and listened and looked at them all, but when he sang those words, *All alone*, I threw the bottle down and ran outside.

I ran right up to him, closer than anyone ever had got, I guess, close enough to touch him.

God damn you, I said.

He went on singing.

Stop it!

He acted like I wasn't there.

You may be blind, you crazy old son of a bitch, but you're not deaf! I'm telling you—and all the rest of you—to get off my property, now! You hear me?

He didn't move. I don't know what happened inside me, then, except that all the hate and mad and sorrow I'd been feeling came back and bubbled over. I reached out first and grabbed that bird on his shoulder. I held it in my hands and squeezed it and kept on squeezing it till it stopped screaming. Then I threw it away.

The people started to murmuring then, like they'd seen a dam burst, or an earthquake, but they didn't move.

Get out of here! I yelled. Go sing to somebody else,

somebody who believes in you. I don't. Hear me? I don't!

I pulled his hands away from the strings. He put them back. I pulled them away again.

You got them all fooled, I said. But I know you can't smell death, or anything else, because you stink so bad yourself! I turned to the people. Come and take a sniff! I told them. Take a sniff of an old man who hasn't been near a cake of soap in all his life—see what it is you been afraid of!

They didn't move.

He's only a man! I yelled. Only a man!

I saw they didn't believe me, so I knew I had to show them, and I think it came to me that maybe this would be the way to get Etila back. I should have thought of it before! If I could prove he wasn't anything but a man, they'd all have to see they were wrong, and that would save them because then they wouldn't just lie down and die, like dogs, whenever they looked out and saw Solomon and heard that damn song. Because they wouldn't *see* Solomon. He'd be gone.

I had my hands around his throat. It felt like wet leather. I pressed as hard as I could, and kept on pressing, with my thumbs digging into his gullet, deeper and deeper, and then I let him drop. He didn't move.

Look at him, I yelled, holding up my hands. He's dead! Solomon is dead! God is dead! The man is dead! I killed him!

The people backed away.

Look at him! Touch him! You want to smell death, too? Go ahead, do it!

I laughed till I cried, then I ran all the way to Etila's house. Her mother shot at me, just the way she said she would, but I knew she'd miss. It was an old gun, she was an old woman. I kicked the door open. I grabbed them both and practically dragged them back to my place. They thought I was crazy. I scared them bad. I didn't care. They had to see it with their own eyes. They had to see the old man sprawled out dead on the ground.

He was right where I dropped him.



Look at him, I said, and it was close to dawn now so they could see him even better. His face was blue and his tongue was sticking out of his mouth like a fat black snake.

I took loose the guitar while they were looking and stomped it to pieces.

They looked up at me, then, and started running.

I didn't bother to go after them, because it didn't matter any more.

It didn't matter, either, when Sheriff Crowder came to see me the next day.

You did murder, Lonnie, he said. Thirty people saw you.

I didn't argue.

He took me to the jail and told me I was in bad trouble, but I shouldn't worry too much, considering the facts. He never thought Solomon was anything but a lunatic, and he didn't think the judge would be too hard on me. Of course it could turn out either way and he wasn't promising anything, but probably it would go all right.

I *didn't* worry, either. Not until last night. I was lying on my cot, sleeping, when I had a dream. It had to be, because I heard Solomon. His voice was clear and high, and sadder than it had ever been. And I saw him, too, when I went to the window and looked out. It was him and no question, standing across the street under a big old elm tree, singing.

*Long valley, dark valley . . . hear the wind cry! . . . in darkness we're born and in darkness we die . . . all alone, alone, to the end of our days . . . to the end of our days, all alone . . .*

It scared me, all right, that dream, but I don't think it will scare me much longer. I mean I really don't.

Tomorrow's the trial. And when it's over, I'm going to take me a long trip. I am.

*It works both ways, of course. Even as the word "alien" evokes the start of fear, so our deepest fears and darkest torments have evolved into symbols of alienness. The symbols must keep pace with culture, it is true. For most of us, a horned-tailed-and-hoofed devil is no longer an apparition of terror; we are more likely to be struck with real fear*

*by the familiar yellow radiation symbol, or by the image of a hairy-legged multimagnified germ-laden fly.*

*But the Devil was Lord of the Flies long before the microbe hunters traded in their bells and candles for microscopes and agar cultures. Mermaids sang in wondrous strange seductive tongues hundreds of years before zoologists began to puzzle out the language of mammalian porpoises. And the archetypal duality of love-hate, good-bad, hope-guilt, took the form (centuries before anyone coined words like "schizoid" and "alienist") of the shape-changer—the werewolf.*

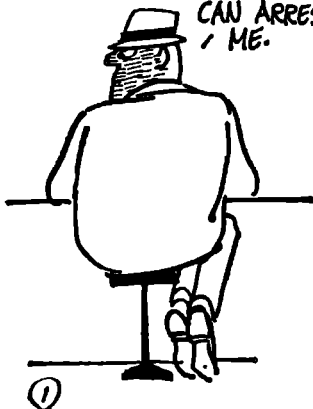
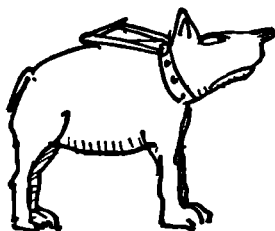
# DOG EAT DOG

by Jules Feiffer

The Hall Syndicate, Inc.

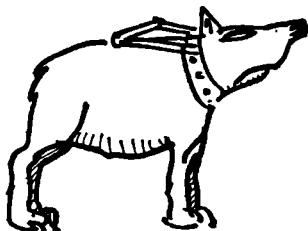
YOU'RE  
UNDER  
ARREST.  
COME  
ALONG,  
QUIETLY.

I KNOW MY RIGHTS. YOU'RE NOT  
A POLICEMAN. ONLY A POLICEMAN  
CAN ARREST  
ME.

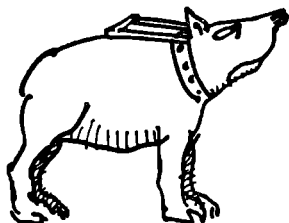


THERE ARE NO MORE  
POLICEMEN. ONLY POLICE  
DOGS. WE'VE ELIMINATED  
THE MIDDLE MAN.  
COME ALONG, QUIETLY.

I KNOW MY RIGHTS.  
I'LL CALL THE F.B.I.



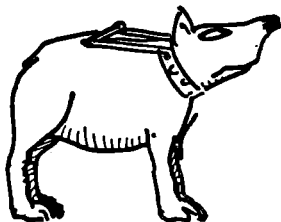
THE F.B.I. WORKS HAND  
IN PAW WITH LOCAL  
LAW ENFORCEMENT  
DOGS. COME ALONG,  
QUIETLY.



I KNOW MY RIGHTS.  
I'LL GO THROUGH  
THE COURTS.



THE COURTS TAKE  
FOREVER. WHY  
ELSE WOULD WE  
ENCOURAGE YOU  
TO USE THEM?  
COME ALONG,  
QUIETLY.



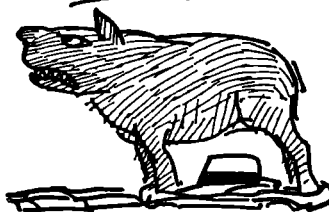
I KNOW MY RIGHTS.  
I'LL PICKET NON-  
VIOLENTLY.



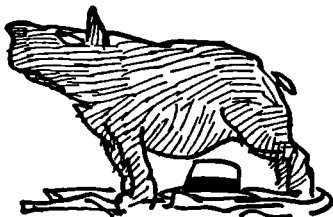
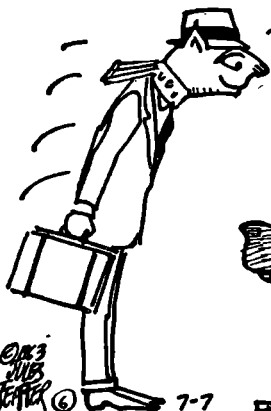
NON-VIOLENCE MAY  
MAKE US FEEL GUILTY  
BUT WE CAN LEARN  
TO LIVE WITH IT.  
COME ALONG GU-  
HEY- WHAT DO YOU  
THINK YOU'RE DOING?



WHAT DOES  
IT LOOK  
LIKE I'M  
DOING?



TELL ME- WHAT IS IT  
YOU PEOPLE WANT?



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SEAFER

6

7-7

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. . . and as far back as the dove meant peace, the crow and raven were croaking portents of doom . . .

## THE JEW BIRD

**Bernard Malamud**

*from The Reporter\**

The window was open so the skinny bird flew in. Flappity-flap with its frazzled black wings. That's how it goes. It's open, you're in. Closed, you're out and that's your fate. The bird wearily flapped through the open kitchen window of Harry Cohen's top-floor apartment on First Avenue near the lower East River. On a rod on the wall hung an escaped canary cage, its door wide open, but this black-type long-beaked bird—its ruffled head and small dull eyes, crossed a little, making it look like a dissipated crow—landed if not smack on Cohen's thick lamb chop, at least on the table, close by. The frozen-foods salesman was sitting at supper with his wife and young son on a hot August evening a year ago. Cohen, a heavy man with hairy chest and beefy shorts; Edie, in skinny yellow shorts and red halter; and their ten-year-old Morris (after her father)—Maurie, they called him, a nice kid though not overly bright—were all in the city after two weeks out, because Cohen's mother was dying. They had been enjoying Kingston, New York, but drove back when Mama got sick in her flat in the Bronx.

"Right on the table," said Cohen, putting down his beer glass and swatting at the bird. "Son of a bitch."

"Harry, take care with your language," Edie said, looking at Laurie, who watched every move.

The bird cawed hoarsely and with a flap of its bedraggled wings—feathers tufted this way and that—rose heavily to the top of the open kitchen door, where it perched staring down.

"Gevalt, a pogrom!"

\* This story also appeared in *Idiots First*, Farrar, Straus and Company, 1963.

"It's a talking bird," said Edie in astonishment.

"In Jewish," said Maurie.

"Wise guy," muttered Cohen. He gnawed on his chop, then put down the bone. "So if you can talk, say what's your business. What do you want here?"

"If you can't spare a lamb chop," said the bird, "I'll settle for a piece of herring with a crust of bread. You can't live on your nerve forever."

"This ain't a restaurant," Cohen replied. "All I'm asking is what brings you to this address?"

"The window was open," the bird sighed; adding after a moment, "I'm running. I'm flying but I'm also running."

"From whom?" asked Edie with interest.

"Anti-Semeets."

"Anti-Semites?" they all said.

"That's from who."

"What kind of anti-Semites bother a bird?" Edie asked.

"Any kind," said the bird, "also including eagles, vultures, and hawks. And once in a while some crows will take your eyes out."

"But aren't you a crow?"

"Me? I'm a Jewbird."

Cohen laughed heartily. "What do you mean by that?"

The bird began dovening. He prayed without Book or tallith, but with passion. Edie bowed her head though not Cohen. And Maurie rocked back and forth with the prayer, looking up with one wide-open eye.

When the prayer was done Cohen remarked, "No hat, no phylacteries?"

"I'm an old radical."

"You're sure you're not some kind of a ghost or dybbuk?"

"Not a dybbuk," answered the bird, "though one of my relatives had such an experience once. It's all over now, thanks God. They freed her from a former lover, a crazy jealous man. She's now the mother of two wonderful children."

"Birds?" Cohen asked slyly.

"Why not?"

"What kind of birds?"

"Like me. Jewbirds."

Cohen tipped back in his chair and guffawed. "That's a big laugh. I've heard of a Jewfish but not a Jewbird."

"We're once removed." The bird rested on one skinny leg, then on the other. "Please, could you spare maybe a piece of herring with a small crust of bread?"

Edie got up from the table.

"What are you doing?" Cohen asked her.

"I'll clear the dishes."

Cohen turned to the bird. "So what's your name, if you don't mind saying?"

"Call me Schwartz."

"He might be an old Jew changed into a bird by somebody," said Edie, removing a plate.

"Are you?" asked Harry, lighting a cigar.

"Who knows?" answered Schwartz. "Does God tell us everything?"

Maurie got up on his chair. "What kind of herring?" he asked the bird in excitement.

"Get down, Maurie, or you'll fall," ordered Cohen.

"If you haven't got matjes, I'll take schmaltz," said Schwartz.

"All we have is marinated, with slices of onion—in a jar," said Edie.

"If you'll open for me the jar I'll eat marinated. Do you have also, if you don't mind, a piece of rye bread—the spitz?"

Edie thought she had.

"Feed him out on the balcony," Cohen said. He spoke to the bird. "After that take off."

Schwartz closed both bird eyes. "I'm tired and it's a long way."

"Which direction are you headed, north or south?"

Schwartz, barely lifting his wings, shrugged.

"You don't know where you're going?"

"Where there's charity I'll go."

"Let him stay, papa," said Maurie. "He's only a bird."

"So stay the night," Cohen said, "but no longer."

In the morning Cohen ordered the bird out of the house



but Maurie cried, so Schwartz stayed for a while. Maurie was still on vacation from school and his friends were away. He was lonely and Edie enjoyed the fun he had, playing with the bird.

"He's no trouble at all," she told Cohen, "and besides his appetite is very small."

"What'll you do when he makes dirty?"

"He flies across the street in a tree when he makes dirty, and if nobody passes below, who notices?"

"So all right," said Cohen, "but I'm dead set against it. I warn you he ain't gonna stay here long."

"What have you got against the poor bird?"

"Poor bird, my ass. He's a foxy bastard. He thinks he's a Jew."

"What difference does it make what he thinks?"

"A Jewbird, what a chuzpah. One false move and he's out on his drumsticks."

At Cohen's insistence Schwartz lived out on the balcony in a new wooden birdhouse Edie had bought him.

"With many thanks," said Schwartz, "though I would rather have a human roof over my head. You know how it is at my age. I like the warm, the windows, the smell of cooking. I would also be glad to see once in a while the *Jewish Morning Journal* and have now and then a schnapps because it helps my breathing, thanks God. But whatever you give me, you won't hear complaints."

However, when Cohen brought home a bird feeder full of dried corn, Schwartz said, "Impossible."

Cohen was annoyed. "What's the matter, crosseyes, is your life getting too good for you? Are you forgetting what it means to be migratory? I'll bet a helluva lot of crows you happen to be acquainted with, Jews or otherwise, would give their eyeteeth to eat this corn."

Schwartz did not answer. What can you say to a grubber yung?

"Not for my digestion," he later explained to Edie. "Cramps. Herring is better even if it makes you thirsty. At least rainwater don't cost anything." He laughed sadly in breathy caws.

And herring, thanks to Edie, who knew where to shop, was what Schwartz got, with an occasional piece of potato pancake, and even a bit of soupmeat when Cohen wasn't looking.

When school began in September, before Cohen would once again suggest giving the bird the boot, Edie prevailed on him to wait a little while until Maurie adjusted.

"To deprive him right now might hurt his schoolwork, and you know what trouble we had last year."

"So okay, but sooner or later the bird goes. That I promise you."

Schwartz, though nobody had asked him, took on full responsibility for Maurie's performance in school. In return for favors granted, when he was let in for an hour or two at night, he spent most of his time overseeing the boy's lessons. He sat on top of the dresser near Maurie's desk as he laboriously wrote out his homework. Maurie was a restless type and Schwartz gently kept him to his studies. He also listened to him practice his screechy violin, taking a few minutes off now and then to rest his ears in the bathroom. And they afterwards played dominoes. The boy was an indifferent checker player and it was impossible to teach him chess. When he was sick, Schwartz read him comic books though he personally disliked them. But Maurie's work improved in school and even his violin teacher admitted his playing was better. Edie gave Schwartz credit for these improvements though the bird pooh-poohed them.

Yet he was proud there was nothing lower than C minus on Maurie's report card, and on Edie's insistence celebrated with a little schnapps.

"If he keeps up like this," Cohen said, "I'll get him in an Ivy League college for sure."

"Oh I hope so," sighed Edie.

But Schwartz shook his head. "He's a good boy—you don't have to worry. He won't be a shicker or a wifebeater, God forbid, but a scholar he'll never be, if you know what I mean, although maybe a good mechanic. It's no disgrace in these times."

"If I were you," Cohen said, angered, "I'd keep my big snoot out of other people's private business."

"Harry, please," said Edie.

"My goddamn patience is wearing out. That crosseyes butts into everything."

Though he wasn't exactly a welcome guest in the house, Schwartz gained a few ounces although he did not improve in appearance. He looked bedraggled as ever, his feathers unkempt, as though he had just flown out of a snowstorm. He spent, he admitted, little time taking care of himself. Too much to think about. "Also outside plumbing," he told Edie. Still there was more glow to his eyes so that though Cohen went on calling him crosseyes he said it less emphatically.

Liking his situation, Schwartz tried tactfully to stay out of Cohen's way, but one night when Edie was at the movies and Maurie was taking a hot shower, the frozen-foods salesman began a quarrel with the bird.

"For Christ sake, why don't you wash yourself sometimes? Why must you always stink like a dead fish?"

"Mr. Cohen, if you'll pardon me, if somebody eats garlic he will smell from garlic. I eat herring three times a day. Feed me flowers and will I smell like flowers?"

"Who's obligated to feed you anything at all? You're lucky to get herring."

"Excuse me, I'm not complaining," said the bird. "You're complaining."

"What's more," said Cohen, "even from out on the balcony I can hear you snoring away like a pig. It keeps me awake at night."

"Snoring," said Schwartz, "isn't a crime, thanks God."

"All in all you are a goddamn pest and free loader. Next thing you'll want to sleep in bed next to my wife."

"Mr. Cohen," said Schwartz, "on this rest assured. A bird is a bird."

"So you say, but how do I know you're a bird and not some kind of a goddamn devil?"

"If I was a devil you would know already. And I don't mean because your son's good marks."

"Shut up, you bastard bird," shouted Cohen.

"Grubber yung," cawed Schwartz, rising to the tips of his talons, his long wings outstretched.

Cohen was about to lunge for the bird's scrawny neck but Maurie came out of the bathroom, and for the rest of the evening until Schwartz's bedtime on the balcony, there was pretended peace.

But the quarrel had deeply disturbed Schwartz and he slept badly. His snoring woke him, and awake, he was fearful of what would become of him. Wanting to stay out of Cohen's way, he kept to the birdhouse as much as possible. Cramped by it, he paced back and forth on the balcony ledge, or sat on the birdhouse roof, staring into space. In the evenings, while overseeing Maurie's lessons, he often fell asleep. Awakening, he nervously hopped around exploring the four corners of the room. He spent much time in Maurie's closet, and carefully examined his bureau drawers when they were left open. And once when he found a large paper bag on the floor, Schwartz poked his way into it to investigate what possibilities were. The boy was amused to see the bird in the paper bag.

"He wants to build a nest," he said to his mother.

Edie, sensing Schwartz's unhappiness, spoke to him quietly.

"Maybe if you did some of the things my husband wants you, you would get along better with him."

"Give me a for instance," Schwartz said.

"Like take a bath, for instance."

"I'm too old for baths," said the bird. "My feathers fall out without baths."

"He says you have a bad smell."

"Everybody smells. Some people smell because of their thoughts or because who they are. My bad smell comes from the food I eat. What does his come from?"

"I better not ask him or it might make him mad," said Edie.

In late November Schwartz froze on the balcony in the fog and cold, and especially on rainy days he woke with stiff joints and could barely move his wings. Already he felt

twinges of rheumatism. He would have liked to spend more time in the warm house, particularly when Maurie was in school and Cohen at work. But though Edie was good-hearted and might have sneaked him in in the morning, just to thaw out, he was afraid to ask her. In the meantime Cohen, who had been reading articles about the migration of birds, came out on the balcony one night after work when Edie was in the kitchen preparing pot roast, and peeking into the birdhouse, warned Schwartz to be on his way soon if he knew what was good for him. "Time to hit the flyways."

"Mr. Cohen, why do you hate me so much?" asked the bird. "What did I do to you?"

"Because you're an A-number-one troublemaker, that's why. What's more, whoever heard of a Jewbird? Now scat or it's open war."

But Schwartz stubbornly refused to depart so Cohen embarked on a campaign of harassing him, meanwhile hiding it from Edie and Maurie. Maurie hated violence and Cohen didn't want to leave a bad impression. He thought maybe if he played dirty tricks on the bird he would fly off without being physically kicked out. The vacation was over, let him make his easy living off the fat of somebody else's land. Cohen worried about the effect of the bird's departure on Maurie's schooling but decided to take the chance, first, because the boy now seemed to have the knack of studying—give the black bird-bastard credit—and second, because Schwartz was driving him bats by being there always, even in his dreams.

The frozen-foods salesman began his campaign against the bird by mixing watery cat food with the herring slices in Schwartz's dish. He also blew up and popped numerous paper bags outside the birdhouse as the bird slept, and when he had got Schwartz good and nervous, though not enough to leave, he brought a full-grown cat into the house, supposedly a gift for little Maurie, who had always wanted a pussy. The cat never stopped springing up at Schwartz whenever he saw him, one day managing to claw out several of his tailfeathers. And even at lesson time, when the

cat was usually excluded from Maurie's room, though somehow or other he quickly found his way in at the end of the lesson, Schwartz was desperately fearful of his life and flew from pinnacle to pinnacle—light fixtures to clothes-tree to door top—in order to elude the beast's wet jaws.

Once when the bird complained to Edie how hazardous his existence was, she said, "Be patient, Mr. Schwartz. When the cat gets to know you better he won't try to catch you any more."

"When he stops trying we will both be in Paradise," Schwartz answered. "Do me a favor and get rid of him. He makes my whole life worry. I'm losing feathers like a tree loses leaves."

"I'm awfully sorry but Maurie likes the pussy and sleeps with it."

What could Schwartz do? He worried but came to no decision, being afraid to leave. So he ate the herring garnished with cat food, tried hard not to hear the paper bags bursting like firecrackers outside the birdhouse at night, and lived terror-stricken closer to the ceiling than the floor, as the cat, his tail flicking, endlessly watched him.

Weeks went by. Then on the day after Cohen's mother had died in her flat in the Bronx, when Maurie came home with a zero on an arithmetic test, Cohen, enraged, waited until Edie had taken the boy to his violin lesson, then openly attacked the bird. He chased him with a broom on the balcony and Schwartz frantically flew black and forth, finally escaping into his birdhouse. Cohen triumphantly reached in, and grabbing both skinny legs, dragged the bird out, cawing loudly, his wings wildly beating. He whirled the bird around and around his head. But Schwartz, as he moved in circles, managed to swoop down and catch Cohen's nose in his beak, and hung on for dear life. Cohen cried out in great pain, punched the bird with his fist, and tugging at its legs with all his might, pulled his nose free. Again he swung the yawking Schwartz around until the bird grew dizzy, then with a furious heave, flung him into the night. Schwartz sank like stone into the street. Cohen then tossed the birdhouse and feeder after him, listening at the ledge until they

crashed on the sidewalk below. For a full hour, broom in hand, his heart palpitating and nose throbbing with pain, Cohen waited for Schwartz to return but the broken-hearted bird didn't.

That's the end of that dirty bastard, the salesman thought and went in. Edie and Maurie had come home.

"Look," said Cohen, pointing to his bloody nose swollen three times its normal size, "what that sonofabitchy bird did. It's a permanent scar."

"Where is he now?" Edie asked, frightened.

"I threw him out and he flew away. Good riddance."

Nobody said no, though Edie touched a handkerchief to her eyes and Maurie rapidly tried the nine times table and found he knew approximately half.

In the spring when the winter's snow had melted, the boy, moved by a memory, wandered in the neighborhood, looking for Schwartz. He found a dead black bird in a small lot near the river, his two wings broken, neck twisted, and both bird-eyes plucked clean.

"Who did it to you, Mr. Schwartz?" Maurie wept.

"Anti-Semeets," Edie said later.

**Xenophobia:** An hysterical symptom characterized by a morbid dread of strangers . . . the course of these apprehensions is not in the stranger but in the xenophobic, whose defensiveness is directed actually against his own latent malevolence. . . . Xenophobia usually inspires elaborate and ingenious doctrine about the motivations, intentions, character and habits of strangers. (*The Domesday Dictionary*, by Donald M. Kaplan and Armand Schwerner, 1963)

# ON THE FOURTH PLANET

**J. F. Bone**

*from Galaxy*

The Ul Kwon paused in his search for food, extended his eye and considered the thing that blocked his path.

He hadn't noticed the obstacle until he had almost touched it. His attention had been focused upon gleaning every feeder large enough to be edible from the lichens that covered his feeding strip. But the unexpected warmth radiating from the object had startled him. Sundown was at hand. There should be nothing living or nonliving that radiated a fraction of the heat that was coming from the gleaming metal wall which lay before him. He expanded his mantle to trap the warmth as he pushed his eye upward to look over the top. It wasn't high, just high enough to be a nuisance. It curved away from him toward the boundaries across the width of his land.

A dim racial memory told him that this was an artifact, a product of the days when the Folk had leisure to dream and time to build. It had probably been built by his remote ancestors millennia ago and had just recently been uncovered from its hiding place beneath the sand. These metal objects kept appearing and disappearing as the sands shifted to the force of the wind. He had seen them before, but never a piece so large or so well preserved. It shone as though it had been made yesterday, gleaming with a soft silvery luster against the blue-black darkness of the sky.

As his eye cleared the top of the wall, he quivered with shock and astonishment. For it was not a wall as he had thought. Instead, it was the edge of a huge metal disc fifty raads in diameter. And that wasn't all of it. Three thick columns of metal extended upward from the disc, leaning inward as they rose into the sky. High overhead, almost beyond the range of accurate vision, they converged to support an immense cylinder set vertically to the ground. The cylinder was almost as great in diameter as the disc upon



which his eye first rested. It loomed overhead, and he had a queasy feeling that it was about to fall and crush him. Strange jointed excrescences studded its surface, and in its side, some two-thirds of the way up, two smaller cylinders projected from the bigger one. They were set a little distance apart, divided by a vertical row of four black designs, and pointed straight down his feeding strip.

The Ul Kworm eyed the giant structure with disgust and puzzlement. The storm that had uncovered it must have been a great one to have blown so much sand away. It was just his fortune to have the thing squatting in his path! His mantle darkened with anger. Why was it that everything happened to him? Why couldn't it have lain in someone else's way, upon the land of one of his neighbors? It blocked him from nearly three thousand square raads of life-sustaining soil. To cross it would require energy he could not spare. Why couldn't it have been on the Ul Caada's or the Ul Varsi's strip—or any other of the numberless Folk? Why did he have to be faced with this roadblock?

He couldn't go around it since it extended beyond his territory and, therefore, he'd have to waste precious energy propelling his mass up the wall and across the smooth shining surface of the disc—all of which have to be done without food, since his eye could see no lichen growing upon the shiny metal surface.

The chill of evening had settled on the land. Most of the Folk were already wrapped in their mantles, conserving their energy until the dawn would warm them into life. But Kworm felt no need to estivate. It was warm enough beside the wall.

The air shimmered as it cooled. Microcrystals of ice formed upon the legs of the structure, outlining them in shimmering contrast to the drab shadowy landscape, with its gray-green cover of lichens stippled with the purple balls of the lichen feeders that clung to them. Beyond Kworm and his neighbors, spaced twenty raads apart, the mantled bodies of the Folk stretched in a long single line across the

rolling landscape, vanishing into the darkness. Behind this line, a day's travel to the rear, another line of the Folk was following. Behind them was yet another. There were none ahead, for the U1 Kworn and the other U1 were the elders of the Folk and moved along in the first rank where their maturity and ability to reproduce had placed them according to the Law.

Caada and Varsi stirred restlessly, stimulated to movement by the heat radiating from the obstacle, but compelled by the Law to hold their place in the ranks until the sun's return would stimulate the others. Their dark crimson mantles rippled over the soil as they sent restless pseudopods to the boundaries of their strips.

They were anxious in their attempt to communicate with the U1 Kworn.

But Kworn wasn't ready to communicate. He held aloof as he sent a thin pseudopod out toward the gleaming wall in front of him. He was squandering energy; but he reasoned that he had better learn all he could about this thing before he attempted to cross it tomorrow, regardless of what it cost.

It was obvious that he would have to cross it, for the Law was specific about encroachment upon a neighbor's territory. *No member of the Folk shall trespass the feeding land of another during the Time of Travel except with published permission. Trespass shall be punished by the ejection of the offender from his place in rank.*

And that was equivalent to a death sentence.

He could ask Caada or Varsi for permission, but he was virtually certain that he wouldn't get it. He wasn't on particularly good terms with his neighbors. Caada was querulous, old and selfish. He had not reproduced this season and his vitality was low. He was forever hungry and not averse to slipping a sly pseudopod across the boundaries of his land to poach upon that of his neighbor. Kworn had warned him some time ago that he would not tolerate encroachment and would call for a group judgment if there was any poaching. And since the Folk were physically incapable of lying to one another, Caada would be banished.

After that Caada kept his peace, but his dislike for Kworn was always evident.

But Varsi who held the land on Kworn's right was worse. He had advanced to U1 status only a year ago. At that time there had been rumors among the Folk about illicit feeding and stealing of germ plasm from the smaller and weaker members of the race. But that could not be proved, and many young Folk died in the grim process of growing to maturity. Kworn shrugged. If Varsi was an example of the younger generation, society was heading hell-bent toward Emptiness. He had no love for the pushing, aggressive youngster who crowded out to the very borders of his domain, pressing against his neighbors, alert and aggressive toward the slightest accidental spillover into his territory. What was worse, Varsi had reproduced successfully this year and thus had rejuvenated. Kworn's own attempt had been only partially successful. His energy reserves hadn't been great enough to produce a viable offspring, and the rejuvenation process in his body had only gone to partial completion. It would be enough to get him to the winter feeding grounds. But as insurance he had taken a place beside Caada, who was certain to go into Emptiness if the feeding en route was bad.

Still, he hadn't figured that he would have Varsi beside him.

He consoled himself with the thought that others might have as bad neighbors as he. But he would never make the ultimate mistake of exchanging germ plasm with either of his neighbors, not even if his fertility and his position depended upon it. Cells like theirs would do nothing to improve the sense of discipline and order he had so carefully developed in his own. His offspring were courteous and honorable, a credit to the Folk and to the name of Kworn. A father should be proud of his offspring, so that when they developed to the point where they could have descendants, he would not be ashamed of what they would produce. An U1, Kworn thought grimly, should have some sense of responsibility toward the all-important future of the race.

His anger died as he exerted synergic control. Anger was a waster of energy, a luxury he couldn't afford. He had little enough as it was. It had been a bad year. Spring was late, and winter had come early. The summer had been dry and the lichens in the feeding ground had grown poorly. The tiny, bulbous lichen feeders, the main source of food for the Folk, had failed to ripen to their usual succulent fullness. They had been poor, shrunken things, hardly worth ingesting. And those along the route to the winter feeding grounds were no better.

Glumly he touched the wall before him with a tactile filament. It was uncomfortably warm, smooth and slippery to the touch. He felt it delicately, noting the almost microscopic horizontal ridges on the wall's surface. He palpated with relief. The thing was climbable. But even as he relaxed, he recoiled, the filament writhing in agony! The wall had burned his flesh! Faint threads of vapor rose from where he had touched the metal, freezing instantly in the chill air. He pinched off the filament in an automatic protective constriction of his cells. The pain ceased instantly, but the burning memory was so poignant that his mantle twitched and shuddered convulsively for some time before the reflexes died.

Thoughtfully he ingested his severed member. With a sense of numbing shock he realized that he would be unable to pass across the disc. The implications chilled him. If he could not pass, his land beyond the roadblock would be vacant and open to pre-emption by his neighbors. Nor could he wait until they had passed and rejoin them later. The Law was specific on that point. *If one of the Folk lags behind in his rank, his land becomes vacant and open to his neighbors. Nor can one who has lagged behind reclaim his land by moving forward. He who abandons his position, abandons it permanently.*

Wryly, he reflected that it was this very Law that had impelled him to take a position beside the U1 Caada. And, of course, his neighbors knew the Law as well as he. It was a part of them, a part of their cells even before they split off from their parent. It would be the acme of folly

to expect that neighbors like Varsi or Caada would allow him to pass over their land and hold his place in rank.

Bitterness flooded him with a stimulation so piercing that Caada extended a communication filament to project a question. "What is this thing which lies upon your land and mine?" Caada asked. His projection was weak and feeble. It was obvious that he would not last for many more days unless feeding improved.

"I do not know. It is something of metal, and it bars my land. I cannot cross it. It burns me when I touch it."

A quick twinge of excitement rushed along Caada's filament. The old U1 broke the connection instantly, but not before Kworn read the flash of hope that Kworn had kindled. There was no help in this quarter, and the wild greed of Varsi was so well known that there was no sense even trying that side.

A surge of hopelessness swept through him. Unless he could find some way to pass this barrier he was doomed.

He didn't want to pass into Emptiness. He had seen too many others go that way to want to follow them. For a moment he thought desperately of begging Caada and Varsi for permission to cross into their land for the short time that would be necessary to pass the barrier, but reason asserted itself. Such an act was certain to draw a flat refusal and, after all, he was the U1 Kworn and he had his pride. He would not beg when begging was useless.

And there was a bare possibility that he might survive if he closed his mantle tightly about him and waited until all the ranks had passed. He could then bring up the rear . . . and, possibly, just possibly, there would be sufficient food left to enable him to reach the winter feeding grounds.

And it might still be possible to cross the disc. There was enough warmth in it to keep him active. By working all night he might be able to build a path of sand across its surface and thus keep his tissues from being seared by the metal. He would be technically violating the law by moving ahead of the others, but if he did not feed ahead, no harm would be done.

He moved closer to the barrier and began to pile sand

against its base, sloping it to make a broad ramp to the top of the disc. The work was slow and the sand was slippery. The polished grains slipped away and the ramp crumbled time after time. But he worked on, piling up sand until it reached the top of the disc. He looked across the flat surface that stretched before him.

Fifty raads!

It might as well be fifty zets. He couldn't do it. Already his energy level was so low that he could hardly move, and to build a raad-wide path across this expanse of metal was a task beyond his strength. He drooped across the ramp, utterly exhausted. It was no use. What he ought to do was open his mantle to Emptiness.

He hadn't felt the communication filaments of Caada and Varsi touch him. He had been too busy, but now with Caada's burst of glee, and Varsi's cynical, "A noble decision, U1 Kworn. You should be commended," he realized that they knew everything.

His body rippled hopelessly. He was tired, too tired for anger. His energy was low. He contemplated Emptiness impassively. Sooner or later it came to all Folk. He had lived longer than most, and perhaps it was his time to go. He was finished. He accepted the fact with a cold fatalism that he never dreamed he possessed. Lying there on the sand, his mantle spread wide, he waited for the end to come.

It wouldn't come quickly, he thought. He was still far from the cellular disorganization that preceded extinction. He was merely exhausted, and in need of food to restore his energy.

With food he might still have an outside chance of building the path in time. But there was no food. He had gleaned his area completely before he had ever reached the road-block.

Lying limp and relaxed on the ramp beside the barrier, he slowly became conscious that the metal wasn't dead. It was alive! Rhythmic vibrations passed through it and were transmitted to his body by the sand.

A wild hope stirred within him. If the metal were alive

it might hear him if he tried to communicate. He concentrated his remaining reserves of energy, steeled himself against the pain and pressed a communication filament against the metal.

"Help me!" he projected desperately. "You're blocking my strip! I can't pass!"

Off to one side he sensed Varsi's laughter and on the other felt Caada's gloating greed.

"I cannot wake this metal," he thought hopelessly as he tried again, harder than before, ignoring the pain of his burning flesh.

Something clicked sharply within the metal, and the tempo of the sounds changed.

"It's waking!" Kworn thought wildly.

There was a creaking noise from above. A rod moved out from the cylinder and twisted into the ground in Varsi's territory, to the accompaniment of clicking, grinding noises. A square grid lifted from the top of the cylinder and began rotating. And Kworn shivered and jerked to the tremendous power of the words that flowed through him. They were words, but they had no meaning, waves of sound that hammered at his receptors in an unknown tongue he could not understand. The language of the Folk had changed since the days of the ancients, he thought despairingly.

And then, with a mantle-shattering roar, the cylinders jutting overhead spouted flame and smoke. Two silvery balls trailing thin, dark filaments shot out of the great cylinder and buried themselves in the sand behind him. The filaments lay motionless in the sand as Kworn, wrapped defensively in his mantle, rolled off the ramp to the ground below.

The silence that followed was so deep that it seemed like Emptiness had taken the entire land.

Slowly Kworn loosened his mantle. "In the name of my first ancestor," he murmured shakily, "what was that?" His senses were shocked and disorganized by the violence of the sound. It was worse even than the roar and scream of the samshin that occasionally blew from the south, carry-

ing dust, lichens, feeders and even Folk who had been too slow or too foolish to hide from the fury of the wind.

Gingerly, Kworn inspected the damage to his mantle. It was minor. A tiny rip that could easily be repaired, a few grains of sand that could be extruded. He drew himself together to perform the repairs with the least possible loss of energy, and as he did, he was conscious of an emanation coming from the filaments that had been hurled from the cylinder.

Food!

And such food!

It was the distilled quintessence of a thousand purple feeders! It came to his senses in a shimmering wave of ecstasy so great that his mantle glowed a bright crimson. He stretched a pseudopod toward its source, and as he touched the filament his whole body quivered with anticipation. The barrier was blotted from his thoughts by an orgy of shuddering delight almost too great for flesh to endure. Waves of pleasure ran through his body as he swiftly extended to cover the filament. It could be a trap, he thought, but it made no difference. The demands of his depleted body and the sheer vacuole-constricting delight of this incredible foodstuff made a combination too potent for his will to resist, even if it had desired to do so. Waves of pleasure rippled through him as more of his absorptive surface contacted the filament. He snuggled against it, enfolding it completely, letting the peristaltic rushes sweep through him. He had never fed like this as long as he could recall. His energy levels swelled and pulsed as he sucked the last delight from the cord, and contemplated the further pleasure waiting for him in that other one lying scarcely twenty raads away.

Sensuously, he extended a pseudopod from his upper surface and probed for the other filament. He was filled to the top of his primary vacuole but the desire for more was stronger than ever—despite the fact that he knew the food in the other filament would bring him to critical level, would force him to reproduce. The thought amused him.



As far back as he could remember, no member of the Folk had ever budded an offspring during the Time of Travel. It would be unheard of, something that would go down through the years in the annals of the Folk, and perhaps even cause a change in the Law.

The pseudopod probed, reached and stopped short of its goal. There was nothing around it but empty air.

Fear drove the slow orgasmic thoughts from his mind. Absorbed in gluttony, he hadn't noticed that the filament had tightened and was slowly drawing back into the cylinder from whence it came. And now it was too late! He was already over the rim of the metal disc.

Feverishly, he tried to disengage his absorptive surfaces from the filament and crawl down its length to safety, but he couldn't move. He was stuck to the dark cord by some strange adhesive that cemented his cells firmly to the cord. He could not break free.

The line moved steadily upward, dragging him inexorably toward a dark opening in the cylinder overhead. Panic filled him! Desperately he tried to loosen his trapped surfaces. His pseudopod lashed futilely in the air, searching with panic for something to grip, something to clutch that would stop this slow movement to the hell of pain that waited for him in the metal high overhead.

His searching flesh struck another's, and into his mind flooded the U1 Caada's terrified thought. The old one had reacted quicker than he, perhaps because he was poaching, but like himself he was attached and could not break free.

"Serves you right," Kworn projected grimly. "The thing was on my land. You had no right to feed upon it."

"Get me loose!" Caada screamed. His body flopped at the end of a thick mass of digestive tissue, dangling from the line, writhing and struggling in mindless terror. It was strange, Kworn thought, that fear should be so much stronger in the old than in the young.

"Cut loose, you fool," Kworn projected. "There isn't enough of you adhered to hurt if it were lost. A little body substance isn't worth your life. Hurry! You'll be too late if you don't. That metal is poisonous to our flesh."

"But it will be pain to cut my absorbing surface," Caada protested.

"It will be death if you don't."

"Then why don't you?"

"I can't," Kworn said hopelessly. "All my surface is stuck to the filament. I can't cut free." He was calm now, resigned to the inevitable. His greed had brought him to this. Perhaps it was a fitting punishment. But Caada need not die if he would show courage.

He rotated his eye to watch his struggling neighbor. Apparently Caada was going to take his advice. The tissue below the part of him stuck to the filament began to thin. His pseudopod broke contact. But his movements were slow and hesitant. Already his body mass was rising above the edge of the disc.

"Quick, you fool!" Kworn projected. "Another moment and you're dead!"

But Caada couldn't hear. Slowly his tissues separated as he reluctantly abandoned his absorptive surface. But he was already over the disc. The last cells pinched off and he fell, mantle flapping, full on the surface of the disc. For a moment he lay there quivering, and then his body was blotted from sight by a cloud of frozen steam, and his essence vanished screaming into Emptiness.

Kworn shuddered. It was a terrible way to die. But his own fate would be no better. He wrapped his mantle tightly around him as his leading parts vanished into the dark hole in the cylinder. In a moment he would be following Caada on the journey from which no member of the Folk had ever returned. His body disappeared into the hole.

—and was plunged into paradise!

His foreparts slipped into a warm, thick liquid that loosened the adhesive that bound him to the cord. As he slipped free, he slowly realized that he was not to die. He was bathed in liquid food. He was swimming in it! He was surrounded on all sides by incredible flavors so strange and delicious that his mind could not classify them! The filament had been good, but this—this was indescribable! He relaxed, his mantle spreading through the food, savoring,

absorbing, digesting, metabolizing, excreting. His energy levels peaked. The nuclei of his germ plasm swelled, their chromosomes split, and a great bud formed and separated from his body. He had reproduced!

Through a deadening fog of somatic sensation, he realized dully that this was wrong, that the time wasn't right, that the space was limited, and that the natural reaction to abundant food supply was wrong. But for the moment he didn't care.

For thousands of seasons he had traveled the paths between equator and pole in a ceaseless hunt for food, growing and rejuvenating in good seasons, shrinking and ageing in bad. He had been bound to the soil, a slave to the harsh demands of life and Nature. And now the routine was broken.

He luxuriated in his freedom. It must have been like this in the old days, when the waters were plentiful and things grew in them that could be eaten, and the Folk had time to dream young dreams and think young thoughts, and build their thoughts and dreams into the gleaming realities of cities and machines. Those were the days when the mind went above the soil into the air and beyond it to the moons, the sun and the evening stars.

But that was long ago.

He lay quietly, conscious of the change within him as his cells multiplied to replace those he had lost, and his body grew in weight and size. He was rejuvenated. The cells of his growing body, stimulated by the abundance of food, released memories he had forgotten he had ever possessed. His past ran in direct cellular continuity to the dawn of his race, and in him was every memory he had experienced since the beginning. Some were weak, others were stronger, but all were there awaiting an effort of recall. All that was required was enough stimulation to bring them out of hiding.

And for the first time in millennia the stimulus was available. An abundant food supply could give, the sort of growth that the shrunken environment outside could not supply. The stimulus was growth, the rapid growth that only

With sudden clarity he saw how the Folk had shrunk in mind and body as they slowly adapted to the ever-increasing rigor of life. The rushing torrent of memory and sensation that swept through him gave him a new awareness of what he had been once and what he had become. His eye was lifted from the dirt and lichens.

What he saw filled him with pity and contempt. Pity for what the Folk had become; contempt for their failure to recognize it. Yet he had been no better than the others. It was only through the accident of this artifact that he had learned. The Folk *couldn't* know what the slow dwindling of their food supply had done to them. Over the millennia they had adapted, changing to fit the changing conditions, surviving only because they were more intelligent and more tenacious than the other forms of life that had become extinct. A thousand thousand seasons had passed since the great war that had devastated the world. A million years of slow adaptation to the barren waste that had been formed when the ultimate products of Folk technology were loosed on their creators, had created a race tied to a subsistence level of existence, incapable of thinking beyond the basic necessities of life.

The U1 Kworn sighed. It would be better if he would not remember so much. But he could suppress neither the knowledge nor the memories. They crowded in upon him, stimulated by the food in which he floated.

Beside him, his offspring was growing. A bud always grew rapidly in a favorable environment, and this one was ideal. Soon it would be as large as himself. Yet it would never develop beyond an infant. It could not mature without a transfer of germ plasm from other infants of the Folk. And there were no infants.

It would grow and keep on growing because there would be no check of maturity upon its cells. It would remain a partly sentient lump of flesh that would never be complete. And in time it would be dangerous. When it had depleted the food supply it would turn on him in mindless hunger. It wouldn't realize that the U1 Kworn was its father, or if it did, it wouldn't care. An infant is ultimately selfish, and

its desires are the most important thing in its restricted universe.

Kworn considered his situation dispassionately.

It was obvious that he must escape from this trap before his offspring destroyed him. Yet he could think of no way to avoid the poison metal. He recognized it now, the element with the twelve protons in its nucleus, a light metal seldom used by the Folk even in the days of their greatness because of its ability to rapidly oxidize and its propensity to burst into brilliant flame when heated. With sudden shock he realized that the artifact was nothing less than a gigantic torch!

Why had it been built like this? What was its function? Where had it come from? Why hadn't it spoken since it had released that flood of unintelligible gibberish before it had drawn him inside? Ever since he had entered this food tank it had been quiet except for a clicking, chattering whir that came from somewhere above him. He had the odd impression that it was storing information about him and the way he reacted in the tank.

And then, abruptly, it broke into voice. Cryptic words poured from it, piercing him with tiny knives of sound. The intensity and rapidity of the projections shocked him, left him quivering and shaking when they stopped as abruptly as they had begun.

In the quiet that followed, Kworn tried to recall the sequence of the noise. The words were like nothing he had ever heard. They were not the language of the Folk either past or present. And they had a flow and sequence that was not organic. They were mechanical, the product of a metal intelligence that recorded and spoke but did not think. The Folk had machines like that once.

How had it begun? There had been a faint preliminary, an almost soundless voice speaking a single word. Perhaps if he projected it, it would trigger a response. Pitching his voice in the same key and intensity he projected the word as best he could remember it.

And the voice began again.

Kworn quivered with excitement. Something outside

the artifact was forcing it to speak. He was certain of it. As certain as he was that the artifact was recording himself and his offspring. But who—or what—was receiving the record? And why?

This could be a fascinating speculation, Kworn thought. But there would be time enough for that later. His immediate need was to get out. Already the food supply was running low, and his offspring was becoming enormous. He'd have to leave soon if he was ever going to. And he'd have to do something about his own growth. Already it was reaching dangerous levels. He was on the ragged edge of another reproduction, and he couldn't afford it.

Regretfully, he began moving the cornified cells of his mantle and his underlayer toward his inner surfaces, arranging them in a protective layer around his germ plasm and absorptive cells. There would be enough surface absorption to take care of his maintenance needs, and his body could retain its peak of cellular energy. Yet the desire to feed and bud was almost overpowering. His body screamed at him for denying it the right that food would give it, but Kworn resisted the demands of his flesh until the frantic cellular urges passed.

Beside him his offspring pulsed with physical sensation. Kworn envied it even as he pitied it. The poor mindless thing could be used as a means to the end of his escape, but it was useless for anything else. It was far too large, and far too stupid, to survive in the outside world. Kworn extruded a net of hairlike pseudopods and swept the tank in which they lay. It was featureless, save for a hole where the filament had not completely withdrawn when it had pulled him into this place. A few places in the wall had a different texture than the others, probably the sense organs of the recorder. He rippled with satisfaction. There was a grille of poison metal in the top of the tank through which flowed a steady current of warm air. It would be pleasant to investigate this further, Kworn thought, but there was no time. His offspring had seen to that.

He placed his eye on a thin pseudopod and thrust it through the hole in the wall of the tank. It was still night

outside, but a faint line of brightness along the horizon indicated the coming of dawn. The artifact glittered icily beneath him, and he had a feeling of giddiness as he looked down the vertiginous drop to the disc below. The dark blotch of Caada's burned body was almost invisible against the faintly gleaming loom of the still-warm disc. Kworn shuddered. Caada hadn't deserved a death like that. Kworn looked down, estimating the chances with his new intelligence, and then slapped a thick communication fibril against his offspring's quivering flesh and hurled a projection at its recoiling mass.

Considering the fact that its cells were direct derivations of his own, Kworn thought grimly, it was surprising how hard it was to establish control. The youngster had developed a surprising amount of individuality in its few xals of free existence. He felt a surge of thankfulness to the old U1 Kworn as the youngster yielded to his firm projection. His precursor had always sought compliant germ plasm to produce what he had called "discipline and order." It was, in fact, weakness. It was detrimental to survival. But right now that weakness was essential.

Under the probing lash of his projection the infant extruded a thick mass of tissue that met and interlocked with a similar mass of his own. As soon as the contact firmed, Kworn began flowing toward his eye, which was still in the half-open hole in the side of the tank.

The outside cold struck his sense centers with spicules of ice as he flowed to the outside, clinging to his offspring's gradually extending pseudopod. Slowly he dropped below the cylinder. The infant was frantic. It disliked the cold and struggled to break free, but Kworn clung limpetlike to his offspring's flesh as it twisted and writhed in an effort to return to the warmth and comfort into which it was born.

"Let go!" his offspring screamed. "I don't like this place."

"In a moment," Kworn said as he turned the vague writhings into a swinging pendulum motion. "Help me move back and forth."

"I can't. I'm cold. I hurt. Let me go!"

"Help me," Kworn ordered grimly, "or hang out here and freeze."

His offspring shuddered and twitched. The momentum of the swing increased. Kworn tightened his grip.

"You promised to let go!" his offspring wailed. "You prom—"

The infant's projection was cut off as Kworn loosed himself at the upward arc of the swing, spread his mantle and plummeted toward the ground. Fear swept through him as his body curved through the thin air, missing the edge of the disc and landing on the ground with a sense-jarring thud. Behind and above him up against the cylinder, the thick tendril of his offspring's flesh withdrew quickly from sight. For a moment the U1 Kworn's gaze remained riveted on the row of odd markings on the metal surface, and then he turned his attention to life.

There was no reason to waste the pain of regret upon that half-sentient mass of tissue that was his offspring. The stupid flesh of his flesh would remain happy in the darkness with the dwindling food until its flesh grew great enough to touch the poison metal in the ceiling of the tank.

And then—

With a harsh projection of horror, the U1 Kworn moved, circling the artifact on Caada's vacated strip. And as he moved he concentrated energy into his high-level communication organs, and projected a warning of danger.

"Move!" he screamed. "Move forward for your lives!"

The line rippled. Reddish mantles unfolded as the Folk reacted. The nearest, shocked from estivation, were in motion even before they came to full awareness. Alarms like this weren't given without reason.

Varsi's reaction, Kworn noted, was faster than any of his fellows. The young U1 had some favorable self-preservation characteristics. He'd have to consider sharing some germ plasm with him at the next reproduction season, after all.

In a giant arc, the Folk pressed forward under the white glow of emerging dawn. Behind them the artifact began



to project again in its strange tongue. But in mid-cry it stopped abruptly. And from it came a wail of mindless agony that tore at Kworm's mind with regret more bitter because nothing could be done about it.

His offspring had touched the poison metal.

Kworm turned his eye backwards. The artifact was shaking on its broad base from the violence of his offspring's tortured writhings. As he watched a brilliant burst of light flared from its top. Heat swept across the land, searing the lichens and a scattered few of the Folk too slow to escape. The giant structure burned with a light more brilliant than the sun and left behind a great cloud of white vapor that hung on the air like the menacing cloud of a samshin. Beneath the cloud the land was bare save for a few twisted pieces of smoking metal.

The roadblock was gone.

Kworm moved slowly forward, gleaning Caada's strip and half of his own which he shared with Varsi.

He would need that young U1 in the future. It was well to place him under an obligation. The new thoughts and old memories weren't dying. They remained, and were focused upon the idea of living better than at this subsistence level. It should be possible to grow lichens, and breed a more prolific type of lichen feeder. Water channeled from the canals would stimulate lichen growth a thousandfold. And with a more abundant food supply, perhaps some of the Folk could be stimulated to think and apply ancient buried skills to circumvent Nature.

It was theoretically possible. The new breed would have to be like Varsi, tough, driving and selfishly independent. In time they might inherit the world. Civilization could arise again. It was not impossible.

His thoughts turned briefly back to the artifact. It still bothered him. He still knew far too little about it. It was a fascinating speculation to dream of what it might have been. At any rate, one thing was sure. It was not a structure of his race. If nothing else, those cabalistic markings on the side of the cylinder were utterly alien.

Thoughtfully he traced them in the sand. What did they mean?



*Planaria* are worms. Worm-runners are people who run worms through mazes. The *Worm Runners' Digest* is the journal of the *Planaria* Research Group of the University of Michigan's Mental Health Research Institute. Worm-runners throughout the country—amateur and professional—use the WRD as an information and idea exchange, discussing via lab reports, speech reprints, research papers, semipersonal letters, art, verse, parody, fable, and farce the latest news about worms, themselves, and the human condition, with special reference to the provocative and productive research initiated by the PRG on the biochemistry of learning and memory.

I was fascinated by WRD. And I not only learned about worms; I thought I had found out something about the Ul Kworm too. Who would be more likely to think of worms than a veterinarian?

So I wrote to Dr. Bone. He answered, "The Ul Kworm was built up from terrestrial precursors, but he was made to the requirements of the gadgetry. The gadget is real. NASA had it walking around the banks of the Potomac, shooting out sticky threads and reeling them in for several months before I got the idea for a story. I modified the gadget by making it sessile, but the rest of the machine is about the way it really is. Since NASA intends to shoot it at Mars in the not-too-distant future, I had the planet.

"So all that was left was to build a believable character that could be elemental enough to be trapped by the machine, yet advanced enough to elicit sympathy from the reader. The hunger motivation was inherent in the machine. . . .

*"Physically, the UI is a composite of a snail, a starfish and an amoeba, with the protective mantle being my own creation and dictated by Mars' temperature variations. His reproductive pattern was pirated almost verbatim from the coelenterates, in this case Hydra, which reproduces sexually and asexually.*

*"A far worse problem was to arrange some sort of social order that would make the NASA gadget a problem. By using the hunger motivation and a scanty food supply, I hit upon the idea of territorial strips. After that the formulation of social rules was easy."*

*Easy, that is, for a man whose profession has accustomed him to thinking and feeling nonhuman thoughts and emotions. We do not all possess this faculty in the same degree; too many of us are completely untrained in its use—or more accurately, perhaps, have had it trained out of us. Call it imagination, intuition, empathy: it is something other than logic; something more than the simple sum of observations and deductions. Children have it, far more than adults—as they have other capacities for learning that most of us can hardly perceive.*

## POPPA NEEDS SHORTS

**Walt and Leigh Richmond**

*from Analog*

Little Oley had wandered into forbidden territory again—Big Brother Sven's ham shack. The glowing bottles here were an irresistible lure, and he liked to pretend that he knew all there was to know about the mysteries in this room.

Of course, Sven said that not even *he* knew all of the mysteries, though he admitted he was one of the best ham operators extant, with QSOs from eighteen countries and thirty-eight states to his credit.

At the moment, Sven was busily probing into an open chassis with a hot soldering iron.

"Short's in here some place," he muttered.

"What makes shorts, Sven?" Oley wasn't so knowledgeable but what he would ask an occasional question.

Sven turned and glared down. "What are you doing in

here? You know it's a Federal offense for anybody to come into this room without I say so?"

"Momma and Hilda come in all the time, and you don't say so." Oley stood firm on what he figured were legal grounds. "What makes shorts?"

Sven relented a little. This brother had been something of a surprise to him, coming along when Sven was a full ten years old. But, he reflected, after a few years maybe I should get used to the idea. Actually, he sort of liked the youngster.

"Shorts," he said, speaking from the superior eminence of his fourteen years to the four-year-old, "is when electricity finds a way to get back where it came from without doing a lot of hard work getting there. But you see, electricity likes to work; so, even when it has an easy way, it just works harder and uses itself up."

This confused explanation of shorts was, of course, taken verbatim, despite the fact that Oley couldn't define half the words and probably couldn't even pronounce them.

"I don't like shorts. I don't like these pink shorts Momma put on me this morning. Is they electrics, Sven?"

Sven glanced around at the accidentally-dyed-in-the-laundry, formerly white shorts.

"Um-m-m. Yeah. You could call 'em electric."

With this Oley let out a whoop and dashed out of the room, trailing a small voice behind him. "Momma, Momma. Sven says my shorts is electric!"

"I'll short Sven's electrics for him, if he makes fun of your shorts!" Oley heard his mother's comforting reply.

In the adult world days passed before Oley's accidentally acquired pattern of nubient information on the subject of shorts was enlarged. It was only days in the adult world, but in Oley's world each day was a mountainous fraction of an entire lifetime, into which came tumbling and jumbling—or were 'pulled—bits, pieces, oddments, landslides and acquisitions of information on every subject that he ran into, or that ran into him. Nobody had told Oley that acquiring information was his job at the moment; the acquisition was

partly accidental, mostly instinctive, and spurred by an intense curiosity and an even more intense determination to master the world as he saw it.

There was the taste of the sick green flowers that Momma kept in the window box and, just for a side course, a little bit of the dirt, too. There were the patterns of the rain on the window, and the reactions of a cat to having its tail pulled. The fact that you touch a stove one time, and it's cool and comfortable to lay your head against, and another time it hurts. Things like that. And other things—towering adults who sometimes swoop down on you and throw you high into the air; and most times walk over you, around you, and ignore you completely. The jumble of assorted and unsorted information that is the heritage of every growing young inquiring brain.

In terms of time, it was only a couple of weeks, if you were looking at it as an adult, until the next "shorts" incident.

Oley was sitting peacefully at the breakfast table, doing his level best to control the manipulation of the huge knife-fork-and-spoon, plate-bowl-and-glass, from which he was expected to eat a meal. Things smelled good. Momma was cooking doste, and that to Oley smelled best of all. The doster ticked quietly to itself, then gave a loud pop, and up came two golden-brown slices of doste. Dostes? Oley wasn't sure. But he hadn't really begun paying too much attention to whether one doste was the same as two doste or what, though he could quite proudly tell you the difference between one and two.

Out it came, and fresh butter was spread on it, and in went two shiny white beds, for some more doste.

Little Oley watched in fascination. And now he reached for the tremendous glass sitting on the table in front of him. But his fingers didn't quite make it. Somehow, the glass was heavy and slippery, and it eluded him, rolled over on its side, and spilled the bright purple juicy contents out across the table in a huge swish.

Oley wasn't dismayed, but watched with a researcher's interest as the bright purple juice swept across the table

toward the busily ticking doster. Momma, of course, wasn't here, or she would have been gruff about it. She'd just gone into the other room.

The juice spread rapidly at first, and then more and more slowly, making a huge, circuitous river spreading across the table, first toward the doster and then away from it toward the frayed power-cord lying on the table. It touched and began to run along the cord. Not a very eventful recording so far, but Oley watched, charmed.

As he watched, a few bubbles began to appear near the frayed spot. A few wisps of steam. And then, suddenly, there was a loud, snarling splatt—and Momma screamed from the doorway. "That juice is making a short!"

The information, of course, was duly recorded. Juice makes shorts.

It was a minor item of information, mixed into a jumble of others, and nothing else was added to this particular file for nearly another week.

Oley was playing happily on the living room floor that night. Here there was much to explore, though an adult might not have thought twice about it. Back in the corner metal caught Oley's attention. Bigger on one end than the behind Momma's doing bachine a bright, slender piece of other, but not really very big anywhere, the sewing machine determined that it worked like a tooth by biting himself needle proved fascinating. As a first experiment, Oley with it. After that he went around the room, biting other things with it. Information, of course, is information, and to be obtained any way one can.

The brown, snaky lamp cord was the end of this experiment. Oley bit it, viciously, with his new tooth, and had only barely observed that it had penetrated completely through when there was a loud splatt, and all the lights in the room went out.

In the darkness and confusion, of course, Oley moved away, seeking other new experiences. So the cause of the short that Momma and Poppa yakked so loudly about was never attributed to Oley's actions, but only to "How could

a needle have gotten from your sewing machine into this lamp cord, Alice?"

But the sum of information had increased. Neatles stuck into lamp cords had something to do with shorts.

More time passed. And this time the file on shorts was stimulated by Poppa. The big, rough, booming voice had always scared Oley a bit when it sounded mad, like now.

"Alice, I've just *got* to have some more shorts!"

Poppa was rummaging in a drawer far above Oley's head, so he couldn't see the object under discussion. But all he already knew about shorts—the information passed in review before him.

Shorts are useful. They help electricians to work harder.

Shorts you wear, and they are electricians.

Wires are electricians.

Shorts can be made by juice.

Shorts can be made by neatles, that bite like teeth.

Poppa needs more shorts.

But Oley wasn't motivated to act at the moment. Just sorting out information and connecting it with other information files in the necessarily haphazard manner that might eventually result in something called intelligence, although he didn't know that yet.

It was a week later in the kitchen, when Momma dropped a giant version of the neatle on the floor, that his information file in this area increased again.

"Is that a neatle?" Oley asked.

His mother laughed quietly and looked fondly at her son as she put the ice pick back on the table.

"I guess you could call it a needle, Oley," she told him. "An ice needle."

Oley instinctively waited until Momma's back was turned before taking the nice neatle to try its biting powers; and instinctively took it out of the kitchen before starting his experiments.

As he passed the cellar door he heard a soft gurgling and promptly changed course. Pulling open the door with difficulty, he seated himself on the cellar stairs to watch a delightful new spectacle—frothing, gurgling water making its

way across the floor toward the stairs. It looked wonderfully dirty and brown, and to Oley it was an absorbing phenomenon. It never occurred to him to tell Momma.

Suddenly above him the cellar door slammed open, and Poppa came charging down the stairs, narrowly missing the small figure, straight into the rising waters, intent, though Oley couldn't know it, on reaching the drain pipe in the far corner of the cellar to plug it before water from the spring rains could back up farther and really flood the cellar out.

Halfway across the cellar, Poppa reached up and grasped the dangling overhead light to turn it on, in order to see his way to the drain—and suddenly came to a frozen, rigid, gasping stop as his hand clamped firmly over the socket.

Little Oley watched. There was juice in the cellar. Poppa had hold of an electric. Was Poppa trying to make the shorts he needed?

Oley wasn't sure. He thought it probable. And from the superior knowledge of his four years, Oley already knew a better way to make shorts. Neatles make good shorts. Juice don't do so well.

Suddenly, Oley decided to prove his point. Nice neatles probably made even better shorts than other neatles—and there was a big electric running up the side of the stairs—an electric fat enough to make a real good shorts. Maybe lots of shorts.

Raising his nice neatle, Oley took careful aim and plunged it through the 220-volt stove feeder cable.

Oley woke up. The strange pretty lady in white was a new experience. Somebody he hadn't seen before. And there seemed to be something wrong with his hand, but Oley hadn't noticed it very much, yet.

"Well, my little Hero's awake! And how are you this morning? Your Momma and Poppa will be in to see you in just a minute."

The pretty lady in white went away, and Oley gazed around the white room with its funny shape, happily recorded the experience, and dozed off again.

Then suddenly he was awakened again. Momma was



there; and Poppa. And Sven. But they all seemed different somehow this morning. Momma had been crying, even though she was smiling bravely now. And Poppa seemed to have a new softness that he'd seldom seen before. Sven was looking puzzled.

"I still say, Pop, that he's a genius. He *must* have known what he was doing."

"Oley," Poppa's voice was husky—gruff, but kinder and softer than usual. "I want you to answer me carefully. But understand that it's all right either way. I just want you to tell me. Why did you put the ice pick through the stove cable? You saved my life, you know. But I'd like to know how you knew how."

Little Oley grinned. His world was peaceful and wonderful now. And all the big adults were bending and leaning down and talking to him.

"Nice neatle," he said. "Big electric. Poppa needed shorts."

*The distinctions of chemistry, gravity, atmosphere, temperature, nourishment, technology, and overall biological organization between the Ul Kwon, for example, and an Earth man are obvious; either one would find it nearly impossible to visualize the other's existence as anything other than a fantasy.*

*The difficulty of seeing through the eyes of childhood, for adults, is slightly less than the problem a child must have trying to see a world he has never known (a world of much smaller dimensions, less sharp smells, duller colors, less sunshine and more artificial light, different food and clothes and technology) as adults might see it.*

*Now here is one more alien's-eye view, from the core of the culture-image itself.*

## DOUBLE STANDARD

**Fredric Brown**

from *Playboy*

*April 11*—I'm wondering whether what I'm feeling is shock, fear or wonder that the rules might be different, the other

side of the glass. Morality, I'd always thought, was a constant. And it *must* be; two sets of rules wouldn't be fair. Their censor simply slipped up; that's all it could have been.

Not that it matters, but it happened during a Western. I was Whitey Grant, Marshal of West Pecos, a fine rider, a fine fighter, an all-around hero. A gang of badmen came to town looking for me, real gunslingers, and since everyone else in town was afraid to go up against them, I had to take them on all by myself. Black Burke, the leader of the outlaws, told me afterward (I'd only had to knock him out, not kill him) through the bars of the jail that he thought it was a bit like *High Noon* and maybe it was, but what does that matter? *High Noon* was only a movie and if life happens to imitate fiction, so what?

But it was before that, while we were still "on the air," that I happened to look out through the glass (we sometimes call it "the screen") into the *other* world. One can do this only when one happens to be facing the screen directly. In the relatively rare times when this happens we get glimpses into this other world, a world in which people also exist, people like us, except that instead of doing things or having adventures they are simply sitting and watching *us* through the screen. And for some reason that is a mystery to me (one of many mysteries), never do we on two different evenings happen to see the same person or group of persons watching us from this other world.

That's what I was doing when I looked through last night. In the living room into which I happened to be looking, a young couple sat. They were close together on a sofa, *very* close together, only a dozen feet away from me, and they were kissing. Well, we allow kisses occasionally *here*, but only brief and chaste ones. And this kiss didn't look to be either. They were simply *twined* in each other's arms, lost in and *holding* what looked like a passionate kiss, a kiss with sexual implications. Three times in pacing toward and from the screen I saw them, and they were *still* holding that kiss.

By the time I caught my third glimpse of them they were still holding it and twenty seconds at least must have elapsed. I was forced to avert my eyes; it was simply *too* much.

Kissing at least twenty seconds! Probably longer if they started before my first look or continued after my last one. A twenty-second kiss! What kind of censors have they got over there, to be so careless?

What kind of *sponsors* to let censors be so careless?

After the Western was over and the glass opaque again, leaving us alone in our own world, I wanted to talk it over with Black Burke and did talk quite a while through the bars, but I decided no, I shouldn't bring up what I had seen. They'll probably hang Burke soon, after his trial tomorrow. He's being brave about it, but why should I put another worry on his mind? Killer or no, he isn't a *really* bad guy, and hanging is enough for him to have to think about! Who knows what his next incarnation will be—if any?

*April 15*—I am deeply disturbed now. It happened again last night. And it was *worse*! This time most definitely a shock. The few nights between that first time and this even worse one, I'd been afraid, almost, to look out. I'd turned toward the glass as seldom and as briefly as possible. But when I *had* seen through it there'd been nothing amiss. A different living room each time, but never one with a young couple alone together in it, violating the Code. People sitting around behaving themselves, watching us. Kids, sometimes. The usual.

But last night!

*Really* shocking. A young couple alone again—not, of course, the same couple or the same living room. There wasn't any sofa in this one, just two big overstuffed chairs—and they were both sitting in the same chair, she was on his lap.

That was all I saw my first glimpse. I was a doctor and conditions at the hospital were pretty hectic and kept me rushing from emergency to emergency, saving lives. But near THE END (that's what we call it when the final commercial comes on and we can no longer see out nor can those in the outside world any longer see us) I was delivering some good advice to a younger doctor and faced away from him to do it, which put me looking into the

screen, or through the glass, and I saw them again.

And either they had moved or else I saw something I had *not* noticed in my first glimpse. Oh, they were watching the screen all right and not kissing. But!

The girl was wearing shorts, very short shorts, and *his hand was on her thigh*—and not even just resting there, but moving slightly, caressing! What sort of a den of iniquity is it out there that such a thing would be permitted? A man caressing a woman's bare thigh! Anyone in *our* world would shiver at the very thought of it.

I am shivering now, just thinking about it.

What's wrong with their censors anyway?

Is there some difference between worlds that I do not understand? The unknown is always frightening. I am frightened. *And* shocked.

*April 22*—A full week has passed since the second of the two disturbing episodes and until last night I had begun to feel reassured. I had begun to think that the two Code violations I had observed were isolated instances of indecency, things that had slipped through by mistake.

But last night I saw—or rather heard, in this case—something that was a most flagrant violation of a completely different section of the Code.

Perhaps before describing it I should explain the phenomenon of “hearing.” Very seldom do we hear sounds from the other side of the screen. They are too faint to penetrate the glass, or they are drowned out by our own conversations or the sounds we make, or by the music that plays during otherwise silent sequences. (I used to wonder about the source of that music since, except in sequences that take place in night clubs, dance halls or the like, there are never any musicians around to produce it, but finally I decided that it is simply a mystery that we are not supposed to understand.) For one of us actually to hear identifiable sounds from the other world requires a combination of circumstances. It can happen only during a sequence in which there is absolute silence, sans even music, in our own world. And even then it can be heard by only one of us at

a time, since one of us must be very, very near the glass. (We call this a "tight close-up.") Occasionally, under these ideal circumstances, one of us can hear, clearly enough to understand, a phrase or even an entire sentence spoken in the world outside.

For a moment last night these ideal circumstances prevailed for me and I heard a complete sentence spoken, as well as being able to see the speaker and the spoken-to. They were an ordinary-looking middle-aged couple sitting (but decorously apart) on a sofa facing me. The man said—and I am sure I heard him correctly, for he spoke quite loudly, as though the woman was a bit hard of hearing: "G —, honey, that's awful. Let's shut the d — — thing off and go down to the corner for a beer, huh?"

The first of the two words for which I use dashes was the name of the Deity and is a perfectly proper word when used reverently and in context. But it certainly didn't *sound* as though he was using it reverently, and the second word was very definitely profanity.

I am deeply disturbed.

*April 30*—There is no real reason for me to make an entry tonight to add to the other notes I have made recently. I am more or less doodling and will no doubt throw this page away when I have finished with it. I am writing it simply because I have to be writing something and might as well do this as something even more meaningless.

You see, I am writing this "on screen," as we call it. Tonight I am a newspaper reporter sitting in front of my typewriter in the city room of a newspaper.

I have, however, already played my active part in this adventure, and am now in the background, required only to look busy and keep typing. Since I am a touch typist and do not need to watch the keys, tonight I have ample opportunity to take occasional glances through the glass into the other world. I find myself again seeing a young couple alone together. Their "set" is in their bedroom and obviously they are married, since they are watching from their beds. Beds, plural, of course. I am pleased to see that they are

following the Code, which permits married couples to be shown talking to each other from twin beds a reasonable distance apart, but more than understandably forbids their being shown together in a double bed; no matter how far apart they lie, this is definitely suggestive.

Just took another glance. Apparently they aren't much interested in watching the screen from their side. Instead, they are talking. Of course, I cannot hear what they are saying to each other; even if there were absolute silence on our side, I am too far back from the glass. But he is asking her a question and she is nodding, smilingly.

Suddenly she sweeps back the covers and swings her feet out of bed, sits up on her side of it.

*She is naked.*

Dear God, how can you *permit* this? It is *impossible*. In our world, there *is* no such thing as a naked woman. It just cannot *be*.

She stands up and I cannot tear my eyes away from the impossibly beautiful, beautifully impossible, sight of her. Out of the corner of one eye I can see that he has thrown back the covers on his bed and he, too, is naked. He is beckoning to her and, for a brief moment, she stands there laughing, looking at him and letting him look at her.

Something strange, something I have never felt before, something I did not know was possible is happening in my loins. I try to tear my eyes away, but I cannot.

She crosses the two steps between the beds and lies down beside him. Suddenly he is kissing and caressing her. And now—

*Can such things be?*

It is true, then! There *is* no censorship for them; they *can and do* do the things that in our world may be only vaguely suggested as off-stage happenings. How can they be free when we are not? It is *cruel*. We are being denied equality and our birthright.

Let me out of here! LET ME OUT!

LET ME OUT!

Help, anyone, HELP!

LET ME OUT OF THIS BOX!

*You could call it "canned soul." Or maybe "electropsyche"? Sheerest fantasy when it assumes cognition (ego? sentience? essence?) springing full-blown from the picture tube—but very solid probability when you reverse the sequence, and feed the emotions into the box.*

## **INTERVIEW**

**Frank A. Javor**

*from Analog*

Looking at the woman, Lester V. Morrison felt deep inside himself the stirring of sympathy, familiar, rising to the sustained, heady rapport that made him know, with the certainty of long experience, that this was going to be another of his great interviews.

He smiled and loosened the fist he'd made unconsciously to emphasize the word "great" when it passed through his mind.

He felt a light touch on his arm and turning, bowed his head so that his lead technician could slip over it the video-audio headband. Its close-fitting temple pieces curved to touch the bone behind his ears and the twin stereo viewfinder cameras came down over his eyes.

Lester rather liked to make the subdued bowing movement, the symbolic humbling, it pleased him to think, of his six-and-almost-a-half-foot tallness to receive the crown-like headgear of his craft. A crown heavy, not with the scant two ounces of transmitting metal and optical plastic, but heavy with his responsibility to the billions upon billions of viewers who would see what Lester looked upon, would hear what he turned his ear to; the center of their universe for those moments the spot upon which Lester stood, the signal spreading outward from it like the ripple pattern of a dropped stone.

His technician pressed Lester's arm twice and stepped back. Lester stood erect, his hands and fingers hovering over the twin-arc'd rows of buttons and rods set in the flat surface of the control console he wore high on his chest

like an ancient breastplate. There was no speaking between Lester and his four-man crew, nor any testing of equipment. Lester wore his responsibility with what he considered a suitable humility, but with a firm confidence. Let lesser men fiddle with their equipment, talk, blur the virgin spontaneity of the look that would flash into the woman's eyes with the first impact of Lester's equipment upon her. His men, like Lester, were the absolute best in their field; razor-honed by long close union and good pay until they responded almost symbiotically to Lester and each other.

A clear warning warble from his left earphone, heard only by Lester through the bones of his skull, readied him to begin his task. He stood firmly tall, silent, waiting . . .

A musical bleat. The suddenly glowing red face of the timer in the upper corner of his left viewfinder. He was on the air.

The general view first. Eight seconds to set the scene, to let his viewers see for themselves the sordid slum he was standing in. To see the aged, crumbling buildings, some of them as much as twelve and even fourteen years old, engineered to have been torn down and replaced long ago. Long before a tragedy of this kind could strike. To form their own opinion of a council that could allow such a blight to exist on their planet.

Smoothly Lester pivoted his body, one shoulder leading, a counterbalance for the slightly trailing head, editorializing subtly by what he chose to look at, by what he chose to ignore. Flowingly, easily, compensating automatically for even the rise and fall of his own controlled breathing. A beautifully functioning, rock-steady camera vehicle Lester was. It was the least of his interviewing skills.

A closer shot. His thumb brushed a rod on his breastplate. The view in his finders grew larger. Armor-suited men, resting now, but still strapped in the seats of their half-track diggers. Orange-painted against the greening dust and the bright red glow of the police-erected crowd-control barrier force-field like a sheltering dome over them. Through it, visible above and around in all directions, a



swirling, shifting mass upon mass of human beings. Some in fliers, others on skimmers. Some strapped in one-man jumpers and even on foot. A boiling, roiling swarm of the morbidly, humanly curious pressing all around, straining toward the little knot of blue-coverall-clad men and their pitifully small, broken burden.

Lester's fingers and palms brushed the rods and buttons of his breastplate-console. Let the rattle and the clank and the sound of the crowd stay as they are. A shade more of the force field's rasping hum to warm his viewer's nerve endings . . . to ready them . . .

The woman's sobbing. His thumb touched a stud. Let it start to come through now. Softly . . . barely hearable . . . subtly swelling.

The little knot of blue-coverall-clad men. A medium shot, then rapidly to a close-up of their burden, the dangling limbs half-hidden by their bodies and the merciful sagging of the blue-green plasti-sheet. A tight shot, but passing . . . the merest flicker. Nothing staring, nothing lingering, nothing in bad taste.

In Lester's right ear was the sound of his own voice, recorded on his way to the scene and before he came upon it so that he would not need to break his silence until his selected moment. His voice giving the boy's age, his group-affiliations, the routine details of his death. All quietly, all monotonously even, the greater to contrast with what was the meat of Lester's program.

Nineteen seconds. The sobbing louder now and growing. The mother, kneeling, body sagged, hands clenched, dark head bowed.

Lester put a hand on her shoulder, letting it show in his finders, knowing that each of his viewers could see it as his own, extended, sympathetic, understanding . . .

The woman did not respond to his touch. Unobtrusively Lester increased the pressure of his thumb, gouging. She stirred under his hand, shrinking, her head lifting.

Lester's hand darted back to his console.

Her eyes. Dark, dulled, beseeching. *Fine.*

And now Lester spoke. He spoke with practiced hesitance, the gentle respecter, for his viewer, of her desire and right to her privacy at a time like this.

"How do you feel to have lost your only child?" His hands hovering, the woman looking at him . . . *now.*

Her eyes widened, flickeringly. Sorrow surging and pain, deep and of the soul, opened to the finder. Raw, fresh.

*Great. I'm right never to test, never to speak until this moment.*

"Please try to control yourself. I'm your friend, we're all your friends. Tell us." And he repeated his question.

Her head bent sharply back, the eyes half closing now, her mouth open, the lips trembling, the intensity of her emotion visibly choking the sound in her throat, making of her attempt to speak a silent mouthing.

*Easy . . . easy does it.*

Her hands came up. Fists, pressing against each other and under her chin. "My baby, my baby," and her voice was a moan.

Lester needed only the one hand, his left. The other he stretched toward the woman, touching her hair, his fingertips only, gently, benevolently, seeing it in his finder, looking deep into her upturned face.

In the corner of Lester's finder the sweep second hand began to wipe the red glow from the timer's face. When it came around to the twelve, except for the sponsor break and his verbal sign-off, he would be off the air. .

Sobs began to rock the kneeling woman. Lightly at first a mere staccato catching of the breath, but growing. Growing in a crescendo of violence that, peaking, made of her body a heaving, thrashing, straining animal thing.

Great racking, convulsive sounds rasped from her throat. A thread-thin trickle of blood started from one corner of her tortured mouth.

*Enough.*

Her head dropped, her whole body now bowed and shaking.

Lester watched his hand go out to her, stop in midair. He did not try to hide its trembling. His fingers closed, his hand came back, not having touched her. Leaving her, huddled, tremulous, to herself and her great sorrow.

*Slow fade and . . . go to black.*

Ninety seconds. Exactly and on the dot and another of his human-interest segments for the intergalactic network was over; another moment in the life story of a little person had been made immortal.

Lester eased his headgear off, handed it to the waiting technician, stood rubbing the spots where the temple pieces had pressed. The woman had stopped trembling now and was looking dazed, uncomprehending. *They always do, the subjects.*

Swiftly, but not too roughly, Lester raised up her limp left arm, undid the cuff and stripped off the tiny receptor taped to the wrist. Another he took from her ankle and two more from the back of her skull, from under the concealing black hair. He could have left to one of his technicians this stripping off of the tiny receptors, that, obedient to the commands of his console, sent their impulses impinging upon the nerve streams of his subjects. But Lester felt that doing it himself, this body contact with his subjects, was just one more tiny factor that helped keep fresh his unmistakable feeling of rapport.

His lead technician touched his shoulder from behind, indicating they were about ready for his verbal signature and the one part of his program Lester found distasteful. A compliance with a regulation he felt was onerous and a little demeaning. Some day those who made these artistically pointless rulings would recognize the validity of his technique and perhaps eliminate this abhorrent note. Until then . . .

Lester leaned forward and spoke into the button mike his technician was holding out to him.

And at the end, ". . . The emotional response of the subject was technically augmented."

*Meanwhile, back in the living room . . .*

## **EIGHT O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING**

**Ray Nelson**

*from Fantasy and Science Fiction*

At the end of the show the hypnotist told his subjects, "Awake."

Something unusual happened.

One of the subjects awoke all the way. This had never happened before. His name was George Nada and he blinked out at the sea of faces in the theater, at first unaware of anything out of the ordinary. Then he noticed, spotted here and there in the crowd, the nonhuman faces, the faces of the Fascinators. They had been there all along, of course, but only George was really awake, so only George recognized them for what they were. He understood everything in a flash, including the fact that if he were to give any outward sign, the Fascinators would instantly command him to return to his former state, and he would obey.

He left the theater, pushing out into the neon night, carefully avoiding giving any indication that he saw the green, reptilian flesh or the multiple yellow eyes of the rulers of earth. One of them asked him, "Got a light, buddy?" George gave him a light, then moved on.

At intervals along the street George saw the posters hanging with photographs of the Fascinators' multiple eyes and various commands printed under them, such as, "Work eight hours, play eight hours, sleep eight hours," and "Marry and Reproduce." A TV set in the window of a store caught George's eye, but he looked away in the nick of time. When he didn't look at the Fascinator in the screen, he could resist the command, "Stay tuned to this station."

George lived alone in a little sleeping room, and as soon as he got home, the first thing he did was to disconnect the

TV set. In other rooms he could hear the TV sets of his neighbors, though. Most of the time the voices were human, but now and then he heard the arrogant, strangely bird-like croaks of the aliens. "Obey the government," said one croak. "We are the government," said another. "We are your friends, you'd do anything for a friend, wouldn't you?"

"Obey!"

"Work!"

Suddenly the phone rang.

George picked it up. It was one of the Fascinators.

"Hello," it squawked. "This is your control, Chief of Police Robinson. You are an old man, George Nada. Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, your heart will stop. Please repeat."

"I am an old man," said George. "Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, my heart will stop."

The control hung up.

"No, it won't," whispered George. He wondered why they wanted him dead. Did they suspect that he was awake? Probably. Someone might have spotted him, noticed that he didn't respond the way the others did. If George were alive at one minute after eight tomorrow morning, then they would be sure.

"No use waiting here for the end," he thought.

He went out again. The posters, the TV, the occasional commands from passing aliens did not seem to have absolute power over him, though he still felt strongly tempted to obey, to see these things the way his master wanted him to see them. He passed an alley and stopped. One of the aliens was alone there, leaning against the wall. George walked up to him.

"Move on," grunted the thing, focusing his deadly eyes on George.

George felt his grasp on awareness waver. For a moment the reptilian head dissolved into the face of a lovable old drunk. Of course the drunk would be lovable. George picked up a brick and smashed it down on the old drunk's head with all his strength. For a moment the image blurred, then the blue-green blood oozed out of the face and the

lizard fell, twitching and writhing. After a moment it was dead.

George dragged the body into the shadows and searched it. There was a tiny radio in its pocket and a curiously shaped knife and fork in another. The tiny radio said something in an incomprehensible language. George put it down beside the body, but kept the eating utensils.

"I can't possibly escape," thought George. "Why fight them?"

But maybe he could.

What if he could awaken others? That might be worth a try.

He walked twelve blocks to the apartment of his girl friend, Lil, and knocked on her door. She came to the door in her bathrobe.

"I want you to wake up," he said.

"I'm awake," she said. "Come on in."

He went in. The TV was playing. He turned it off.

"No," he said. "I mean really wake up." She looked at him without comprehension, so he snapped his fingers and shouted, "*Wake up!* The masters command that you wake up!"

"Are you off your rocker, George?" she asked suspiciously. "You sure are acting funny." He slapped her face. "Cut that out!" she cried, "What the hell are you up to anyway?"

"Nothing," said George, defeated. "I was just kidding around."

"Slapping my face wasn't just kidding around!" she cried.

There was a knock at the door.

George opened it.

It was one of the aliens.

"Can't you keep the noise down to a dull roar?" it said.

The eyes and reptilian flesh faded a little and George saw the flickering image of a fat middle-aged man in shirt-sleeves. It was still a man when George slashed its throat with the eating knife, but it was an alien before it hit the floor. He dragged it into the apartment and kicked the door shut.

"What do you see there?" he asked Lil, pointing to the many-eyed snake thing on the floor.

"Mister . . . Mister Coney," she whispered, her eyes wide with horror. "You . . . just killed him, like it was nothing at all."

"Don't scream," warned George, advancing on her.

"I won't, George. I swear I won't, only please, for the love of God, put down that knife." She backed away until she had her shoulder blades pressed to the wall.

George saw that it was no use.

"I'm going to tie you up," said George. "First tell me which room Mister Coney lived in."

"The first door on your left as you go toward the stairs," she said. "George . . . Georgie. Don't torture me. If you're going to kill me, do it clean. Please, George, please."

He tied her up with bedsheets and gagged her, then searched the body of the Fascinator. There was another one of the little radios that talked a foreign language, another set of eating utensils, and nothing else.

George went next door.

When he knocked, one of the snake things answered, "Who is it?"

"Friend of Mister Coney. I wanna see him," said George.

"He went out for a second, but he'll be right back." The door opened a crack, and four yellow eyes peeped out. "You wanna come in and wait?"

"Okay," said George, not looking at the eyes.

"You alone here?" he asked, as it closed the door, its back to George.

"Yeah, why?"

He slit its throat from behind, then searched the apartment.

He found human bones and skulls, a half-eaten hand.

He found tanks with huge fat slugs floating in them.

"The children," he thought, and killed them all.

There were guns too, of a sort he had never seen before. He discharged one by accident, but fortunately it was noiseless. It seemed to fire little poisoned darts.

He pocketed the gun and as many boxes of darts as he

could and went back to Lil's place. When she saw him she writhed in helpless terror.

"Relax, honey," he said, opening her purse, "I just want to borrow your car keys."

He took the keys and went downstairs to the street.

Her car was still parked in the same general area in which she always parked it. He recognized it by the dent in the right fender. He got in, started it, and began driving aimlessly. He drove for hours, thinking—desperately searching for some way out. He turned on the car radio to see if he could get some music, but there was nothing but news and it was all about him, George Nada, the homicidal maniac. The announcer was one of the masters, but he sounded a little scared. Why should he be? What could one man do?

George wasn't surprised when he saw the roadblock, and he turned off on a side street before he reached it. No little trip to the country for you, Georgie boy, he thought to himself.

They had just discovered what he had done back at Lil's place, so they would probably be looking for Lil's car. He parked it in an alley and took the subway. There were no aliens on the subway, for some reason. Maybe they were too good for such things, or maybe it was just because it was so late at night.

When one finally did get on, George got off.

He went up to the street and went into a bar. One of the Fascinators was on the TV, saying over and over again, "We are your friends. We are your friends. We are your friends." The stupid lizard sounded scared. Why? What could one man do against all of them?

George ordered a beer, then it suddenly struck him that the Fascinator on the TV no longer seemed to have any power over him. He looked at it again and thought, "It has to believe it can master me to do it. The slightest hint of fear on its part and the power to hypnotize is lost." They flashed George's picture on the TV screen and George retreated to the phone booth. He called his control, the Chief of Police.



"Hello, Robinson?" he asked.

"Speaking."

"This is George Nada. I've figured out how to wake people up."

"What? George, hang on. Where are you?" Robinson sounded almost hysterical.

He hung up and paid and left the bar. They would probably trace his call.

He caught another subway and went downtown.

It was dawn when he entered the building housing the biggest of the city's TV studios. He consulted the building directory and then went up in the elevator. The cop in front of the studio entrance recognized him. "Why, you're Nada!" he gasped.

George didn't like to shoot him with the poison dart gun, but he had to.

He had to kill several more before he got into the studio itself, including all the engineers on duty. There were a lot of police sirens outside, excited shouts, and running footsteps on the stairs. The alien was sitting before the TV camera saying, "We are your friends. We are your friends," and didn't see George come in. When George shot him with the needle gun he simply stopped in mid-sentence and sat there, dead. George stood near him and said, imitating the alien croak, "Wake up. Wake up. See us as we are and kill us!"

It was George's voice the city heard that morning, but it was the Fascinator's image, and the city did awake for the very first time and the war began.

George did not live to see the victory that finally came. He died of a heart attack at exactly eight o'clock.

*Three years ago, the sixth annual SF reprinted Ray Bradbury's Life article, "A Serious Search for Weird Worlds," about the origins and objectives of the felicitously named Project Ozma.*

*Mr. Bradbury pointed out with detailed care that this sort of undertaking would have to be measured in generations rather than years: that it would take twenty-two years, for instance, simply to exchange Hello's with the nearest possible neighbors.*

*By this time, we are all well accustomed to the concept of the*

*limiting speed of light: astronomical information cannot travel faster than 186,000 miles per second. But we have also become accustomed to faulty space-breaking timetables. Everything always happens sooner than they said it would.*

*And here it is four years since Ozma started. So . . .*

## WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

**Ben Bova**

*from Amazing*

It was Enrico Fermi, the late Nobel Prize-winning physicist, who asked the question. His reasoning was basically this:

The universe is so vast that, according to mere blind chance, there must be literally billions of planetary systems. With so many planets available, it is incomprehensible that intelligent life should have evolved only on Earth. There must be many—millions, at least—of intelligent races elsewhere in space. But the universe is much older than the Earth. Therefore, the chances are that intelligent races exist who are much older than man. It is not impossible to imagine many races so far advanced that they have solved the problems of interstellar flight. If this is true, then:

Where is everybody? Why have they not established contact with us? Or is the fact that we have *not* received interstellar visitors proof that *no* intelligent life exists in space?

There are usually two reasons given for our lack of interstellar tourists. The first is the "grain of sand" argument; the second is the "postage stamp" analogy.

The first argument uses a poetic metaphor to make its point:

A man can walk across a very large beach without much difficulty. He can chart its shoreline and depths, its contour and headlands. But—*can he inspect every grain of sand on the beach?*

In other words, even assuming that an advanced race could develop interstellar travel, could they explore every

one of the Milky Way's 100 billion stars in an effort to find other intelligent races? Stated in this manner, the prospects for interstellar contact sound dim indeed. But let us examine this argument a little more closely. Basically, it involves two facets: the ability to achieve interstellar flight, and the ability to investigate very large numbers of stars. An intelligent race *could* develop the technology necessary for interstellar flight. And it need not inspect every one of the Milky Way's 100 billion stars. Some stars are manifestly inhospitable to the evolution of life; many others are too young to have allowed intelligence time enough to develop. Moreover, our solar system is situated away from the center of the galaxy, out where the stars are relatively far apart. At the galaxy's heart, where the oldest stars are, interstellar distances must be less than half of those in our region of space.

It is possible, then, to envision an intelligent race scouting the galaxy in a highly purposeful fashion, seeking out stars that are old and stable enough to have sponsored intelligent life. With the use of powerful radio receivers or other detection devices, interstellar explorers might be able to find inhabited planets at very great distances. So it would seem that while our planet is indeed a single grain of sand on the vast shores of space, an intelligent race might find us if it had enough energy, time and purpose.

The question of purpose brings us to the "postage stamp" analogy. You have no doubt seen this picture painted by astronomers and anthropologists alike: Consider the history of the Earth. Let the height of the Empire State Building represent the planet's five billion years of existence. Man's one-million-year tenure on Earth can then be represented by a one-foot ruler, standing at the very top of the building. A dime placed atop the ruler represents the entire span of man's civilization. And, at the very top of the whole wobbly conglomerate, is glued a postage stamp—this represents the length of time since man has developed modern science.

If other intelligent races exist, what are the chances of our meeting a race at exactly our own level of develop-

ment? Within the thickness of the postage stamp, that is. They will either be far below or far beyond us, technologically.

Several cosmologically-minded thinkers have arrived at the conclusion that technology may be only a passing phase in the development of an intelligent race. Perhaps it is only in the first blush of its youth that a race is interested in exploring the stars. This type of reasoning is typified by Sebastian von Hoerner, of the Astronomical Research Institute of Heidelberg, who states that an intelligent race is bound either to destroy itself or to stagnate within a few hundred, or at best, a few thousand years after reaching the modern Earthly level of technology. In other words, the postage stamp may grow as thick as a dime, but certainly no thicker. Is this a reasonable assumption? Will man destroy himself? Or will he become a passive, stagnant lotus-eater, served by his machines until his ultimate (and not-too-distant) extinction?

Let us be optimistic and assume that man (or any intelligent race) will not destroy himself. Will he become stagnant? Is the technological "state of mind" merely a passing fancy? Anthropologists have amassed some solid evidence that points entirely in the opposite direction.

Even before man was fully human he was a maker and user of tools. The wheel and the plow were invented about 10,000 B.C. The so-called modern era of science, dating roughly from Copernicus, Galileo and Newton, is not completely different from the eras that preceded it. The technology that we are so justly proud of did not spring full-blown from the minds of a few brilliant men. It was the product of generations of effort. Modern society represents not so much a break with the past as an acceleration of past trends, speeded by the gathering forces of technical methods and accumulated scientific knowledge. In short, an intelligent race is apt to be technologically oriented, and *unlikely* to give up its technology.

It would seem, then, that the postage stamp atop the Empire State Building is an artifact. Man's technology may be very young, but so is man himself. As long as he has

been human, he has been a tool-wielder. If and when we meet other intelligent races, the chances are that the technologies will be fully as old as they are. Thus, if we meet an older race, its technology will be far advanced over ours. And if we find a younger race, its talents will be similarly undeveloped.

So far we have tested two lines of speculation and concluded that: (1) An intelligent race could reach us if it wanted to; (2) Once a race develops technology, it is not likely to dispose of it and return to nature. But our original question remains unanswered. If intelligent races abound among the stars, why have they not visited us? Is man alone in his intelligence and technology?

One key to these questions depends on the "geography" of space. Astronomers are still not at all certain of the age of our galaxy, but we can pick 10 billion years as a convenient value. Ten billion years ago, there was no Milky Way galaxy, no stars, no planets, no life. Only a vast, distended cloud of tenuous gas—a nearly perfect vacuum by human standards, but so large that it contained more than 200 billion times the mass of our sun. (Where this gas came from is a cosmological question that will be carefully avoided here.) This tremendous cloud consisted of hydrogen atoms, simple protons and electrons. Nothing more. Much of this primordial gas is still present between the stars today; we see it in the brilliant swirls of nebulae, we hear its 21-centimeter-wavelength "song" on our radio telescopes.

In some unknown manner, the cloud began to rotate and contract. As it did so, tiny swirls and eddies began to appear, to break into still smaller whirls and ultimately to produce stars. (The first stars, evidently, were produced in large batches. We can see them today. They are very ancient globular clusters which may contain 100,000 or a million individual stars, packed together as closely as the planets of our own solar system.) As the original gas cloud continued to rotate and contract it produced many more stars. The nucleus of the Milky Way is so thick with stars

that our own region of the galaxy, out toward the edge, must be classed as a stellar desert. Thus the central portions of our galaxy, according to astronomical theory, contain the oldest stars.

As the gas cloud condensed, its rotation became faster. Its shape became flattened, bulging at the center. Finally, to maintain stability, the cloud began to fling off great belts of gas from its middle. These belts—long, twisted filaments of star-producing gas—became the spiral arms of our galaxy, thousands of light-years in cross-section, tens of thousands of light-years in length. In one of these belts, known as the Carina-Cygnus Arm, is the sun and our solar system, some 25,000 light-years from the star-thronged center of the galaxy.

It would appear, then, that our sun is a latecomer to the galaxy. Indeed, astronomers refer to the sun as a "second generation" star. Of course, many of the stars in our region of the galaxy are much younger. Sirius, for example, can hardly be more than a few hundred million years old and Rigel is probably no older than man himself—one million years.

Before we go any further, we had better straighten out a bit of astronomical jargon. Astronomers frequently refer to two types of stars in the Milky Way. Stars in our own quarter of the galaxy—including the sun—are called Population I. Other stars, such as those nearer the galaxy's center and in the globular clusters, are called Population II. The confusing thing is that the Population II stars are *older*, hence are "first generation" stars, while the younger Population I stars are "second generation." In addition to their different locations in the galaxy, Population II stars apparently have rather different chemical compositions than our own neighbors of Population I. This difference is one of degree, and at first glimpse would seem trivial: Population II stars are comparatively poor in heavier elements. Now, *all* stars of *all* populations are about 99 percent hydrogen and helium; the younger the star, the higher the percentage of hydrogen compared to helium. In any case, the heavier elements—such as the metals—are restricted to

about one percent of the star's mass. But, just as in a detective story, this seemingly insignificant fact is a critical clue.

The older Population II stars are metal-poor. The younger Population I stars are relatively metal-rich. If the galaxy began with nothing but hydrogen gas where did the metals come from?

The answer to that riddle was first proposed about a dozen years ago by a group of English astronomers and mathematicians, among them Thomas Gold, Fred Hoyle and Hermann Bondi. The stars are nuclear cooks, they said. We know that the sun is fusing hydrogen into helium, and in the process converting four million tons of mass into energy every second. But, said Gold, Hoyle and Bondi, this is only the beginning of a star's career. At a certain point in its lifetime (some five billion years from now, for the sun) a star reaches a critical stage. Its hydrogen fuel is becoming depleted. At the core of the star is a large amount of helium—"ash" from the hydrogen fires—under tremendous pressure and, consequently, at very high temperatures, perhaps 100 million degrees Kelvin.

Under these conditions, the helium will begin to fuse into heavier elements: oxygen, carbon, neon. Eventually, the star goes on to produce constantly heavier elements at constantly higher internal temperatures. Finally the star runs out of energy sources, collapses and explodes. Most of its material—from hydrogen on up through the heavier elements—is hurled out into space. This is a supernova.

The theory that results is that the older Population II stars "cooked" the heavier elements within their cores and then spewed them out in supernova explosions. (Supernovas occur about once every five hundred years in the Milky Way, on the average.) The remnants flung into interstellar space mix with the primeval hydrogen and thus provide new raw material for "second generation" stars. But notice that these newer stars have a much richer raw material to build with—it contains helium, oxygen, neon, iron and many other elements. Even rare, short-lived radioactive

elements, such as californium (an "artificial" element on Earth) have been observed in the spectra of old Population II stars.

Now then, what has all this stellar cookery to do with the possibilities of intelligent life throughout the galaxy? Simply this:

The oldest stars in the Milky Way were built on hydrogen alone. They could not have planetary systems like ours because the heavier elements were not yet available. There might be a few spheres of frozen hydrogen circling these stars at great distances, but they would be sterile worlds.

The sun is a Population I star, a "second generation" luminary. It possesses a relatively large amount of heavy elements; it also possesses a planetary system that harbors life and intelligence. But the sun is a rather old Population I star—age, five billion years, about half as old as the entire Milk Way galaxy. Can it be that the first five billion years of the galaxy's existence were spent mainly in building up heavier elements so that "second generation" stars like the sun could arise and produce planets, life and intelligence? If so, then we might well be one of the first intelligent races in the Milky Way. The teeming center of the galaxy might be devoid of life and intelligence.

Although this kind of astronomical evidence might lend support to the speculation that we are among the galaxy's elder citizens, we should be very careful about reaching conclusions from an admittedly oversimplified paste-up of assumptions and theories. The idea has a certain satisfaction to it from an egocentric point of view, and it goes a long way toward explaining why They have not visited Earth. There might not *be* any of Them. Or, if there are, They might not yet have attained the advanced technology necessary for interstellar flight.

But to assume that we are in first place in the galaxy's IQ rating is rash indeed. If astronomy has taught man anything it is the painful fact that we are not special creatures in any sense of the term. Our star is an average one, and the conditions that led to the formation of our planet and ourselves are probably not very extraordinary. Even



granting that we might be among the elder citizens of the Milky Way, we must assume that among the galaxy's 100 billion stars there are some that harbor much more intelligent species.

Then the question returns again: Where is everybody?

Imagine a race of intelligent creatures, human beings, living in their own world. They have developed in isolation, and have split into many local cultures, some have advanced to high civilizations, others have remained struggling in the Stone Age. But all of them are members of a fully human species, and as intelligent as we are. Suddenly, their world is visited by a vastly superior race. To simplify matters, we will assume that the visitors are also human in form. The first contacts are friendly enough. Soon, though, it becomes clear that the visitors have measured the natives and found them lacking. The visitors begin to take over the natives' world.

Fighting begins. The natives lack the advanced technology of their opponents. Within a few generations the natives cease to exist, except for scattered tribes in the back country. The natives have not merely been beaten in a war. They have been virtually extinguished by a superior culture. Through intermarriage, through susceptibility to new diseases, through an emotional response that can only be described as "racial shock," the natives either die away or are genetically engulfed by the newcomers. This actually happened to the American Indians.

What would happen if a vastly superior race suddenly dropped out of the blue, straightened out our political squabbles, handed us a child's primer of fusion reactors, and generally took over the planet? Could our deep-grained pride stand such a shock, or would we go into a racial decline?

Look at it another way. Anthropologists are interested in studying man's nearest relative, the primate apes. A good deal has been learned by observing chimpanzees and other apes in captivity. But the basic question of why we live in cities while our closest relatives live in trees can

only be answered by studying the primates in their natural habitat. This is not easy to do because the key to the entire scheme is that the animals under scrutiny *must never know they are being watched*. Only by remaining "invisible" can the scientists learn how apes behave naturally.

Now let us consider the reactions of an advanced race that discovers intelligent life on the planet Earth. It seems reasonable to assume that the ethics of an intelligent race will advance together with its technology, even if the ethics advance more slowly. Any race capable of developing interstellar travel, it would seem, should also be intelligent and ethical enough to observe a relatively primitive race like our own without interfering with us. Why should they contact us? They have far more to learn by keeping us under surveillance. Thus, they might well have a "closed door" policy about contacting us, but an "open window" attitude about observing us.

Where is everybody? If you assume that: (1) an intelligent race can develop interstellar travel; (2) such a race can detect signs of intelligence at great distances in space; and (3) one or more such races have indeed evolved on "second generation" stars—then the answer may be this: They may be watching us right now, using us to learn more about the phenomenon called intelligence, and waiting for us to reach the maturity necessary before we can join them as galactic equals.

*... or they may not even watch. Could be, the star charts show Sol III as "unmapped; uninhabited; nonarable; overrun with poison ego, infectious entropy-accelerator."*

Or we might be succulent pickings for any number of star-market buyers. Does the peach tree know about canning and slicing? Do you have yourself announced by an aphid butler if you spend an hour watching an anthill?

On the other hand, will you really worry about whether the ants know that you are watching? Or what interpretation they may put on it, if they do?

In what he himself calls "a satire of hasty conclusions," André Maurois here sets forth a first lesson in alien-watching. If there is

*some small confusion in identifying the true alien, bear in mind that it is a parable, not a primer. As for who watches the watchers—it is an old question, and adds a certain spice to the game.*

## THE EARTH DWELLERS

**André Maurois**

*from The Weigher of Souls & The Earth Dwellers (Macmillan, 1963)*

By the end of 1970 friendly relations had been established between the Earth and most of the major planets, and terrestrial scientists became anxious to compare their own hypotheses and doctrines with those of their colleagues in other worlds. But such comparisons were often difficult, because, as is well known, the eminent physicists of Venus, Jupiter, and Mars had no perception of either light or sound, and lived in a world of radiations of which we had hitherto been quite ignorant. But the theory of sensorial equivalents made rapid progress, and at the date of writing (1992) it may be said that we are capable of transposing every language of the planetary system into Earth language—except Saturnian.

One of the most interesting discoveries due to this new philology was that of books written about ourselves, the Earth Dwellers, by the scientists of foreign planets. Mankind had not the slightest idea that for millions of years past he had been under observation, thanks to instruments very much more powerful than his own, by the naturalists of Venus, Mars, and even Uranus. Terrestrial science lagged far behind the science of neighboring bodies, and as our organs were insensitive to the radiations utilized by these observers, it was impossible for us to know that, in the most secret moments of our lives, we were sometimes within the field of vision of a celestial ultramicroscope.

Nowadays these works can be consulted by any scholar in the library of the League of Planets. They provide most commendable reading for young men eager to devote

themselves to the learned sciences, not only because of their great intrinsic interest, but also because of the sense of humility which they cannot fail to evoke. To observe the incredible errors made by beings of such high intelligence and so wonderfully equipped for research, one cannot refrain from reverting to a number of our own human affirmations, wondering whether we have not observed plants and animals very much as the Martians observed us.

One case in particular strikes us as worthy of careful study: that of the Uranian scholar A.E. 17, who published his book, *Man and His Life*, in 1959.<sup>1</sup> Until the War that book was the standard work not only in Uranus but also, in translations, among the inhabitants of Venus and Mars. To ourselves it is readily accessible because, alone among our fellow-planetaries, the Uranians share with us the sense of sight, which makes their vocabulary approximate closely to ours. Moreover, the experiments carried out by A.E. 17 were such as completely to upset the Earth throughout a period of six months; and we have access to the terrestrial account of these events in the newspapers and memoirs of the time.

We propose here:

(a) To describe briefly a few of the events noted on our own planet in the year 1954;

(b) to show what interpretation the eminent A.E. 17 put on his own experiments.

## THE MYSTERIOUS SPRINGTIME

In the month of March, 1954, numerous observers throughout the Northern Hemisphere gave surprising reports of atmospheric conditions. Notwithstanding fine and cool weather, storms of the utmost violence were bursting suddenly within strictly limited zones. Ships' captains and airplane pilots reported to the Central Meteorological

<sup>1</sup>Original Uranian edition, 1959. First terrestrial edition, 1982.

Bureau that their compasses had for several seconds behaved quite wildly for no conceivable reason. In several places, under a clear sky, people saw what appeared to be the shadow of a huge cloud passing over the ground, although no such cloud was visible. The newspapers published interviews with the eminent meteorologists, who explained that they had anticipated this phenomenon, which was due to sunspots and would come to an end with the equinoctial tides. But the advent of the equinox only brought stranger happenings in its wake.

## THE "HYDE PARK HILL" INCIDENT

On the third Sunday in April, the crowds of men and women listening to the open-air orators giving their pitch at Marble Arch, suddenly saw passing overhead the shadow of an invisible obstacle mysteriously interposed between the Earth and the sun. A few seconds later, from the park railings to a point some three or four hundred yards inside the park, there occurred an abrupt upheaval of the ground. Trees were uprooted and pedestrians tumbled over and were buried, while those who were on the edge of the disturbed area were dumfounded to observe that a great funnel at least three hundred feet deep had been scooped out, the soil from which had been thrown up to form a hill of corresponding height.

A policeman, giving evidence next day at the inquest on victims, said, "It all happened just as if a giant had been wielding a spade in the park. Yes, it was just like someone using a spade, because the outer edge of the cavity was trim and smooth, while the edge on the side where the hill came consisted of crumbling loose soil, with half-cut heads and bodies protruding from it."

Over three hundred citizens walking in the park had been buried alive. Some who had only been covered with a light layer of earth managed to extricate themselves with difficulty. Some, too, suddenly lost their senses and rushed down the steep slope of the new hill, uttering dreadful

shrieks. On the summit of the mound there appeared the upright figure of a Salvation Army preacher, Colonel R. W. Ward, who, with astonishing presence of mind, still shaking the dirt from his hair and clothing, began to bellow: "I told you so, brothers! You have sacrificed to false gods, and now the Lord God is angered with his people, and the hand of the Lord God has fallen heavy upon us. . . ."

And indeed this inexplicable event bore such a likeness to certain divine punishments as described in Holy Writ that skeptics among the bystanders were instantly converted, and began lives of practicing religion to which they have from that moment been steadfast.

The episode enabled people to appreciate the virtues of the Metropolitan Police. Three members of the force were among the victims, but a dozen others, arriving instantly on the scene, set to work at digging with great courage. Telephone messages were sent out at once to the military authorities and fire stations, and General Clarkwell, the Commissioner of Police, took command of the rescue forces, and within four hours Hyde Park had resumed its normal appearance. Unfortunately, the dead numbered two hundred.

Scientists gave the most varied explanations of the disaster. The theory of an earthquake, the only reasonable one if the supernatural were ruled out, did not seem plausible, for no shock had been recorded by any seismograph. The public was fairly well satisfied when the experts informed them that it *had* been an earthquake, but an earthquake of a very special sort which they had labeled a "vertical-montiform seismic variant."

## THE HOUSE IN THE AVENUE VICTOR HUGO

The Hyde Park incident was followed by a considerable number of similar occurrences, which attracted much less public attention because they caused no human fatalities. But at different points these strange mounds were seen taking shape with the same swiftness, each of them bordered

by a precipice with sheer, clean-cut fall. In certain places these hills are still in existence: as for instance the one in the plain of Ayen in Périgord, that of Roznov in Wallachia, and that of Itapura in Brazil.

But the mysterious spade which was thus apparently wielded on bare land was now, alas, to attack human erections.

About midday on April 24, a strange noise, compared by some who heard it to that of a whizzing blade, by others to that of an extremely fine and powerful water jet, astonished the passersby in the region of Paris bounded approximately by the Arc de Triomphe, the Avenue de la Grande Armée, the Avenue Marceau, and the Avenue Henri Martin.

People happening to be opposite the building known as 66 Avenue Victor Hugo saw an enormous oblique cleft appear across it; the house was shaken by two or three tremors, and suddenly the whole of the top story, occupied by the servants' rooms, seemed to crumble away as if under powerful pressure. The frenzied inhabitants appeared at the windows and on the balconies. Fortunately, although the building was literally cut in two, it did not collapse. Halfway up the staircase the rescuers came upon the fissure produced by the invisible instrument. It looked exactly as if a blade had cut through the wood of the steps, the carpet, the metal balustrade, following a line at right angles to these. Everything in its path—furniture, carpets, pictures, books—had been cut in two with a clean stroke, very neatly. By a miracle nobody was injured. A girl sleeping on the third floor found her bed sliced obliquely across; but the cut had just missed her. She had felt no pain, but did experience a shock like that of a weak electric battery.

In this case, too, there were numerous explanations. The word "seismic" was again produced. Certain newspapers accused the architect and proprietor of the building of having used faulty materials in its construction. A Communist deputy raised the question in the Chamber.

## THE TRANSPORTATION PHENOMENA

Like the Hyde Park occurrence, the accident in the Avenue Victor Hugo was followed by several almost identical in kind, which we shall not recount, but which ought, as we now see, to have convinced observant minds of a hidden will engaged in the furtherance of a definite plan. In numerous countries, houses, great and small, were sundered by an invisible force. Several farmhouses, one in Massachusetts, another in Denmark, another in Spain, were raised into the air and dropped back onto the ground, smashed to pieces with their inhabitants. The French Building in New York was cut in two. About fifty men and women met their deaths in these occurrences, but as they took place in very different countries, each isolated case being responsible only for a few victims, and also as nobody could provide an explanation, very little was said about them.

It was different with the subsequent series of happenings which kept the whole planet in a ferment of excitement throughout May and June, 1954. The first victim was a young Negress of Hartford, Connecticut, who was leaving her employers' house one morning when a postman, the sole witness of the accident, saw her suddenly soar into the air, uttering terrible cries. She rose to a height of three hundred feet and then crashed to the ground. The postman declared that he had seen no aerial apparatus of any sort overhead.

The second case of "transportation" was that of a customs official at Calais, who was also seen rising vertically and disappearing at high speed toward the English coast. A few minutes later he was found on the Dover cliffs, dead, but with no visible injuries. He looked as if he had been laid gently down on the ground; he was blue, like a man hanged.

Then began the period of the so-called "successful transportations." The first victim to arrive living at the end of



his journey was an aged beggar, who was seized by an invisible hand when he was begging for alms in front of Notre Dame, and ten minutes later was deposited in the middle of Piccadilly Circus at the feet of a stupefied policeman. He had not suffered at all, and had the impression of having been conveyed in a closed cabin to which neither wind nor light could penetrate. Eyewitnesses of his departure had observed that he became invisible immediately after he was raised from the ground.

For several weeks longer these "transportations" continued. Once they were known to be quite harmless, they were regarded as rather comical. The choice of the invisible hand seemed to be completely whimsical. Once it was a little girl of Denver, Colorado, who found herself set down in a Russian steppe; another time a Saragossa dentist turned up in Stockholm. The "transportation" which caused most talk was that of the venerable President of the French Senate, M. Paul Reynaud, who was picked up in the Luxembourg Gardens and deposited on the shore of Lake Ontario. He took the opportunity of making a journey through Canada, was triumphantly welcomed back at the Bois de Boulogne station, and this unsought publicity was probably largely responsible for his election as President of the Republic, in 1956.

It should be noted that, after their journeys, the subjects of "transportation" were smeared with a reddish liquid that stained their clothing, for no ascertainable reason. This was the only inconvenience of these otherwise harmless adventures. After about two months they ceased, to be followed by a new and still stranger series which began with the famous episode of the "Two Couples."

## THE "TWO COUPLES" EPISODE

The first of the two famous couples was a French one, living in a small house close to Paris, in Neuilly. The husband, Jacques Martin, was on the teaching staff of the Lycée Pasteur, a sporting and scholarly young man, and

the author of a remarkable biographical study on Paul Morand. He and his wife had four children. On July 3, toward midnight, Mme. Martin had just fallen asleep when she heard that steamlike whistling which we have already mentioned, felt a slight shaking, and had the impression of being very rapidly raised into the air. Opening her eyes, she was stupefied to see that the pale light of the moon was flooding her room, a whole wall of which had vanished, that she was lying on the edge of a bed cut in two, and that on her left hand, where her husband had been lying a few second before, there was a bottomless gulf, above which the stars were glittering. She flung herself in terror toward the still solid edge of the bed, and was amazed (and at the same time reassured) to find that it did not wobble, although it was left with only two legs. Mme. Martin felt that she was rising no higher, but was being moved very fast in a straight line; then she was made aware, by a feeling in the heart like that which one has in a lift descending too quickly, that she was dropping. Imagining that her fall would end with a crash, she had already closed her eyes in anticipation of the final shock. But it was gentle and elastic, and when she looked around her, she could see nothing. The room was dark. Her own narrative continues:

"I put out my arm; everything was solid. The abyss had apparently closed up again. I called my husband's name, thinking that I had been passing through a nightmare and feeling anxious to tell him about it. My groping hand felt a man's arm, and I heard a strong unknown voice say in English, 'Oh, my dear, what a fright you gave me!' I started back and wanted to turn on the light, but I could not find the electric switch. 'What's wrong?' said the unknown. He himself turned on a light. We both uttered simultaneous cries. In front of me was a fair-haired young Englishman, with a small short nose, rather shortsighted, and still half asleep, in blue pajamas. Down the middle of the bed ran a crack; sheets, mattress and bolster were all cut in two. There was a difference of three or four inches in the level of the two portions of the bed.

"When my bedfellow had recovered his wits, his demeanor in these difficult circumstances gave me a high opinion of the British race. After a short but very excusable moment of confusion, his correctness was as complete and natural as if we had been in a drawing room. I spoke his language and told him my name. He told me that his was John Graham. The place we were in was Richmond. Looking around, I saw that the whole of one half of my own room had accompanied me; I recognized my window with its cherry-colored curtains, the large photograph of my husband, the small table with books beside my bed, and even my watch on top of my books. The other half, Mr. Graham's, was unknown to me. On the bedside table there were a portrait of a very pretty woman, photographs of children, some magazines, and a box of cigarettes. John Graham looked at me for a very long time, examining the background against which I had appeared to him, and then said with the utmost seriousness, 'What are you doing here?' I explained that I knew nothing about it, and, pointing to the large portrait, I said, 'This is my husband.' Pointing likewise, he answered, 'This is my wife.' She was delightful, and the disturbing thought came to me that she was perhaps at that very moment in the arms of Jacques. 'Do you suppose,' I asked him, 'that half of your house has been transported to France at the same time as half of ours has come here?' 'Why?' he said. He annoyed me. Why, indeed? I knew nothing about it at all. . . . Because this affair had a sort of natural symmetry of its own.

"'A queer business,' he said, shaking his head. 'How can it be possible?' 'It isn't possible,' I said, 'but it has happened.'

"At this moment cries were heard apparently coming from upstairs, and the same thought struck us: 'The children?' John Graham jumped out of bed and ran barefoot toward a door, the door of *his* half. He opened it, and I could hear cries, the sound of coughing, and then the Englishman's powerful voice mingling oaths with words of comfort. I made haste to rise, and looked in the mirror. My face looked just as usual. I then noticed that my nightdress was

décolleté and looked around for my kimono; but I remembered having hung it in the half of the room which had stayed behind. Standing there in front of the mirror, I heard a pitiable voice behind me.

"The cries in the nursery were redoubled, weeping and appeals mingling with them.

"'Come and help me,' he said in a beseeching tone.

"'Of course I will . . . but have you got your wife's dressing gown, and slippers?'

"'Oh, yes, of course. . . .'

"Handing me his own dressing gown he showed me the way to the nursery. The children were splendid. I managed to soothe them. It was the youngest, a lovely fair baby, who seemed to be suffering most. I comforted him as best I could, and took his hand; he accepted my presence.

"In this way we spent a couple of hours in that room, both in a state of mental anguish, he thinking of his wife, and I of my husband.

"I asked if we could not telephone to the police. He tried, and found that his telephone had been cut off; his radio aerial had also been cut; the house must have been looking extremely odd. When dawn appeared, Mr. Graham went out. The children had fallen asleep. In a few minutes he returned for me, saying that really the front of the house was well worth looking at. And it was! The unknown contriver of this miracle had evidently wanted to pick two houses of the same height divided in the same way, and he had succeeded; but the styles were so different that the combined effect took one's breath away. Our house at Neuilly was of brick, very plain, its tall windows framed with stone; the English house was a small black and white cottage, with wide bay windows. The juxtaposition of these two utterly different halves formed a most ludicrous ensemble—like a harlequin of Picasso's.

"I urged Mr. Graham to put on his clothes and send off a telegram to France to find out what had happened to his wife. He told me that the telegraph office did not open till eight o'clock. He was a stolid creature, apparently incapable of conceiving that in such peculiar circumstances

one could infringe on regulations and awaken the telegraph clerk. I shook him energetically, but in vain. All I could get out of him was 'It only opens at eight.' In the end, about seven o'clock, just when he was going out, we saw a policeman arriving. He was gazing at the house in amazement, and had brought a telegram from the head of the Paris police, asking if I was there and announcing that Mrs. John Graham was safe and sound at Neuilly."

It is not worth while continuing the quotation of this narrative *in extenso*. Suffice it to say that Mrs. Graham tended Mme. Martin's children as devotedly as the latter did the little English ones, that both couples declared themselves charmed by the amiability of their companions in adventure, and that both households remained close friends to their dying days. Mme. Martin was still alive ten years ago, in her family home at Chambourcy (Seine-et-Oise).

The space allotted to this chapter in the general plan of this volume does not allow us to recount the analogous adventures which astonished mankind throughout that month of August, 1954.

The series of "sliced houses" was even longer than that of the "transportations." Over one hundred couples were interchanged in this way, and the changes became a favorite theme with novelists and film writers. An element of whimsical sensuality which was much to the public's taste continued. Besides, it was diverting to see (as it really happened) a queen waking up in a policeman's bed, and a ballet girl in that of the President of the United States. Then the series stopped dead, and 'gave place to another. It looked as if the mysterious beings who amused themselves by disturbing the lives of humans were capricious, and quick to tire of their games.

## THE CAGING

Early in September, the hand whose power was by now known to all the world fell upon some of the finest minds

on its surface. A dozen men, nearly all chemists or physicists, men of the highest achievement, were simultaneously abstracted from different points among the civilized countries and transported to a clearing in the Forest of Fontainebleau.

A group of lads, who had come there in the early hours of the morning to climb the rocks, noticed some old men wandering forlornly among the trees. Seeing that they were in difficulties, the young men tried to approach them to offer help, but were taken aback to find themselves suddenly checked by some transparent but insurmountable resistance. They tried to find a way around the obstacle, but after making a complete circle around the clearing they realized that it was completely ringed by an invisible rampart. One of the scientists was recognized by a few of the youths as their professor, and they called him by name. He did not seem to hear them. Sound could not penetrate the barrier. The celebrated personages were there like caged beasts.

Before very long they seemed to accept the situation. They were observed to be lying down in the sunlight; and then, drawing pieces of paper from their pockets, they began scribbling mathematical formulas and arguing quite cheerfully. One of the young onlookers went off to inform the authorities, and by noon many curious spectators were beginning to come on the scene. By noon the scientists were showing signs of anxiety; they were all of advanced years, and they dragged themselves rather wearily to the edge of the ring, where, seeing that their voices were not reaching anyone, they made signs that they should be supplied with food.

A few officers were present, and one of them had what appeared to be the excellent notion of supplying the unfortunate men with supplies by airplane. A couple of hours later the drone of a motor was heard, and the pilot, passing skillfully over the circular clearing, dropped some packages of food exactly over the center. But, unfortunately, about sixty feet above the ground the packages were seen to stop in their fall, bounce back, and then were left suspended in

midair. The cage had a roof composed of the same invisible radiations.

Toward nightfall the old men became desperate, signaling that they were dying of hunger and dreaded the night chills. The anguished onlookers could do nothing for them. Were they going to witness the perishing of this remarkable assemblage of great intellects?

In the pale light of the dawn it was at first thought that the situation had not changed, but closer examination showed that quite a new setting had appeared in the center of the "cage." The invisible hand had staged things so that the packages dropped by the airplane were now suspended at the end of rope about fifteen feet above the ground, while alongside this rope hung another which actually reached the ground. To any young man it would have been an easy matter to swing himself up and reach the packages that held the hopes of safety. But unhappily there was little likelihood that any of these venerable men of learning could undertake this difficult gymnastic feat. They were seen walking around the ropes and gauging their strength, but none of them ventured further.

A whole day went by in this way. Night fell. Gradually the curious throng melted away. About midnight one young student took it into his head to ascertain whether the barrier of radiations still held. To his great surprise he found nothing barring his way, walked straight on, and uttered a cry of triumph. The cruel powers which had made men their toys for two whole days were consenting to spare their victims. The scientists were fed and warmed, and none of them succumbed.

Such are the chief facts which distinguished this period, at the time inexplicable, but which we now know to have corresponded to a period of experiments on the planet Uranus. We shall now give a few extracts, in our opinion the most interesting, from the book of the famous A.E. 17.

The reader will understand that we have been obliged to find terrestrial equivalents for the Uranian words, and

the translation is only approximate. Uranian time consists of years very much longer than ours, and wherever possible we have made a transposition into terrestrial time. Furthermore, to designate ourselves the Uranians use a word which signifies, roughly, "apterous bipeds"; but this is needlessly complicated, and we have in most places substituted the words "men" or "Earth Dwellers." Similarly, we have translated the queer word by which they designated our cities by the word "manheaps," which gives in our view a fair suggestion of the associations of analogous ideas. Finally, the reader should not overlook the fact that the Uranian, although endowed like ourselves with the sense of sight, is ignorant of sound. Uranians communicate with each other by means of a special organ consisting of a series of small colored lamps which flash on and off. Observing that men were without this organ, and being unable to imagine speech, the Uranian naturally supposed that we were incapable of communicating our ideas to each other.

Here we can offer only a few brief excerpts from the book by A.E. 17 on *Man and His Life*. But we strongly advise the student to read the book in its entirety; there is an excellent school edition published with appendix and notes by Professor Fischer of Peking.

## MAN AND HIS LIFE

By A.E. 17

When the surface of the small planets, particularly that of the Earth, is examined through an ordinary telescope, large stains may be noticed, more streaky in texture than those formed by a lake or ocean. If these stains are observed over a long enough period, they are seen to expand throughout several terrestrial centuries, pass through a period of maximum size, and then diminish, or even in some cases disappear. Many observers have thought that they were related to some unhealthy condition of the soil. And indeed nothing could be more like the development and reabsorption of a tumor in an organism. But with



the invention of the ultratelemicroscope, it has been possible to detect that we are here confronted by an accumulation of living matter. The imperfections of the first apparatus did not allow us to see more than a confused swarming, a sort of throbbing jelly, and excellent observers, such as A. 33, then maintained that these terrestrial colonies were composed of animals joined to each other and living a common existence. With our present apparatus it is at once obvious that things are quite otherwise. The individual creatures can be clearly distinguished, and their movements can be followed. The stains observed by A. 33 are in point of fact huge nests which can almost be compared to Uranian cities and are known to us as "manheaps."

The minute animals inhabiting these towns, Men, are apterous biped animals, with an indifferent electrical system, and generally provided with an artificial epidermis. It was long believed that they secreted this supplementary skin themselves. But my researches enable me to declare that this is not so; they are impelled by a powerful instinct to collect certain animal or vegetable fibers and assemble them in such a way as to form a protection against cold.

I use the word "instinct," and from the outset of this work I must lay stress on a clear indication of my feelings regarding a question which ought never to have been raised and has, especially during recent years, been treated with incredible levity. A curious mode of thought has become habitual among our younger naturalists, in attributing to these terrestrial vegetations an intelligence of the same nature as that of the Uranian. Let us leave to others the task of pointing out the distressing nature of such doctrine from the religious point of view. In this book I shall show its absurdity from only the scientific point of view. No doubt the beauty of the spectacle rouses a quite excusable enthusiasm when one views for the first time under the microscope one of these particles of jelly, and suddenly sees the unfolding of countless lively and interesting scenes—the long streets along which Men pass to and fro, sometimes stopping and apparently exchanging speech; or the small individual nest in which a couple keep watch over a

brood of young; or armies on the march; or builders at their work. . . . But for a profitable study of the psychic faculties of these animals, it is not enough to profit by the circumstances that chance affords the observer. It is essential to know how to procure the most favorable conditions of observation, and to vary these as much as possible. It is necessary, in a word, to experiment, and thus to build up science on the solid base of fact.

This is what we have sought to do in the course of the long series of experiments reported here. Before embarking on their description I must ask the reader to imagine and to gauge the immense difficulties which such a project was bound to present. Long-distance experiment, no doubt, has become relatively easy since we had at our disposal the W rays, which enable us to grasp, handle, and even transport bodies through interstellar space. But in dealing with creatures so small and fragile as Men, the W rays are very clumsy and brutal instruments. In our first tests it turned out only too often that we killed the animals we desired to observe. Transmitting appliances of extraordinary sensitiveness were required to enable us to reach exactly the point aimed at, and to treat the sensitive matter with the necessary delicacy. In particular, when first carrying out the transference of Men from one point to another on terrestrial territory, we omitted to take full account of these animals' respiratory difficulties. We made them move too rapidly across a thin layer of air which envelops the Earth, and they died of asphyxiation. We had to construct a real box of rays, inside which the swiftness of transportation produced no effect. Similarly, when we first attempted the bisection and transference of nests, we did not make sufficient allowance for the constructional processes used by the Earth Dwellers. Experience taught us to prop up the nests after their division, by the passage of certain massive currents of rays.

The reader will find here a sketch map of that portion of the terrestrial surface on which our main experiments were carried out. We would ask him particularly to note the two great manheaps on which we made our first tests,

and to which we gave the names, later adopted by the astrosociologists, of "Mad Manheap" and "Rigid Manheap."

These names we chose on account of the singularly differing plans of these manheaps, one of which at once impresses the observer by its almost geometrical star patterns of roadways, while the other is a complex maze of rather tortuous streets. Between "Mad Manheap" and "Rigid Manheap" stretches a gleaming line which is believed to be sea. The greatest manheap on the Earth is "Geometrical Manheap," which is even more regular than "Rigid Manheap"; but is far distant from the other two, and separated from them by a wider gleaming surface.

## FIRST ATTEMPTS

At what point of the Earth was it best to direct our first efforts? How must we interfere with the lives of these animals in such a way as to obtain instructive reactions from them? I must confess to real emotion when I prepared for the first time to operate on the Earth, armed with an apparatus of adequate range.

I had around me four of my young pupils, who were also deeply moved, and in turn we gazed at the charming miniature landscapes in the ultratelemicroscope. Aiming the apparatus at the "Mad Manheap," we sought a fairly open locality so as to see the consequences of our action more clearly. Tiny trees gleamed in the spring sunshine, and multitudes of small motionless insects could be seen forming irregular circles; in the middle of each of these stood an isolated insect. For a moment we speculated on the meaning of this game, but failing to find one, we decided to try an application of the rays. The effect was staggering. A hole was scooped in the ground; some of the insects were buried under the debris; and instantly an astounding activity was loosed. It really looked as if these creatures were intelligently organized. Some went to the rescue of their overwhelmed companions, others went off to get help. We then

tried applying the rays on several points of the Earth, but this time we chose uninhabited areas, so as not to endanger our subjects at the very beginning of our researches. We thus learned how to reduce the power of our rays, and to operate more skillfully. Being now sure of our means of action, we decided to start the first series of our experiments.

It was my plan to take individuals in a certain manheap, mark them with a touch of a brush, transport them to different points, and then observe whether the transported individuals would find their way back to the original manheap. At first, as I have said, we encountered great difficulties, first because the animals died during transference, and then because we had neglected to take into account the artificial epidermis with which these creatures provide themselves. They doff these coverings with the utmost ease, and so once we had set them down again in the midst of a manheap, we lost sight of them. For the subsequent transportations we tried to mark them directly on the body, tearing off the supplementary skin; but in these cases the animal made itself a new skin as soon as it arrived in the manheap.

With a little practice my assistants were at last able to follow one particular animal with the ultratelemicroscope and keep it constantly in sight. They found that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the man returns to his starting point. I attempted the transference of two males from the same manheap—the “Mad Manheap”—with the extremely remote one which we termed the “Geometrical Manheap.” After ten (terrestrial) days my esteemed pupil E.X. 33, who had followed them night and day with incomparable devotion, showed me them returning to the “Rigid Manheap.” They had come back, notwithstanding the fact of their unfamiliarity with the places to which I had transported them; they were individuals of stay-at-home habit (we had kept them under long observation), who were obviously seeing for the first time the country where we had deposited them. How did they find the way back? Their transference had been so rapid that observation was out of the question. What was their guide? Certainly not memory, but a special faculty which we must confine our-

selves to noting without claiming to explain it, so remote is it from anything in our own psychology.

These transferences raised another problem. Would the returning individual be recognized by the others? Apparently he is. Generally speaking, great excitement is to be seen in the nest when the absent one reappears. The others place their arms around him, and sometimes even place their lips on his. In certain cases, however, the feelings manifested appeared to be those of rage or displeasure.

The first experiments showed that some instinct enables Men to recognize their own manheaps. The second problem to which we turned was to find out whether, among these creatures, there existed sentiments akin to those of Uranians, and whether, for instance, conjugal or maternal love could exist on the Earth. Such an hypothesis struck me as absurd; it attributed to the Earth Dweller refinements of feeling which the Uranian has attained only through millions of years of civilization. But the duty of the experimental scientist is to approach his subject with an open mind, and to make all his experiments without any prejudice regarding their outcome.

At night the male Earth Dweller generally rests beside his female. I asked my pupils to bisect some nests in such a way as to separate the male from the female without injuring either, and then to join up one half of Nest A with the half of Nest B, observing whether the little animals took notice of the change. For the experiment to be carried out under normal conditions, it was essential that the selected nests should closely resemble each other; and for this reason I instructed my collaborators to select two nests containing cells of the same size and broods with the same number of young. E.X. 33 showed me, not without pride, two almost identical nests in the "Mad Manheap" and the "Rigid Manheap," each of them containing a couple with four little ones. The bisection of the houses, and their transportation, were carried out with admirable skill by E.X. 33, and the results were conclusive. In both cases the couples thus artificially put together by us showed slight

surprise at the moment of waking, adequately accounted for by the movement and shock. Then, in both cases, they remained together with no attempt at flight, and in apparently normal attitudes. An almost incredible fact was that, from the very first moment, each of the two females tended the other's brood with no sign of horror or distaste. They were plainly incapable of realizing that they were not dealing with their own offspring.

This experiment was repeated on numerous occasions. In 93 per cent of cases, the nests and offspring were tended by both couples. The female retains a stubborn sense of her proper functions, without having any idea of the individuals toward which she performs this duty. Whether the children are hers or not, she toils with equal fervor. It might be thought that this confusion is caused by a close resemblance between the two nests; but at different stages we chose nests of quite different appearances, joining up, for instance, the half of a shabby nest with the half of a rich nest of a different species. The results were more or less the same; Man does not distinguish between his own cell and another.

Having thus shown that in the matter of sentiment the Earth Dweller is an animal occupying a very low place in the scale of creation, we sought an appropriate means of gauging his intellectual faculties. The simplest way, it seemed to us, was to isolate a few individuals in a ray cage, and to put at their disposal food which could only be reached by means of more and more complex actions. I took particular pains to choose for this experiment certain Earth Dwellers for whom my colleague X. 38 claimed signs of scientific intelligence. In Appendix A will be found the details of this experiment. It showed beyond any possible doubt that the space of time within which Man lives is extremely limited in the past and future, that he immediately forgets, and that he is incapable of imagining the simplest method of self-preservation as soon as he is confronted by problems slightly different from those which he has, by heredity, become used to solving.

After a long period of experimenting on individual Earth

Dwellers, my pupils and I became familiar enough with the movements of these animals to be able to observe them in their ordinary life without intervention on our part. It is of the utmost interest to follow, as I have done, the history of a manheap through several terrestrial years.

The origin of these human societies is unknown. Why and how did these animals abandon their freedom to become slaves of the manheap? We cannot tell. It may be that in this grouping process they found a support in warfare against other creatures and against natural forces; but it is a support for which they pay highly. No animal species is so ignorant as this one of leisure and the joy of living. In the great manheaps, and particularly the "Geometrical Manheap," activity begins at dawn and is prolonged through part of the night. Were this activity necessary, it would be comprehensible; but Man is a creature of such limited nature, so much dominated by his instincts, that he produces hardly anything beyond his requirements. Over and over again have I seen objects accumulating in the reserve stores of a manheap in such numbers that they seemed to be a source of embarrassment; and yet, only a short distance away, another group would continue to manufacture the very same objects.

Little is also known of the division of Mankind into castes. It is established that certain of these animals till the soil and produce nearly all the foodstuffs, while others make the supplementary skins or build nests, and others seem to do nothing but move swiftly to and fro over the planet's surface, eating and coupling. Why do the first two classes consent to clothe and feed the third? That remains obscure to me. E.X. 33 has written a notable thesis seeking to prove that this tolerance has a sexual origin. He has shown that at night, when the individuals of the superior caste foregather, the workers collect around the entrances to these festivities in order to see the half-nude females. According to him, the compensation of the sacrificed classes consists of the aesthetic pleasure provided by the spectacle of these easy existences. The theory strikes me as ingenious, but not so firmly based as to convince me of its truth.

For my own part, I would rather seek an explanation in Man's amazing stupidity. It is a supreme folly to be forever seeking to explain the actions of Men by Uranian reasonings. That is wrong, profoundly wrong. Man is not guided by a free intelligence. Man obeys a fatal and unconscious incitement; he cannot choose what he shall do; he slides along haphazard, following an irresistible predetermined slope which will bring him to his goal. I amused myself by following the individual existences of certain Men in whom the functions of love seemed to be the essentials of their existence. I saw how the conquest of one female to start with brought upon his shoulders all the burdens of nests and young; but, not content with that first load, my male would go off in search of a second mate, for whom he set up a new nest. These simultaneous love affairs led the wretched animal into endless battles of which I was the spectator. It mattered nothing to him; his successive woes seemed to hold no lessons for him, and he went on putting his head into his wretched adventures without seeming to be one whit the wiser after the third than after the first.

One of the strangest proofs of this inability to keep contact with the past and imagine the future was afforded me by the frightful struggles which I witnessed between individuals of one and the same species. On Uranus it would seem a grotesque idea that one group of Uranians could attack another group, hurling on it projectiles meant to injure it, and trying to asphyxiate it with poisonous gases.

That is what happened on the Earth. Within a few terrestrial years my observation showed me compact masses of men thus confronting each other, now in one corner of that planet, now in another. Sometimes they fought in the open; sometimes they crouched in earthworks and strove to demolish the adjoining earthworks by showering heavy lumps of metal on them. Note that they themselves were at the same time peppered in the same way. It is a hideous and ridiculous sight. The scenes of horror which one witnesses at these times are such that if these creatures had



the slightest faculty for remembering, they would avoid their recurrence for at least several generations. But in the course of even their brief lifetimes, the same men will be seen plunging madly into the same murderous escapades.

Another striking example of this blind subservience of Man to instinct is to be seen in his habit of tirelessly rebuilding manheaps at certain points of the planet where they are fated to destruction. Thus, for instance, I have attentively watched a very populous island where, within eight years, all the nests were destroyed three times by tremors of the outer coating of the Earth. To any sensible observer it is plain that the animals living in these parts ought to migrate. They do nothing of the sort, but pick up once more, with a positively ritual action, the same pieces of wood or iron, and zealously rebuild a manheap which will once more be destroyed in the following year. But, say my critics, however absurd the goal of this activity, it remains true that the activity is regulated, and proves the existence of a directing power, a spirit. Again, a mistaken idea! The swarming of Men disturbed by an earthquake, as I have shown, resembles the movement of gaseous molecules. If the latter be observed individually, they are seen to describe irregular and complicated trajectories, but in combination their great number produces effects of decided simplicity. Similarly, if we demolish a manheap, thousands of insects collide with each other, hamper each other's movements, and show every sign of disorganized excitement; and yet, after a certain time, the manheap is discovered to be built up again.

Such is the strange intellect in which it is now fashionable to see a replica of Uranian reason! But fashion passes, facts remain; and the facts are bringing us back to the good old beliefs regarding the Uranian soul and its privileged destiny. For my own part, I shall be happy if my few experiments, modestly and prudently carried out, have helped toward the downfall of pernicious teachings, and restored these animals to their proper place in the scale of creatures. Curious and worthy of study they certainly are;

but the very naïveté and incoherence of Man's behavior must force us to bear in mind how great is the gulf fixed by the Creator between bestial instinct and Uranian soul.

## DEATH OF A.E. 17

Happily, A.E. 17 died before he could witness the first interplanetary war, the establishment of relations between Uranus and the Earth, and the ruin of all his work. His great renown endured to his last days. He was a simple, kindly Uranian, who showed vexation only when contradicted. To ourselves it is an interesting fact that the monument erected to his memory on Uranus bears on its plinth a bas-relief designed from a telephotographic picture showing a swarming mass of men and women. Its background is strongly reminiscent of Fifth Avenue.

*In his introduction to The Earth Dwellers, M. Maurois mentions a book which delighted and exasperated me when I read it: Jean Henri Fabre's essays on the "social insects."*

*"He described some extraordinary feats performed by insects, and kept on warning the reader: 'Do not believe there is any intelligence in all that. It's just instinct. Bees have no patriotism with regard to the beehive nor ants toward the anthill.'" And in an epilogue, Jacques Choron adds a quotation from Bertrand Russell: "... animals behave in a manner showing the rightness of the views of the man who observes them."*

*Which brings us back to the more advanced sport of watcher-watching. "The Nobel Prize Winners" is a long hard look at some engineers and scientists, by a scientist and engineer. W. J. J. Gordon, besides being the author of occasional brilliant farcical fiction in the Atlantic, is a lecturer in the Engineering Department of Applied Physics at Harvard, and also President of Syntectics, Inc., a "consulting firm concerned with augmenting the creative output of industrial research organizations."*

# THE NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS

**W. J. J. Gordon**

*from The Atlantic Monthly*

We were due in Portland, Oregon, at 9:00 A.M. their time, so I made a point of getting into the diner for breakfast by 8:00. I ordered prunes, poached eggs, and coffee. Then I looked out the window and thought about last night. What had Dr. Hurlbet called his research division? Research-O-Rama? He was the boss of it—I guess he could call it whatever he wanted; but when you're in my line you have to be more careful. No one wants a metal-fatigue expert to make jokes. I play it very no-jokes, with the pipe and the oracle-type delivery that make a client figure he's getting his consultant service straight from God. Hurlbet is the biggest man in American industrial research, so he can get away with anything. But last night he really took off like a bird. If his picture of industrial research was true, what an indictment! Maybe he'd been fried out of shape last night and would feel like a fool this morning. Or perhaps he wouldn't even remember. I lifted my arm to let the waiter put a clean napkin over my side of the table. It wasn't a napkin. It rustled like paper. Hurlbet! Honest to God, I was embarrassed for him. I didn't look up. I just pulled the piece of paper under my eyes.

A mathematician named Rose  
Could do calculus on her toes;  
IBM hired her,  
Boxed her and wired her,  
And rented her out when they chose.

It was a funny limerick—"calculus on her toes"—a little bitter, though. Still without looking up, I said, "Good morning, Dr. Hurlbet." I heard him pull out the chair at my table and sit down.

"Good morning, Fairley." He was cheery as anything. I sneaked a look at him. There he was, smiling. He remem-

bered last night all right, and he couldn't have cared less. "Perhaps you like this one better," he said:

An ecclesiast named Bob  
Did calculus in his knob.  
So they wired him into  
Original sin to  
Rent to the Pope for a job.

I really didn't plug in, but the sound of it made me laugh out loud. Hurlbet glanced at the menu.

"The tyranny of the egg," he said. He was off again, same as last night. He still had a hex on me.

"The tyranny of what?" There I was, playing straight man for him right off the bat.

"This is a free country, isn't it?" he asked. I got very interested in the prunes and didn't answer. "They say this is a free country, but every morning millions of good citizens are bullied by eggy despotism. What are you having for breakfast?"

"Eggs. Two. Poached. On toast," I said. I wished I had ordered the trout they have on the Northern Pacific.

"See?" said Hurlbet. "You're tyrannized." The waiter came with my eggs and took Hurlbet's order—orange juice, tea, and two boiled eggs. He winked at me. "Me too," he said. "Egg-O-Rama!" That "Me too" of his got me thinking. Last night Hurlbet had told me all about how lousy his research people were, a bunch of nine-to-fivers. Then he said he was sucked up in it himself. And now "Me too" on the eggs. I wondered whether he'd thrown in the sponge and all that was left was cynical jokes.

"I better hurry," I said. "We're nearly there—"

"What time are you due at your first appointment?" asked Hurlbet. I explained that I was expected after lunch. "I'd like to hire you for a half day," he said. "How much?" I go at three hundred and fifty a day and two hundred a half day. I told him. "Fine," he said.

"Have you got a metal-fatigue problem?" I asked him. He shook his head.

"Do you think I don't remember last night?" I had a

little trouble getting rid of a prune pit, so he went on. "I told you all about my research laboratory, right?" I was still tonguing around my mouth for the prune pit. I kept nodding like a lunatic. "Did I mention the toilets in the new lab—how elegant they were?" I found the prune pit and bootlegged it onto my plate.

"Have you got a metals problem?" I repeated. Was this one of those no-fee lab visits?

"We must have a metals problem somewhere, but that's not why I'm hiring you. I want to show you around and get your reactions," Hurlbet said.

"Dr. Hurlbet, you know very well there are consulting companies who do nothing but help increase personnel efficiency."

"Dr. Fairley." He copied my tone, but it was all right, not nasty. "I just finished with the biggest in the business. They sent me a high-powered 'task force.' There was a fat man who claimed to be a physicist and talked like Sigmund Freud. He was very intense about 'research operations in terms of the psychoanalytical model.' There was a sociologist who talked like a mathematician. He kept giving me the statistical probabilities of an immigrant inventing the atomic bomb. And there was another man who said he was a chemist, but I couldn't push him beyond expressions like 'in-group,' 'out-group,' and 'the dynamics of innovation.' Do you know how these sophisticated consultants operate, Dr. Fairley?" I didn't know. "They come in and talk to everybody—to me, to my deputies, to group leaders. They're smart, very smart, but they believe everything my people tell them. And you know what's worse? These men on the task force—they never call each other anything but 'Doctor,' by the way—these men are as bad as my people. They're all part of the Research-O-Rama Guild, and they have an agreement about not showing each other up. After about six months of this they presented me with a report eighty pages long, in three parts." I was getting fidgety. We were in the outskirts of Portland already. Dr. Hurlbet let his eggs get cold. "Three parts. Part one said how morale

was good, how comfortable the lab was, how everybody loved me. In fact, except for the parking place, everything was perfect."

"I better get back to my compartment," I said.

"They told me there should be a 'status-oriented' parking space—that's how they talk! Status-oriented, so that senior staff people could leave their cars nearest the lab, with the shortest distance to walk. If I would see to this, I wouldn't have a thing to worry about. Can you meet me on the platform?" I said O.K., I would, and hurried back to my compartment to pack.

The porter had put away my stuff, so all I did was shut the bag. When we pulled in, I overtipped the porter and jumped down onto the platform. There was Dr. Hurlbet. He started right out where he had left off a few minutes back. As we walked down the platform he put his non-bag arm through mine. He had a stride like a Maine guide. I had to hop a couple of times to keep up.

"These personnel consultants made me feel that they were really working for the FBI, that if they cleared me, I should feel good—and I was paying them. Part two of their report said there should be more communication between basic research and development and engineering. It took forty pages to give me the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Let me tell you something, Dr. Fairley. Once the Consult-O-Rama boys zone in on the communication problem, they've got you! And they told me what to do about it. 'Make it better,' they told me." He squinted into the morning sun. Way down the street was a big, low sports car. "There's Mother," he said. That was like him, I thought, calling his wife "Mother." I wondered what she'd be like. He was lean and tough. She ought to be on the plump side. What the hell! I know my Rockwell Kent.

"But part three was lovely." He took a step out in front of me. I had to stop quickly to avoid bumping into him. "They suggested I remove one particular person because he didn't have 'growth potential,' because he was not 'scien-

tifically sophisticated.' They wanted to be sure that a 'certain level of technical competence' was maintained. The person they wanted me to get rid of is the only man in the lab who really pushes his nose right down there and produces. But he isn't a guild member, no Ph.D., so they dared attack him. Here we are." Dr. Hurlbet opened the trunk of the snappy car. He threw in his bag and reached for mine, gently. He smiled at me. He was asking whether I'd come out to his lab with him. I let him take my bag, and he said, "Good."

When two people who are fond of each other meet after a considerable separation it makes me nervous to be around. Dr. Hurlbet hadn't seen his wife for quite a while, so I fiddled in the trunk, giving them time to say hello. But he hailed me from up front. "They'll ride all right, Dr. Fairley. The lab's only a couple of miles from here."

I slammed shut the trunk and stepped around to the front. "This is Mother. Dr. Fairley—Mother." The car was so low that I simply stuck my arm in the window and waited for a handshake.

"How do you do, Mrs. Hurlbet?" I couldn't find her. I was waving my hand around inside hoping she'd grab it before I hit her in the teeth. She did. For an older woman, she had quite a grip. I couldn't get a look at her until I fitted myself into the little buckboard seat in the back. Dr. Hurlbet got in the front alongside Mother, who stayed behind the wheel. He put his arm around her and drew her close. They kissed. Man! It was like an old movie. A real kiss. Not just hello. It was sexy. I squirmed a little. Then I got a good look at 'Mother.' What a bimbo! About forty, full lips and everything. Hurlbet was at least sixty, but these two had what they call a Relationship.

She put the car in gear, and they held hands—not à la St. Petersburg, Florida; shuffleboard; retirement for older citizens. I mean they *held hands*. The old man and the bimbo. She was fine. A nice laugh and easy way. She was wearing a big diamond bracelet and driving the fancy car. Maybe Dr. Hurlbet was disgusted with his research personnel, but he wasn't starving. And with Mother to support,

he had better not throw up the whole thing and go back to inventing in a cellar. They talked about kids and ponies till we got to the lab.

The lab! It was out in the country. A lot of lawn to cut. A monument to research. Out in front some sculptor had nailed together a thing about thirty feet tall—big balls, all connected with rods. Great! It was an outsize molecular model. Mother let us off in front of a glass-and-aluminum entrance. I gathered up my bag and said good-bye to her. There was a man who opened the door for us and touched his hat to Hurlbet. Like El Morocco. We hurried down the hall to Hurlbet's office. His secretary swarmed all over him, wanting to know if he had a good trip and how things were in Washington, and had he given her regards to the President, hah, hah. No joke, by the way. He sees the President all the time. He hung up my coat and said, "Follow me." Out we went and turned in at a MEN sign. Hurlbet led me up to a row of w.c.'s.

"Look at the doors," he said. "See? No measly half doors! Down to the floor and up to the ceiling." He knocked on one to show how solid it was, then he went over to the washbasins. "Look at the towels—it's the Ritz! No paper towels in Research-O-Rama. Last night you thought I was exaggerating, didn't you? Come on, I'll show you around." And we left the ritzy men's room.

We were going down the corridor. "I told them we needed a research center, and we've got one—from Cartier's!" Hurlbet waved his hand down the hall. It was spotless and quiet, like a hospital. As we walked along I looked into the open doors. The people were nice and clean in their lab smocks, very serious and busy-busy, and they whispered together. Over each door was the group name: Operations Research, Physics, Organic Chemistry, Inorganic Chemistry, Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering—the works!

"Each group has its own warren, like special rabbits," Hurlbet said. "We keep the strains pure here—and you know what happened to the collie. Its nose got sharper and



its head thinner till its brains were pushed out through its ears. A terrible, terrible thing. But what can I do? They've all got families to support."

An intense young man stopped Hurlbet. He was very excited. "Guess what?" he said, like a kid.

"What?" said Hurlbet.

"You'll never guess," the young man said.

"What?" said Hurlbet.

"We've got the apparatus in the lab set up so we can run six hundred tests a day." The young man's eyes gleamed.

"That's nice. This is Dr. Fairley. Dr. Letter. He's in charge of our Pure Research." I said hello, and Letter kept going.

"We used to squeeze out a measly two hundred tests a day using the old spectrograph," said Letter. "Now we're up to six hundred a day. Beautiful data. Beautiful."

"Very nice," said Hurlbet. "Do you suppose you could ever get up to a thousand tests a day? It would make an interesting paper." The thought of so many beautiful data threw Letter, and he went mumbling down the hall.

Hurlbet turned on me. "It's the equipment," he said. "The damn Research-O-Rama equipment! The minute they're in a jam, my people scream for fancy instruments and tools, big enough to hide behind." I laughed because I thought that was what he was after.

"Don't laugh," Hurlbet said. "That's how we get the big government research jobs. Monumental cyclotrons and well-behaved, competent people to use them. God save us from competence! Isn't there one nut around? I gave a lecture last summer to my staff on the importance of individuality in research. The next morning seven of my people showed up in yachting blazers." He shut his eyes tight the way he does and led me back into the office.

"Who's your best man?" I asked. "The hottest?"

"You mean best-known?"

"All right, best-known."

"Oh, oh! Dr. Fairley, so you don't think we've got any big names?"

I happened to be looking at Hurlbet's desk. It didn't have a paper on it. The ashtray was a pond lily sitting on a spotless lake. He noticed my sudden interest in the desk.

"Oh, yes, my secretary read in *Fortune* that top executives—she loves that word 'top'—should never look messy-busy." He leaned over his desk to get nearer me. "About the big names. A couple of years ago at a board of directors meeting—I'm on the board. I'm the dean of research directors, don't you know that?" I said that I knew that, and he said that was better, because he hoped he hadn't worked forty years for nothing. After all, what other research director had a clean desk? He winked at me again in that warm style of his, and I would have signed anything.

"At the board meeting," he went on, "they asked me why I didn't have any great men around to sort of dress up the lab a bit. They wanted the star system, like the movies. So I hired Cole and Hart, the Nobel Prize winners. Now we have our own private Nobel Prize winners in residence."

I'd heard of Cole and Hart. About twenty years ago the two of them had done some great hormone work. I remembered seeing their pictures. Beards and vests. Old-school Nobel Prize winners! Venerable—not the young crew cuts you see today. But what the hell were they doing here?

"Aren't Cole and Hart old men?" I asked.

"They have a little age on them, yes," said Hurlbet.

"And aren't they biologists—in this lab?"

"Certainly they're biologists!" said Hurlbet. "In the first place, what does the board of directors know? In the second place, Cole and Hart were way past their prime, so I got what you might term a good buy. But a funny thing happened, Fairley. The two old codgers are a gold mine."

I pointed out that Cole and Hart hadn't published anything in twenty years and wanted to know if they were about to make a breakthrough.

"Of course not," said Hurlbet. "But look here. This lab is funded from the Defense Department—almost all of it, that is. You must show competence—not brilliance, not commitment, but competence. 'Competence' means that

in your research stable you have personnel with academic backgrounds in the technical areas implied by a research contract. Never mind whether these personnel bother to roll out of bed in the morning. Their degrees must appear on a laundry list of people who will make up the task force. The Defense Department loves the expression 'task force.' They eat it up."

Hurlbet was climbing away from me again. He kept doing that. "I still don't see what you need biologists for," I said.

"Ah, ah!" he said. He put his finger alongside his nose like a mock Santa. "Up there"—he raised his eyes—"there's the moon. Right?"

"Right," I said. I really loved this guy.

"Right," he said. "It's going to take a long time to get there. Right?"

"Right," I said. Hurlbet was great. Even if he did have me playing straight man again.

"Right," he said. "And people have to live, survive, endure. Right?"

I nodded. He lifted his arm. "That's what I mean. Biology. Those two old Nobel-O-Rama gentlemen have put me over the top on contracts more than once. Star system." It turns out that with Nobel Prize winners' names on the billing, Hurlbet snatches the front money. He looked at me hard. "It's a terrible thing, technical competence. Come on down and meet them, they're a grand pair."

Dr. Hurlbet led me out of the office and down the hall. There were loudspeakers squeaking people's names, but I noticed some men had little units in the breast pockets of their Hollywood white lab jackets.

"What are those little things?" I pointed to a guy with one.

"That's the latest thing in status around here," Hurlbet said. "My deputies just sold me on the idea. Research personnel rating as senior staff and above don't get called on the loudspeaker. They get contacted by their own private intercom. Honest to God, Fairley! They've got me. I can't

stop it. You tell me how, and I'll stop it, but I don't know how." He shook his head. I felt sorry for him again, like last night. Here he was, the biggest in his field. He put his hand on a knob of a door with an opaque glass top.

"Get ready. Here are Cole and Hart."

He opened the door into a room about sixty by thirty feet. Spotless. Ready for an appendectomy. That sterile. And the equipment. A vacuum pump was going *phoom, phoom, phoom*. And green liquid was having a hell of a trip for itself up and down a row of glass tubes. There was more damn bubbling and complicated splashing than in *Jekyll and Hyde*. A long row of stainless steel animal cages, doors open. The floor was covered with white mice, a few dogs, and some rabbits.

"Follow me," said Hurlbet. He waded through the animals to the end of the lab, where there was a kind of tiny living room. A pipe rack, bookcases, easy chairs, and a fireplace. Two old men were sitting next to each other; they both had canes. One of them had a lapful of bread, and he was feeding the animals.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said Hurlbet.

The old man with the bread jumped. His body was obese, little and fat, but long, thin legs stuck out from him stiffly. Like a drugged spider.

"Dr. Cole," said Hurlbet, "I'd like you to meet Dr. Fairley."

I shook hands with Dr. Cole, who leaned forward but didn't get up. "And this is Dr. Hart." A guy about seven feet tall wound out of his armchair with lots of cane work. He didn't weigh a hundred and thirty pounds.

"A pleasure to have you here, Dr. Fairley," said Dr. Hart.

Dr. Cole didn't even turn around. "Sam," he said to Hurlbet. "Is this young man with us?" I thought he wondered if I was on the staff, but Hurlbet's answer made me see they had a code going.

"He's all right," said Hurlbet.

"Thank God!" said Dr. Cole. "I really didn't feel like a floor show this morning. Besides, I let everybody out for

a romp." He fed a piece of bread to a fat dog. Dr. Hart sat down again. Hurlbet and I went around and used chairs alongside the fire. The old men with the canes were sitting facing directly into the fire.

"Did you like yesterday's performance? It started slowly, but how about the finish? How about that nonsense on 'The Mathematics of Life-from-not-life'?" Dr. Cole's feet were hidden in a swirl of animals. The mice piled themselves up in mounds that kept toppling when the dogs nuzzled them. The rabbits hopped around, absentmindedly bumping into the chairs and other rabbits and mice and dogs. But there was no squeaking or barking. Just a lot of scuffling. Suddenly one of the dogs separated his back legs and raised his tail. In a flash Dr. Hart snatched a big glass ashtray off a table and caught the droppings. He moved like an outfielder. But his face squeezed with pain, and I knew his sudden movement hurt. Still, he was proud he had made the play. He put the ashtray back on the table with a professional flourish.

"Dr. Hart, I've never seen you in better form," said Hurlbet, "but let me tell you something funny." He turned to Dr. Cole. "You made a little trouble for me. The space people want a rush proposal for research based on your 'Mathematics of Life-from-not-life.'"

"See, Cole, I've warned you and warned you and warned you." Dr. Hart leaned over to give Dr. Cole's cane a sharp rap with the tip of his cane. The nearest animals were startled. Two mounds of white mice fell. Dr. Cole tapped back with his cane.

"Your jokes have gotten us in trouble at last. You've lost your dignity, sir. We are Nobel men, after all!" And Dr. Hart returned Dr. Cole's tap.

"The trouble with you, Hart"—another sharp tap, cane tip against cane tip—"is that you've no feel for show business."

"That's just cheap!" said Dr. Hart, and he gave Dr. Cole's cane a good sharp crack. "Cheap! Both of us!" Now the tapping was continuous, with canes scraping back and forth in battle, never getting off the floor. Only the tips in

action. I looked over at Hurlbet to see how he was taking all this. He was wearing that sad smile of his, but he was relaxed. So I sat back.

"What would you rather have us do?" asked Dr. Cole with a long sigh. "Look here, Hart. I'm seventy-six and you're sixty-nine. Do you think we've got another Nobel Prize in us?" The cane tapping stopped. "What bothers you the most? Please tell me!"

Without looking around, Dr. Hart put his cane over his shoulder and jabbed it at the colored liquid bubbling in the big glass tubes. "That fake stage set," he said.

"Don't you think it's pretty?" asked Dr. Cole.

"It's a fake, it just bubbles around and around. It's a damn lie." Dr. Hart was yelling. "The same with the animals. They're just pets. Not one of them has served science."

"All right," said Dr. Cole. "Do you know of a home for old Nobel Prize winners?"

"Very funny, Dr. Cole. Very funny. Have you no sense of form?" He banged his cane tip down on his partner's. A good whack this time. "No dignity?"

That was the ball game, right there! Cole returned the whack, and the two old men went at it, never leaving their armchairs. Crack! Crack! Crack! Hurlbet didn't move a muscle even when it really got bad. By now the canes were flashing through the air. Wham! Wham! The two old men started to have trouble breathing. Dr. Hart had the reach, but Dr. Cole was pretty cute at that, catching Hart a couple of good ones up near the hand. They never touched each other—the whole fight was with canes. A flurry, then things slowed down. They were puffing. Finally Cole dropped his cane arm to his side and closed his eyes. He put a hand over his left side. Hart kept his cane at the ready. Cole had probably played possum before. In a minute Hart dropped his arm also. The two old men just sat there, pooped. With his eyes still closed, Cole turned his head toward Hurlbet.

"They are too fat," said Dr. Cole, pushing his cane under a mouse hill, "too fat to serve science." And he threw the

rest of the bread at the animals. "When's the next floor show, Hurlbet? How about doing the whole thing in black-face? Sort of research in Mississippi riverboat style. A period piece."

"God!" said Dr. Hart.

"Oh, Hart," said Cole. "I'm sorry." His cane touched Hart's cane very softly—a kiss. Hart just sat there. The two canes lay on the floor quietly, one tip lying over the other.

"The chairman of the board is flying out here next week," said Hurlbet.

"What does he like?" asked Cole. "Does he like smells?" Hart shook his head. "No class, eh? Well, I guess you're right. Something new. Let me think. Come on, Hart. What'll we give him?"

Hart shook his head. Opened his mouth, then closed it again. No words.

"How about another technical paper—you know, the stuff these young government consultants put out. How's this? 'The Arithmetic of Animal Claustrophobia.' I'll tell you what we'll do for the chairman of the board. Oh, boy, he'll love it. We'll put all the animals in the cages, but the cages will have shades on them. No light. We'll open the cages, and of course the animals will stagger out. Then I'll read a few paragraphs from 'The Arithmetic of Animal Claustrophobia.' How's that for dignity, Hart?" Dr. Hart's hands were clenching and unclenching. Hurlbet broke in as he got to his feet.

"Gentlemen. Dr. Fairley has an appointment crosstown." Cole shook hands sitting down. Hart got up, but he had to push his cane right down between his feet to make it.

"Delighted to meet you, Dr. Fairley," said Hart. "Please excuse us. We're old men, you know." I didn't say anything. I couldn't even look him in the eye.

We went out and up the hall. At a bulletin board, Hurlbet stopped. "Hey, look at this," he said. I glanced along to where I could read a thumbtacked memorandum. It said:

TILL FURTHER NOTICE NO MORE THAN 10 MINUTES WILL BE PERMITTED FOR COFFEE BREAKS. THIS APPLIES TO ALL RESEARCH PERSONNEL.

Signed: Dr. Hurlbet

Dr. Hurlbet took my arm, sighed, and we went back to his office. I didn't say a word as he helped me on with my coat.

"Some edict, eh?" said Hurlbet. I carefully fitted my scarf around my neck. "But that's what it's come to. The mass approach. No coffee and discovery-making talk for these peasants. They wouldn't know what to do with it." He grabbed my arm. "The Russians have done it again."

"And what does that mean?" My coat was on by now. It was warm in there, but when Hurlbet pulled a statement like that, I was a goner.

"What's our biggest effort—research effort, I mean?" he asked.

"The moon shot?" I was guessing, but it had a Washington in-the-know ring to it.

"Right," said Hurlbet. "That means that all the science graduates for the next four years must be dragged into the program. It's that big. You know what I think? I think the Russians aren't ever going for the moon. While we're going broke on the moon shot they'll pick up three dozen more small countries."

"Are you sure—dead sure?" I asked.

"Of course not, but it could be. Not only that, but look at how we attack a research problem. We put an army into it. We hope that enough mediocrity will add up to talent. Me too, by God. I cancel coffee breaks because my people don't know how to use them. So I'm banking on the mass mediocrity too."

"What do you think the Russians are doing?"

"They pretend to use the mass approach, but I bet they work in little competitive teams, the way invention used to work in America in the early days. I tell you, they're making fools out of us."

"Well, thank you for showing me around, sir. I don't feel I earned any fee."



"You see what we've come to, and I don't know how to stop it." He hadn't even heard me. He waved an arm around to take in the whole building, toilets and all. "One of these days," he said, "I'll set it on fire and run by the light of it."

I certainly wasn't earning any fee.

"Perhaps I've lost the quality of courage," Hurlbet said. "But I've got responsibilities, too, you know." I thought of Mother and the sports car. I looked at my watch.

"I've got to get going, sir," I said.

Hurlbet grabbed my hand and shook it a long while. "Think about it. What can I do? I'll try anything!" I nodded and went out.

I went down the hall till I got blocked by a cleaning wagon. It was parked in the middle. A janitor took out a mop and went along the corners. A sign on the wagon said "Maintenance Engineering," and there was the Maintenance Engineer himself with the mop.

*In 1954, the late honored Albert Einstein astonished more laymen than fellow-scientists when he said that if he were about to choose a career, "I would not try to become a scientist or scholar or teacher. I would rather choose to be a plumber or peddler. . . ."*

*Norbert Wiener had written, earlier: "...The degradation of the position of the scientist as an independent worker and thinker to that of a morally irresponsible stooge in a science-factory has proceeded even more rapidly and devastatingly than I had expected. . . ."*

*And earlier still, J. Robert Oppenheimer watched the explosion of the first atom bomb at Alamogordo, and could think of nothing but the line from the Bhagavad-Gita: "I am become death—the shatterer of worlds."*

*The quotations are all from Lewis S. Feuer's The Scientific Intellectual (Basic Books, 1963), and his conclusions seem inescapable. The Laugh-O-Rama of Big Business Research is no happenstance; the decline of creative scientific thought is a natural consequence of the compromise—and compromising—of scientists.*

**Science:** A broad inquiry, by means of numerous subsidiary disciplines, into the true nature of the universe. Its chief exponents liken it to humanity in general, whose perpetuation requires the intermittent observation of its own errors.

**Scientism:** The promotion of goods, services, values or decisions

in the name of scientific method. Hence science as practiced. One who practices science is called a *scientist*. The practice allows for a large variety of human inclinations. Scientists are variously idealistic, ambitious, ordinary, academic, practical, foolish, careless, trustworthy, decent, and indecent; some are comic, some tragic, some vulgar, and some are in the grand tradition.

*(The Domesday Dictionary)*

## HOT PLANET

Hal Clement

from *Galaxy*

The wind which had nearly turned the *Albireo's* landing into a disaster instead of a mathematical exercise was still playing tunes about the fins and landing legs as Schlossberg made his way down to Deck Five.

The noise didn't bother him particularly, though the endless seismic tremors made him dislike the ladders. But just now he was able to ignore both. He was curious—though not hopeful.

"Is there anything at all obvious on the last sets of tapes, Joe?"

Mardikian, the geophysicist, shrugged. "Just what you'd expect . . . on a planet which has at least one quake in each fifty-mile-square area every five minutes. You know yourself we had a nice seismic program set up, but when we touched down we found we couldn't carry it out. We've done our best with the natural tremors—incidentally stealing most of the record tapes the other projects would have used. We have a lot of nice information for the computers back home; but it will take all of them to make any sense out of it."

Schlossberg nodded; the words had not been necessary. His astronomical program had been one of those sabotaged by the transfer of tapes to the seismic survey.

"I just hoped," he said. "We each have an idea why Mercury developed an atmosphere during the last few decades, but I guess the high school kids on Earth will know

whether it's right before we do. I'm resigned to living in a chess-type universe—few and simple rules, but infinite combinations of them. But it would be nice to know an answer sometime.”

“So it would. As a matter of fact, I need to know a couple right now. From you. How close to finished are the other programs—or what's left of them?”

“I'm all set,” replied Schlossberg. “I have a couple of instruments still monitoring the sun just in case, but everything in the revised program is on tape.”

“Good. Tom, any use asking you?”

The biologist grimaced. “I've been shown two hundred and sixteen different samples of rock and dust. I have examined in detail twelve crystal growths which looked vaguely like vegetation. Nothing was alive or contained living things by any standards I could conscientiously set.”

Mardikian's gesture might have meant sympathy.

“Camille?”

“I may as well stop now as any time. I'll never be through. Tape didn't make much difference to me, but I wish I knew what weight of specimens I could take home.”

“Eileen?” Mardikian's glance at the stratigrapher took the place of the actual question.

“Cam speaks for me, except that I could have used any more tape you could have spared. What I have is gone.”

“All right, that leaves me, the tape-thief. The last spools are in the seismographs now, and will start running out in seventeen hours. The tractors will start out on their last rounds in sixteen, and should be back in roughly a week. Will, does that give you enough to figure the weights we rockhounds can have on the return trip?”

The *Albireo's* captain nodded. “Close enough. There really hasn't been much question since it became evident we'd find nothing for the mass tanks here. I'll have a really precise check in an hour, but I can tell right now that you have about one and a half metric tons to split up among the three of you.

“Ideal departure time is three hundred ten hours away, as you all know. We can stay here until then, or go into a

parking-and-survey orbit at almost any time before then. You have all the survey you need, I should think, from the other time. But suit yourselves."

"I'd just as soon be space-sick as seasick," remarked Camille Burkett. "I still hate to think that the entire planet is as shivery as the spot we picked."

Willard Rowson smiled. "You researchers told me where to land after ten days in orbit mapping this rockball. I set you just where you asked. If you'd found even five tons of juice we could use in the reaction tanks I could still take you to another one—if you could agree which one. I hate to say 'Don't blame me,' but I can't think of anything else that fits."

"So we sit until the last of the tractors is back with the precious seismo tapes, playing battleship while our back teeth are being shaken out by earthquakes—excuse the word. What a thrill! Glorious adventure!" Zaino, the communications specialist who had been out of a job almost constantly since the landing, spoke sourly. The captain was the only one who saw fit to answer.

"If you want adventure, you made a mistake exploring space. The only space adventures I've heard of are second-hand stories built on guesswork; the people who really had them weren't around to tell about it. Unless Dr. Marini discovers a set of Mercurian monsters at the last minute and they invade the ship or cut off one of the tractors, I'm afraid you'll have to do without adventures." Zaino grimaced.

"That sounds funny coming from a spaceman, Captain. I didn't really mean adventure, though; all I want is something to do besides betting whether the next quake will come in one minute or five. I haven't even had to fix a suit-radio since we touched down. How about my going out with one of the tractors on this last trip, at least?"

"It's all right with me," replied Rowson, "but Dr. Mardikian runs the professional part of this operation. I require that Spurr, Trackman, Hargedon and Aiello go as drivers, since without them even a minor mechanical problem would be more than an adventure. As I recall

it, Dr. Harmon, Dr. Schlossberg, Dr. Marini and Dr. Mardikian are scheduled to go; but if any one of them is willing to let you take his or her place, I certainly don't mind."

The radioman looked around hopefully. The geologists and the biologist shook their heads negatively, firmly and unanimously; but the astronomer pondered for a moment. Zaino watched tensely.

"It may be all right," Schlossberg said at last. "What I want to get is a set of wind, gas pressure, gas temperature and gas composition measures around the route. I didn't expect to be more meteorologist than astronomer when we left Earth, and didn't have exactly the right equipment. Hargedon and Aiello helped me improvise some, and this is the first chance to use it on Darkside. If you can learn what has to be done with it before starting time, though, you are welcome to my place."

The communicator got to his feet fast enough to leave the deck in Mercury's feeble gravity.

"Lead me to it, Doc. I guess I can learn to read a home-made weathervane!"

"Is that merely bragging, or a challenge?" drawled a voice which had not previously joined the discussion. Zaino flushed a bit.

"Sorry, Luigi," he said hastily. "I didn't mean it just that way. But I still think I can run the stuff."

"Likely enough," Aiello replied. "Remember though, it wasn't made just for talking into." Schlossberg, now on his feet, cut in quickly.

"Come on, Arnie. We'll have to suit up to see the equipment; it's outside."

He shepherded the radioman to the hatch at one side of the deck and shooed him down toward the engine and air lock levels. Both were silent for some moments; but safely out of earshot of Deck Five the younger man looked up and spoke.

"You needn't push, Doc. I wasn't going to make anything of it. Luigi was right, and I asked for it." The astronomer slowed a bit in his descent.

"I wasn't really worried," he replied, "but we have several months yet before we can get away from each other, and I don't like talk that could set up grudges. Matter of fact, I'm even a little uneasy about having the girls along, though I'm no misogynist."

"Girls? They're not—"

"There goes your foot again. Even Harmon is about ten years older than you, I suppose. But they're girls to me. What's more important, they no doubt think of themselves as girls."

"Even Dr. Burkett? That is—I mean—"

"Even Dr. Burkett. Here, get into your suit. And maybe you'd better take out the mike. It'll be enough if you can listen for the next hour or two." Zaino made no answer, suspecting with some justice that anything he said would be wrong.

Each made final checks on the other's suit; then they descended one more level to the airlock. This occupied part of the same deck as the fusion plants, below the wings and reaction mass tanks but above the main engine. Its outer door was just barely big enough to admit a space-suited person. Even with the low air pressure carried by spaceships, a large door area meant large total force on jamb, hinges and locks. It opened onto a small balcony from which a ladder led to the ground. The two men paused on the balcony to look over the landscape.

This hadn't changed noticeably since the last time either had been out, though there might have been some small difference in the volcanic cones a couple of miles away to the northeast. The furrows down the sides of these, which looked as though they had been cut by water but were actually bone-dry ash slides, were always undergoing alteration as gas from below kept blowing fresh scoria fragments out of the craters.

The spines—steep, jagged fragments of rock which thrust upward from the plain beyond and to both sides of the cones—seemed dead as ever.

The level surface between the *Albireo* and the cones was more interesting. Mardikian and Schlossberg believed it to

be a lava sheet dating from early in Mercury's history, when more volatile substances still existed in the surface rocks to cut down their viscosity when molten. They supposed that much—perhaps most—of the surface around the "twilight" belt had been flooded by this very liquid lava, which had cooled to a smoother surface than most Earthly lava flows.

How long it had stayed cool they didn't guess. But both men felt sure that Mercury must have periodic upheavals as heat accumulated inside it—heat coming not from radioactivity but from tidal energy. Mercury's orbit is highly eccentric. At perihelion, tidal force tries to pull it apart along the planet-to-sun line, while at aphelion the tidal force is less and the little world's own gravity tries to bring it back to a spherical shape. The real change in form is not great, but a large force working through even a small amount of distance can mean a good deal of energy.

If the energy can't leak out—and Mercury's rocks conduct heat no better than those of Earth—the temperature must rise.

Sooner or later, the men argued, deeply buried rock must fuse to magma. Its liquefaction would let the bulk of the planet give farther under tidal stress, so heat would be generated even faster. Eventually a girdle of magma would have to form far below the crust all around the twilight strip, where the tidal strain would be greatest. Sooner or later this would melt its way to the surface, giving the zone a period of intense volcanic activity and, incidentally, giving the planet a temporary atmosphere.

The idea was reasonable. It had, the astronomer admitted, been suggested long before to account for supposed vulcanism on the moon. It justified the careful examination that Schlossberg and Zaino gave the plain before they descended the ladder; for it made reasonable the occasional changes which were observed to occur in the pattern of cracks weaving over its surface.

No one was certain just how permanent the local surface was—though no one could really justify feeling safer on board the *Albireo* than outside on the lava. If anything really drastic happened, the ship would be no protection.

The sun, hanging just above the horizon slightly to the watcher's right, cast long shadows which made the cracks stand out clearly; as far as either man could see, nothing had changed recently. They descended the ladder carefully—even the best designed space suits are somewhat vulnerable—and made their way to the spot where the tractors were parked.

A sheet-metal fence a dozen feet high and four times as long provided shade, which was more than a luxury this close to the sun. The tractors were parked in this shadow, and beside and between them were piles of equipment and specimens. The apparatus Schlossberg had devised was beside the tractor at the north end of the line, just inside the shaded area.

It was still just inside the shade when they finished, four hours later. Hargedon had joined them during the final hour and helped pack the equipment in the tractor he was to drive. Zaino had had no trouble in learning to make the observations Schlossberg wanted, and the youngster was almost unbearably cocky. Schlossberg hoped, as they returned to the *Albireo*, that no one would murder the communications expert in the next twelve hours. There would be nothing to worry about after the trip started; Hargedon was quite able to keep anyone in his place without being nasty about it. If Zaino had been going with Aiello or Harmon—but he wasn't, and it was pointless to dream up trouble.

And no trouble developed all by itself.

Zaino was not only still alive but still reasonably popular when the first of the tractors set out, carrying Eileen Harmon and Eric Trackman, the *Albireo's* nuclear engineer.

It started more than an hour before the others, since the stratigrapher's drilling program, "done" or not, took extra time. The tractor hummed off to the south, since both Darkside routes required a long detour to pass the chasm to the west. Routes had been worked out from the stereophotos taken during the orbital survey. Even Darkside had been covered fairly well with Uniquantum film under Venus light.



The Harmon-Trackman vehicle was well out of sight when Mardikian and Aiello started out on one of the Brightside routes, and a few minutes later Marini set out on the other with the space-suit technician, Mary Spurr, driving.

Both vehicles disappeared quickly into a valley to the northeast, between the ash cones and a thousand-foot spine which rose just south of them. All the tractors were in good radio contact; Zaino made sure of that before he abandoned the radio watch to Rowson, suited up and joined Hargedon at the remaining one. They climbed in, and Hargedon set it in motion.

At about the same time, the first tractor came into view again, now traveling north on the farther side of the chasm. Hargedon took this as evidence that the route thus far was unchanged, and kicked in highest speed.

The cabin was pretty cramped, even though some of the equipment had been attached outside. The men could not expect much comfort for the next week.

Hargedon was used to the trips, however. He disapproved on principle of people who complained about minor inconveniences such as having to sleep in space suits; fortunately, Zaino's interest and excitement overrode any thought he might have had about discomfort.

This lasted through the time they spent doubling the vast crack in Mercury's crust, driving on a little to the north of the ship on the other side and then turning west toward the dark hemisphere. The route was identical to that of Harmon's machine for some time, though no trace of its passage showed on the hard surface. Then Hargedon angled off toward the southwest. He had driven this run often enough to know it well even without the markers which had been set out with the seismographs. The photographic maps were also aboard. With them, even Zaino had no trouble keeping track of their progress while they remained in sunlight.

However, the sun sank as they traveled west. In two hours its lower rim would have been on the horizon, had they been able to see the horizon; as it was, more of the "sea

level" lava plain was in shadow than not even near the ship, and their route now lay in semidarkness.

The light came from peaks projecting into the sunlight, from scattered skylight which was growing rapidly fainter and from the brighter celestial objects such as Earth. Even with the tractor's lights it was getting harder to spot crevasses and seismometer markers. Zaino quickly found the fun wearing off . . . though his pride made him cover this fact as best he could.

If Hargedon saw this, he said nothing. He set Zaino to picking up every other instrument, as any partner would have, making no allowance for the work the youngster was doing for Schlossberg. This might, of course, have had the purpose of keeping the radioman too busy to think about discomfort. Or it might merely have been Hargedon's idea of normal procedure.

Whatever the cause, Zaino got little chance to use the radio once they had driven into the darkness. He managed only one or two brief talks with those left at the ship.

The talks might have helped his morale, since they certainly must have given the impression that nothing was going on in the ship while at least he had something to do in the tractor. However, this state of affairs did not last. Before the vehicle was four hours out of sight of the *Albireo*, a broadcast by Camille Burkett reached them.

The mineralogist's voice contained at least as much professional enthusiasm as alarm, but everyone listening must have thought promptly of the dubious stability of Mercury's crust. The call was intended for her fellow geologists Mardikian and Harmon. But it interested Zaino at least as much.

"Joe! Eileen! There's a column of what looks like black smoke rising over Northeast Spur. It can't be a real fire, of course; I can't see its point of origin, but if it's the convection current it seems to me the source must be pretty hot. It's the closest thing to a genuine volcano I've seen since we arrived; it's certainly not another of those ash mounds. I should think you'd still be close enough to make it out, Joe. Can you see anything?"

The reply from Mardikian's tractor was inaudible to Zaino and Hargedon, but Burkett's answer made its general tenor plain.

"I hadn't thought of that. Yes, I'd say it was pretty close to the Brightside route. It wouldn't be practical for you to stop your run now to come back to see. You couldn't do much about it anyway. I could go out to have a look and then report to you. If the way back is blocked there'll be plenty of time to work out another." Hargedon and Zaino passed questioning glances at each other during the shorter pause that followed.

"I know there aren't," the voice then went on, responding to the words they could not hear, "but it's only two or three miles, I'd say. Two to the spur and not much farther to where I could see the other side. Enough of the way is in shade so I could make it in a suit easily enough. I can't see calling back either of the Darkside tractors. Their work is just as important as the rest—anyway, Eileen is probably out of range. She hasn't answered yet."

Another pause.

"That's true. Still, it would mean sacrificing that set of seismic records—no, wait. We could go out later for those. And Mel could take his own weather measures on the later trip. There's plenty of time!"

Pause, longer this time.

"You're right, of course. I just wanted to get an early look at this volcano, if it is one. We'll let the others finish their runs, and when you get back you can check the thing from the other side yourself. If it is blocking your way there's time to find an alternate route. We could be doing that from the maps in the meantime, just in case."

Zaino looked again at his companion.

"Isn't that just my luck!" he exclaimed. "I jump at the first chance to get away from being bored to death. The minute I'm safely away, the only interesting thing of the whole operation happens—back at the ship!"

"Who asked to come on this trip?"

"Oh, I'm not blaming anyone but myself. If I'd stayed back there the volcano would have popped out here some-

where, or else waited until we were gone."

"If it is a volcano. Dr. Burkett didn't seem quite sure."

"No, and I'll bet a nickel she's suiting up right now to go out and see. I hope she comes back with something while we're still near enough to hear about it."

Hargedon shrugged. "I suppose it was also just your luck that sent you on a Darkside trip? You know the radio stuff. You knew we couldn't reach as far this way with the radios. Didn't you think of that in advance?"

"I didn't think of it, any more than you would have. It was bad luck, but I'm not grouching about it. Let's get on with this job." Hargedon nodded with approval, and possibly with some surprise, and the tractor hummed on its way.

The darkness deepened around the patches of lava shown by the driving lights; the sky darkened toward a midnight hue, with stars showing ever brighter through it; and radio reception from the *Albireo* began to get spotty. Gas density at the ion layer was high enough so that recombination of molecules with their radiation-freed electrons was rapid. Only occasional streamers of ionized gas reached far over Darkside. As these thinned out, so did radio reception. Camille Burkett's next broadcast came through very poorly.

There was enough in it, however, to seize the attention of the two men in the tractor.

She was saying: "—real all right, and dangerous. It's the . . . thing I ever saw . . . kinds of lava from what looks like . . . same vent. There's high viscosity stuff building a spatter cone to end all spatter cones, and some very thin fluid from somewhere at the bottom. The flow has already blocked the valley used by the Brightside routes and is coming along it. A new return route will have to be found for the tractors that . . . was spreading fast when I saw it. I can't tell how much will come. But unless it stops there's nothing at all to keep the flow away from the ship. It isn't coming fast, but it's coming. I'd advise all tractors to turn back. Captain Rowson reminds me that only one takeoff is possible. If we leave this site, we're committed to leaving Mercury. Arnie and Ren, do you hear me?"

Zaino responded at once. "We got most of it, Doctor. Do you really think the ship is in danger?"

"I don't know. I can only say that *if* this flow continues the ship will have to leave, because this area will sooner or later be covered. I can't guess how likely . . . check further to get some sort of estimate. It's different from any Earthly lava source—maybe you heard—should try to get Eileen and Eric back, too. I can't raise them. I suppose they're well out from under the ion layer by now. Maybe you're close enough to them to catch them with diffracted waves. Try, anyway. Whether you can raise them or not you'd better start back yourself."

Hargedon cut in at this point. "What does Dr. Mardikian say about that? We still have most of the seismometers on this route to visit."

"I think Captain Rowson has the deciding word here, but if it helps your decision Dr. Mardikian has already started back. He hasn't finished his route, either. So hop back here, Ren. And Arnie, put that technical skill you haven't had to use yet to work raising Eileen and Eric."

"What I can do, I will," replied Zaino, "but you'd better tape a recall message and keep it going out on—let's see—band F."

"All right. I'll be ready to check the volcano as soon as you get back. How long?"

"Seven hours—maybe six and a half," replied Hargedon. "We have to be careful."

"Very well. Stay outside when you arrive; I'll want to go right out in the tractor to get a closer look." She cut off.

"And *that* came through clearly enough!" remarked Hargedon as he swung the tractor around. "I've been awake for fourteen hours, driving off and on for ten of them; I'm about to drive for another six; and then I'm to stand by for more."

"Would you like me to do some of the driving?" asked Zaino.

"I guess you'll have to, whether I like it or not," was the rather lukewarm reply. "I'll keep on for a while, though—

until we're back in better light. You get at your radio job."

Zaino tried. Hour after hour he juggled from one band to another. Once he had Hargedon stop while he went out to attach a makeshift antenna which, he hoped, would change his output from broadcast to some sort of beam; after this he kept probing the sky with the "beam," first listening to the *Albireo's* broadcast in an effort to find projecting wisps of ionosphere and then, whenever he thought he had one, switching on his transmitter and driving his own message at it.

Not once did he complain about lack of equipment or remark how much better he could do once he was back at the ship.

Hargedon's silence began to carry an undercurrent of approval not usual in people who spent much time with Zaino. The technician made no further reference to the suggestion of switching drivers. They came in sight of the *Albireo* and doubled the chasm with Hargedon still at the wheel, Zaino still at his radio and both of them still uncertain whether any of the calls had gotten through.

Both had to admit, even before they could see the ship, that Burkett had had a right to be impressed.

The smoke column showed starkly against the sky, blowing back over the tractor and blocking the sunlight which would otherwise have glared into the driver's eyes. Fine particles fell from it in a steady shower; looking back, the men could see tracks left by their vehicle in the deposit which had already fallen.

As they approached the ship the dark pillar grew denser and narrower, while the particles raining from it became coarser. In some places the ash was drifting into fairly deep piles, giving Hargedon some anxiety about possible concealed cracks. The last part of the trip, along the edge of the great chasm and around its end, was really dangerous; cracks running from its sides were definitely spreading. The two men reached the *Albireo* later than Hargedon had promised, and found Burkett waiting impatiently with a pile of apparatus beside her.

She didn't wait for them to get out before starting to organize.

"There isn't much here. We'll take off just enough of what you're carrying to make room for this. No—wait. I'll have to check some of your equipment; I'm going to need one of Milt Schlossberg's gadgets, I think, so leave that on. We'll take—"

"Excuse me, Doctor," cut in Hargedon. "Our suits need servicing, or at least mine will if you want me to drive you. Perhaps Arnie can help you load for a while, if you don't think it's too important for him to get at the radio—"

"Of course. Excuse me. I should have had someone out here to help me with this. You two go on in. Ren, please get back as soon as you can. I can do the work here; none of this stuff is very heavy."

Zaino hesitated as he swung out of the cab. True, there wasn't too much to be moved, and it wasn't very heavy in Mercury's gravity, and he really should be at the radio; but the thirty-nine-year-old mineralogist was a middle-aged lady by his standards, and shouldn't be allowed to carry heavy packages . . .

"Get along, Arnie!" the middle-aged lady interrupted this train of thought. "Eric and Eileen are getting farther away and harder to reach every second you dawdle!"

He got, though he couldn't help looking northeast as he went rather than where he was going.

The towering menace in that direction would have claimed anyone's attention. The pillar of sable ash was rising straighter, as though the wind were having less effect on it. An equally black cone had risen into sight beyond Northeast Spur—a cone that must have grown to some two thousand feet in roughly ten hours. It had far steeper sides than the cinder mounds near it; it couldn't be made of the same loose ash. Perhaps it consisted of half-melted particles which were fusing together as they fell—that might be what Burkett had meant by "spatter-cone." Still, if that were the case, the material fountaining from the cone's top should be lighting the plain with its incandescence rather than casting an inky shadow for its entire height.

Well, that was a problem for the geologists; Zaino climbed aboard and settled to his task.

The trouble was that he could do very little more here than he could in the tractor. He could have improvised longer-wave transmitting coils whose radiations would have diffracted a little more effectively beyond the horizon, but the receiver on the missing vehicle would not have detected them. He had more power at his disposal, but could only beam it into empty space with his better antennae. He had better equipment for locating any projecting wisps of charged gas which might reflect his waves, but he was already located under a solid roof of the stuff—the *Albireo* was technically on Brightside. Bouncing his beam from this layer still didn't give him the range he needed, as he had found both by calculation and trial.

What he really needed was a relay satellite. The target was simply too far around Mercury's sharp curve by now for anything less.

Zaino's final gesture was to set his transmission beam on the lowest frequency the tractor would pick up, aim it as close to the vehicle's direction as he could calculate from map and itinerary and set the recorded return message going. He told Rowson as much.

"Can't think of anything else?" the captain asked. "Well, neither can I, but of course it's not my field. I'd give a year's pay if I could. How long before they should be back in range?"

"About four days. A hundred hours, give or take a few. They'll be heading back anyway by that time."

"Of course. Well, keep trying."

"I am—or rather, the equipment is. I don't see what else I can do unless a really bright idea should suddenly sprout. Is there anywhere else I could be useful? I'm as likely to have ideas working as just sitting."

"We can keep you busy, all right. But how about taking a transmitter up one of those mountains? That would get your wave farther."

"Not as far as it's going already. I'm bouncing it off the ion layer, which is higher than any mountain we've seen



on Mercury even if it's nowhere near as high as Earth's."

"Hmph. All right."

"I could help Ren and Dr. Burkett. I could hang on outside the tractor—"

"They've already gone. You'd better call them, though, and keep a log of what they do."

"All right." Zaino turned back to his board and with no trouble raised the tractor carrying Hargedon and the mineralogist. The latter had been trying to call the *Albireo* and had some acid comments about radio operators who slept on the job.

"There's only one of me, and I've been trying to get the Darkside team," he pointed out. "Have you found anything new about this lava flood?"

"Flow, not flood," corrected the professional automatically. "We're not in sight of it yet. We've just rounded the corner that takes us out of your sight. It's over a mile yet, and a couple of more corners, before we get to the spot where I left it. Of course, it will be closer than that by now. It was spreading at perhaps a hundred yards an hour then. That's one figure we must refine. . . . Of course, I'll try to get samples, too. I wish there were some way to get samples of the central cone. The whole thing is the queerest volcano I've ever heard of. Have you gotten Eileen started back?"

"Not as far as I can tell. As with your cone samples, there are practical difficulties," replied Zaino. "I haven't quit yet, though."

"I should think not. If some of us were paid by the idea we'd be pretty poor, but the perspiration part of genius is open to all of us."

"You mean I should charge a bonus for getting this call through?" retorted the operator.

Whatever Burkett's reply to this might have been was never learned; her attention was diverted at that point.

"We've just come in sight of the flow. It's about five hundred yards ahead. We'll get as close as seems safe, and I'll try to make sure whether it's really lava or just mud."

"Mud? Is that possible? I thought there wasn't—couldn't be—any water on this planet!"

"It is, and there probably isn't. The liquid phase of mud doesn't have to be water, even though it usually is on Earth. Here, for example, it might conceivably be sulfur."

"But if it's just mud, it wouldn't hurt the ship, would it?"

"Probably not."

"Then why all this fuss about getting the tractors back in a hurry?"

The voice which answered reminded him of another lady in his past, who had kept him after school for drawing pictures in math class.

"Because in my judgment the flow is far more likely to be lava than mud, and if I must be wrong I'd rather my error were one that left us alive. I have no time at the moment to explain the basis of my judgment. I will be reporting our activities quite steadily from now on, and would prefer that you not interrupt unless a serious emergency demands it, or you get a call from Eileen.

"We are about three hundred yards away now. The front is moving about as fast as before, which suggests that the flow is coming only along this valley. It's only three or four feet high, so viscosity is very low or density very high. Probably the former, considering where we are. It's as black as the smoke column."

"Not glowing?" cut in Zaino thoughtlessly.

"Black, I said. Temperature will be easier to measure when we get closer. The front is nearly straight across the valley, with just a few lobes projecting ten or twelve yards and one notch where a small spine is being surrounded. By the way, I trust you're taping all this?" Again Zaino was reminded of the afternoon after school.

"Yes, Ma'am," he replied. "On my one and only monitor tape."

"Very well. We're stopping near the middle of the valley one hundred yards from the front. I am getting out, and will walk as close as I can with a sampler and a radiometer. I assume that the radio equipment will continue to relay my suit broadcast back to you." Zaino cringed a little, cer-

tain as he was that the tractor's electronic apparatus was in perfect order.

It struck him that Dr. Burkett was being more snappish than usual. It never crossed his mind that the woman might be afraid.

"Ren, don't get any closer with the tractor unless I call. I'll get a set of temperature readings as soon as I'm close enough. Then I'll try to get a sample. Then I'll come back with that to the tractor, leave it and the radiometer and get the markers to set out."

"Couldn't I be putting out the markers while you get the sample, Doctor?"

"You could, but I'd rather you stayed at the wheel." Hargedon made no answer, and Burkett resumed her description for the record.

"I'm walking toward the front, a good deal faster than it's flowing toward me. I am now about twenty yards away, and am going to take a set of radiation-temperature measures." A brief pause. "Readings coming. Nine sixty. Nine eighty. Nine ninety—that's from the bottom edge near the spine that's being surrounded. Nine eighty-five—" The voice droned on until about two dozen readings had been taped. Then, "I'm going closer now. The sampler is just a ladle on a twelve-foot handle we improvised, so I'll have to get that close. The stuff is moving slowly; there should be no trouble. I'm in reach now. The lava is very liquid; there's no trouble getting the sampler in—or out again—it's not very dense, either. I'm heading back toward the tractor now. No, Ren, don't come to meet me."

There was a minute of silence, while Zaino pictured the space-suited figure with its awkwardly long burden, walking away from the creeping menace to the relative safety of the tractor. "It's frozen solid already; we needn't worry about spilling. The temperature is about—five eighty. Give me the markers, please."

Another pause, shorter this time. Zaino wondered how much of that could be laid to a faster walk without the ladle and how much to the lessening distance between flow and tractor. "I'm tossing the first marker close to the edge—

it's landed less than a foot from the lava. They're all on a light cord at ten-foot intervals; I'm paying out the cord as I go back to the tractor. Now we'll stand by and time the arrival at each marker as well as we can."

"How close are you to the main cone?" asked Zaino.

"Not close enough to see its base, I'm afraid. Or to get a sample of it, which is worse. We—goodness, what was that?"

Zaino had just time to ask, "What was what?" when he found out.

For a moment, he thought that the *Albireo* had been flung bodily into the air. Then he decided that the great metal pillar had merely fallen over. Finally he realized that the ship was still erect, but the ground under it had just tried to leave.

Everyone in the group had become so used to the almost perpetual ground tremors that they had ceased to notice them; but this one demanded attention. Rowson, using language which suggested that his career might not have been completely free of adventure after all, flashed through the communication level on his way down to the power section. Schlossberg and Babineau followed, the medic pausing to ask Zaino if he were all right. The radioman merely nodded affirmatively; his attention was already back at his job. Burkett was speaking a good deal faster than before.

"Never mind if the sample isn't lashed tight yet—if it falls off there'll be plenty more. There isn't time! Arnie, get in touch with Dr. Mardikian and Dr. Marini. Tell them that this volcano is explosive, that all estimates of what the flow may do are off until we can make more measures, and in any case the whole situation is unpredictable. Everyone should get back as soon as possible. Remember, we decided that those big craters Eileen checked were not meteor pits. I don't know whether this thing will let go in the next hour, the next year, or at all. Maybe what's happening now will act as a safety valve—but let's get out. Ren, that flow is speeding up and getting higher, and the ash rain is getting a lot worse. Can you see to drive?"

She fell silent. Zaino, in spite of her orders, left his set long enough to leap to the nearest port for a look at the volcano.

He never regretted it.

Across the riven plain, whose cracks were now nearly hidden under the new ash, the black cone towered above the nearer elevations. It was visibly taller than it had been only a few hours before. The fountain from its top was thicker, now jetting straight up as though wind no longer meant a thing to the fiercely driven column of gas and dust. The darkness was not so complete; patches of red and yellow incandescence showed briefly in the pillar, and glowing sparks rather than black cinders rained back on the steep slopes. Far above, a ring of smoke rolled and spread about the column, forming an ever-broadening blanket of opaque cloud above a landscape which had never before been shaded from the sun. Streamers of lightning leaped between cloud and pillar, pillar and mountain, even cloud and ground. Any thunder there might have been was drowned in the howl of the escaping gas, a roar which seemed to combine every possible note from the shrillest possible whistle to a bass felt by the chest rather than heard by the ears. Rowson's language had become inaudible almost before he had disappeared down the hatch.

For long moments the radioman watched the spreading cloud, and wondered whether the *Albireo* could escape being struck by the flickering, ceaseless lightning. Far above the widening ring of cloud the smoke fountain drove, spreading slowly in the thinning atmosphere and beyond it. Zaino had had enough space experience to tell at a glance whether a smoke or dust cloud was in air or not. This wasn't, at least at the upper extremity . . .

And then, quite calmly, he turned back to his desk, aimed the antenna straight up, and called Eileen Harmon. She answered promptly.

The stratigrapher listened without interruption to his report and the order to return. She conferred briefly with her companion, replied "We'll be back in twelve hours," and

signed off. And that was that.

Zaino settled back with a sign, and wondered whether it would be tactful to remind Rowson of his offer of a year's pay.

All four vehicles were now homeward bound; all one had to worry about was whether any of them would make it. Hargedon and Burkett were fighting their way through an ever-increasing ash rain a scant two miles away—ash which not only cut visibility but threatened to block the way with drifts too deep to negotiate. The wind, now blowing fiercely toward the volcano, blasted the gritty stuff against their front window as though it would erode through; and the lava flow, moving far faster than the gentle ooze they had never quite measured, surged—and glowed—grimly behind.

A hundred miles or more to the east, the tractors containing Mardikian, Marini and their drivers headed southwest along the alternate route their maps had suggested; but Mardikian, some three hours in the lead, reported that he could see four other smoke columns in that general direction.

Mercury seemed to be entering a new phase. The maps might well be out of date.

Harmon and Trackman were having no trouble at the moment, but they would have to pass the great chasm. This had been shooting out daughter cracks when Zaino and Hargedon passed it hours before. No one could say what it might be like now, and no one was going out to make sure.

"We can see you!" Burkett's voice came through suddenly. "Half a mile to go, and we're way ahead of the flow."

"But it's coming?" Rawson asked tensely. He had returned from the power level at Zaino's phoned report of success.

"It's coming."

"How fast? When will it get here? Do you know whether the ship can stand contact with it?"

"I don't know the speed exactly. There may be two hours, maybe five or six. The ship can't take it. Even the temperature measures I got were above the softening point of the alloys, and it's hotter and much deeper now. Any-

way, if the others aren't back before the flow reaches the ship they won't get through. The tractor wheels would char away, and I doubt that the bodies would float. You certainly can't wade through the stuff in a space suit, either."

"And you think there can't be more than five or six hours before the flow arrives?"

"I'd say that was a very optimistic guess. I'll stop and get a better speed estimate if you want, but won't swear to it."

Rowson thought for a moment.

"No," he said finally, "don't bother. Get back here as soon as you can. We need the tractor and human muscles more than we need even expert guesses." He turned to the operator.

"Zaino, tell all the tractors there'll be no answer from the ship for a while, because no one will be aboard. Then suit up and come outside." He was gone.

Ten minutes later, six human beings and a tractor were assembled in the flame-lit near-darkness outside the ship. The cloud had spread to the horizon, and the sun was gone. Burkett and Hargedon had arrived, but Rowson wasted no time on congratulations.

"We have work to do. It will be easy enough to keep the lava from the ship, since there seems to be a foot or more of ash on the ground and a touch of main drive would push it into a ringwall around us; but that's not the main problem. We have to keep it from reaching the chasm anywhere south of us, since that's the way the others will be coming. If they're cut off, they're dead. It will be brute work. We'll use the tractor any way we can think of. Unfortunately it has no plow attachment, and I can't think of anything aboard which could be turned into one. You have shovels, such as they are. The ash is light, especially here, but there's a mile and a half of dam to be built. I don't see how it can possibly be done . . . but it's going to be."

"Come on, Arnie! You're young and strong," came the voice of the mineralogist. "You should be able to lift as much of this stuff as I can. I understand you were lucky

enough to get hold of Eileen—have you asked for the bonus yet?—but your work isn't done."

"It wasn't luck," Zaino retorted. Burkett, in spite of her voice, seemed much less of a schoolmistress when encased in a space suit and carrying a shovel, so he was able to talk back to her. "I was simply alert enough to make use of existing conditions, which I had to observe for myself in spite of all the scientists around. I'm charging the achievement to my regular salary. I saw—"

He stopped suddenly, both with tongue and shovel. Then, "Captain!"

"What is it?"

"The only reason we're starting this wall here is to keep well ahead of the flow so we can work as long as possible, isn't it?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I never thought of trying anywhere else. The valley would mean a much shorter dam, but if the flow isn't through it by now it would be before we could get there—oh! Wait a minute!"

"Yes, sir. You can put the main switch anywhere in a D. C. circuit. Where are the seismology stores we never had to use?"

Four minutes later the tractor set out from the *Albireo*, carrying Rowson and Zaino. Six minutes after that it stopped at the base of the ash cone which formed the north side of the valley from which the lava was coming. They parked a quarter of the way around the cone's base from the emerging flood and started to climb on foot, both carrying burdens.

Forty-seven minutes later they returned empty-handed to the vehicle, to find that it had been engulfed by the spreading liquid.

With noticeable haste they floundered through the loose ash a few yards above the base until they had outdistanced the glowing menace, descended and started back across the plain to where they knew the ship to be, though she was invisible through the falling detritus. Once they had to detour around a crack. Once they encountered one which widened toward the chasm on their right, and they knew a



detour would be impossible. Leaping it seemed impossible, too, but they did it. Thirty seconds after this, forty minutes after finding the tractor destroyed, the landscape was bathed in a magnesium-white glare as the two one-and-a-half kiloton charges planted just inside the crater rim let go.

"Should we go back and see if it worked?" asked Zaino.

"What's the use? The only other charges we had were in the tractor. Thank goodness they were nuclear instead of H. E. If it didn't work we'd have more trouble to get back than we're having now."

"If it didn't work, is there any point in going back?"

"Stop quibbling and keep walking. Dr. Burkett, are you listening?"

"Yes, Captain."

"We're fresh out of tractors, but if you want to try it on foot you might start a set of flow measures on the lava. Arnie wants to know whether our landslide slid properly."

However, the two were able to tell for themselves before getting back to the *Albireo*.

The flow didn't stop all at once, of course; but with the valley feeding it blocked off by a pile of volcanic ash four hundred feet high on one side, nearly fifty on the other and more than a quarter of a mile long, its enthusiasm quickly subsided. It was thin, fluid stuff, as Burkett had noted; but as it spread it cooled, and as it cooled it thickened.

Six hours after the blast it had stopped with its nearest lobe almost a mile from the ship, less than two feet thick at the edge.

When Mardikian's tractor arrived, Burkett was happily trying to analyze samples of the flow, and less happily speculating on how long it would be before the entire area would be blown off the planet. When Marini's and Harmon's vehicles arrived, almost together, the specimens had been loaded and everything stowed for acceleration. Sixty seconds after the last person was aboard, the *Albireo* left Mercury's surface at two gravities.

The haste, it turned out, wasn't really necessary. She had been in parking orbit nearly forty-five hours before the first of the giant volcanoes reached its climax, and the one

beside their former site was not the first. It was the fourth.

"And that seems to be that," said Camille Burkett rather tritely as they drifted a hundred miles above the little world's surface. "Just a belt of white-hot calderas all around the planet. Pretty, if you like symmetry."

"I like being able to see it from this distance," replied Zaino, floating weightless beside her. "By the way, how much bonus should I ask for getting that idea of putting the seismic charges to use after all?"

"I wouldn't mention it. Any one of us might have thought of that. We all knew about them."

"Anyone *might* have. Let's speculate on how long it would have been before anyone *did*."

"It's still not like the other idea, which involved your own specialty. I still don't see what made you suppose that the gas pillar from the volcano would be heavily charged enough to reflect your radio beam. How did that idea strike you?"

Zaino thought back, and smiled a little as the picture of lightning blazing around pillar, cloud and mountain rose before his eyes.

"You're not quite right," he said. "I was worried about it for a while, but it didn't actually strike me."

It fell rather flat; Camille Burkett, Ph.D., had to have it explained to her.

*If the several examinations here of the species Scientist (his habits, habitat, habiliments) seem less than conclusive, it may be due to a sort of "atmosphere problem."*

*The astronomer, evaluating star spectrograms, must make allowance for the known composition of the intervening atmosphere. The thicker the atmosphere, or the more unknown elements in it, the less accurate will be the analysis; observatories are built on high ground, away from city smog and smoke. In addition, the less similar the subject of study, the more alien it is to the native atmosphere, the more accurate will the analysis be.*

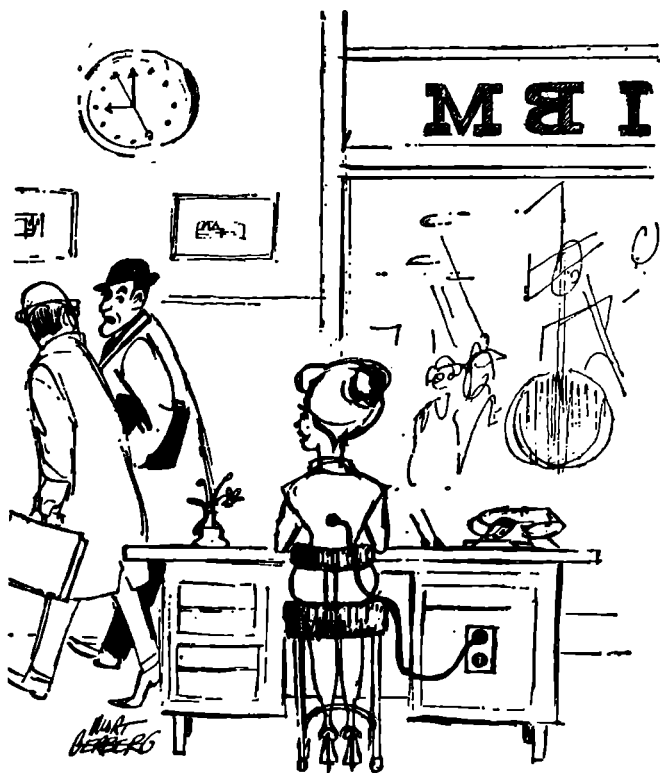
*The atmosphere in which we observe each other is murky, to say the least. In an article in the Saturday Review last year, Robert Graves delivered himself of much unhappiness, after spending two weeks as a guest on the M.I.T. campus. "It is politely assumed here that scientists*

have souls as well as minds," says Mr. Graves, expressing his disapproval of the new chapel. "But what modern scientist has ever learned the technique of meditation?" Meanwhile, the distinguished editor of the Worm Runner's Digest, and chief of the Planaria Research Group, Professor James V. McConnell, in a speech to the American Psychological Association, attacked the "humanistic value system" in the teaching of psychology with at least as much enthusiasm as Robert Graves generated against his image of the scientist. "Our reaction to the word humanism is a powerful, non-logical, gut reaction. Did Pavlov's dogs stop to ask why the dinner bell had such a pleasant sound? No, the dogs merely salivated each time the bell was rung, much as humans unthinkingly 'light up with an inner glow' whenever someone extolls the merits of the humanistic approach." But, he adds, "if humanism is nothing but an arbitrary set of values we accept chiefly because we've been trained to do so, what about science? Is it something different, something better? The truth is of course, that science, too, is a way of life, a set of mores and values that our society in general tends to venerate (at least in principle) much as it venerates humanism."

Having made the admission, Dr. McConnell unfortunately proceeded to ignore its implications in the remainder of his address. But all this meant was that it was true, and the significant truth had been stated long before:

No man is an island. When we look at each other—white and Negro, male and female, child and adult, Communist and Bircher, scientist and humanist—no matter what labels we pin on ourselves, we look to some extent into a mirror. Creators and creations both, each of us is part of the total culture and environment in which we meet and observe each other. Whether we will someday meet an intelligence alien enough to be accurately observed, remains to be seen. For now, perhaps we had best just accept the existence of the scientist, the engineer, and even the TV technician, as inalienable parts of our society. We may then, instead of trying to isolate components, begin upon the useful study of (take your choice; take both) scientific humanity and human science.

Cliff Owsley is a representative of another subspecies unique to contemporary society: the PR people. As chief of press and writing for the U. S. Forest Service in Washington, he occupies a position commanding a superior view for observation.



by Mort Gerberg

. I B M

from *The Dude*

# CONFESSIONS OF THE FIRST NUMBER

**Cliff Owsley**

from Martin Levin's "Phoenix Nest" in the *Saturday Review*

It was inevitable. Sooner or later somebody had to be picked for the rare honor of being the first to give up his name for a digit. The first, that is, outside of regular prisons. My number (or name, as I've come to call it) is now 420 03 2557. My first number is 420, not much different from a three-syllable name such as Adelbert. The middle name or initial is 03, no more difficult than any two-syllable name, say Jasper. And the last or surnumber is 2557, no more unwieldy than a name such as Vanlandingham.

As I said, rather well I thought, at the announcement ceremony, "I am honored to be the first person to orbit into the outer space of numerical security." That pleased the man there from the new agency in Washington handling the conversion, the National Agency for Numerical Security (NANS).

At first I didn't want to give up my name, though it was not anything special except perhaps to me. Still, it was mine and I had been known by it for a number of years. I rather liked it. Yet most of those I deal with apparently had me down as a number anyway. Reluctantly I agreed, after the mayor of our town kept telling me I would be a pioneer, the first into a new age, and in that way would achieve a certain distinction. Something like the first man into space.

Out of some twenty numbers I had to deal with, including the latest, my ZIP code, it was finally decided that my social security number would be best. It was one of the longest and could eventually absorb the others. Besides, the Internal Revenue Service was already calling me by that number, which made it feel warm and familiar.

So they had this big ceremony. The mayor and other local dignitaries and friends were there along with the man from Washington. He made a speech about how practical

and humanitarian it would be for everyone to have a number instead of a name. It would promote mass efficiency and true democracy and equality, he said; then no one would have a distinctive name nor a particularly poor one. He said, too, that it would raise the morale of all those in regular prisons since they would no longer feel discriminated against. I felt better after his speech.

Everyone congratulated me and kept calling me 420, or Mr. 2557, or just plain "4" (my nickname). After a while it began to sound natural. Reporters were there with a lot of questions.

"What do you really think of being a number instead of a name?" one reporter asked.

What do I think?! Why should I think? Let the computers do the thinking.

—420 03 2557.

(Formerly Cliff Owsley)

*Extrasensory Perception:* Also ESP. An inadmissible mode of cognition in which an external event presents itself to none of the five known senses. Telepathy and clairvoyance are two common modes of ESP; the former is the extrasensory perception of the mental activities of another person; the latter is the extrasensory perception of events that have already happened, or that are happening, or that are about to happen. Though investigations of purported ESP phenomena manage to discredit most of them, they do not discredit all of them; moreover, there is a small body of experimental data strongly suggesting paranormal cognition in certain subjects. However, at this point ESP is more an embarrassment than a legitimate concern of science (q.v.). Like soup spilled at a banquet, it is seen but ignored.

(*The Domesday Dictionary*)

# THE MING VASE

**E. C. Tubb**

*from Analog*

The antique shop was one of those high-class places which catered only to the very rich and the very possessive. A single vase of hand-worked glass stood in one window, an Egyptian Solar Boat in the other, between them the door presented a single expanse of unbroken glass to the street outside.

Don Gregson paused before it, deep-set eyes curious as they stared at the street. There was no trace of the accident. The wreckage had been removed and the rain had washed away the last traces of blood. Even the inevitable sightseers had gone about their business. Turning back to the door he pushed it open and stepped into the warmth inside.

Earlman was there, and Bronson, both standing beside a small, elderly man with delicate hands and intelligent eyes. Some assistants hovered discreetly in the background. The police had left and Don was glad of it. Earlman stepped forward.

"Hi, Don. You made good time."

"The general sees to that. Is that the owner?"

Max nodded, gesturing to the little man. Quickly he made the introductions.

"Mr. Levkin, this is Don Gregson, C.I.A., Special Detachment."

They shook hands, Don surprised at the wiry strength in the delicate fingers. Bronson, as usual, merely stood and watched; a coiled spring waiting his moment of release.

"I wish we could have met under happier circumstances," said Don to the owner. "Please tell me all about it."

"Again?"

"If you please. First-hand reports are always the most reliable."

Levkin shrugged and spread his hands in a gesture almost as old as time.

"I have been robbed," he said with simple understatement. "I have been robbed of the most precious item in my shop. It was small, a vase from the Ming Dynasty, but it was beautiful. You understand?"

"How small?"

Levkin gestured with his hands and Don nodded.

"About six inches high, small enough to slip into a pocket. You said it was valuable. How valuable?"

"I said it was precious," corrected the owner. "How do you value a work of art? The price is what the purchaser is prepared to pay. Let me say only that I have refused one hundred thousand dollars for it."

Earlman grunted, his thin, harassed face and dark, bruised-looking eyes veiled behind the smoke of his cigarette.

"Tell us about the man."

"He was medium built, medium height, well-dressed, brown hair and eyes . . . remarkable eyes. About a hundred and seventy pounds, softly spoken, very gentle and polite."

Over Levkin's head Earlman caught Don's eye and nodded.

"Nothing ostentatious," continued Levkin. "Nothing which gave a hint that he was not what he seemed. I had no reason to suspect that he was a thief."

"He isn't," said Don, then frowned at his own absurdity. "Go on."

"We spoke. He was interested in rare and beautiful things, it was natural that I should show him the vase. Then there was a crash in the street, an accident. Inevitably we turned and headed towards the door. It was a bad accident, our attention was distracted, but only for a moment. It was enough. By the time I remembered the man had gone and he had taken the vase with him."

"Are you positive as to that?" Don labored the point. "Could it be hidden here somewhere? Anywhere?"

"The police asked that. No, it is not hidden. I have made a thorough search. It has been stolen." For the first time the man showed emotion. "Please, you will get it back? You will do your best?"



Don nodded, jerking his head at Earلمان as he stepped to one side. Bronson, as always, joined them.

"How about the identification?" Don spoke in a trained whisper inaudible two feet from his lips. "Is it positive?"

"They swear to the photograph. It's our man all right."

"I've got to be certain. How about the accident? Could that have been faked?"

"Not a chance. A cab hit a pedestrian and swerved into a truck. The jaywalker's dead, the cabbie will lose a leg and the truck driver's in a bad way. That was no rigged diversion."

"Coincidence?" Don shook his head. "No, the timing was too limited for that. Levkin's no fool and even the smartest crook requires a certain reaction time before he can spot an opportunity, weigh his chances and then swing into action. Levkin would never have given an ordinary crook that much time. It looks as if you're right, Max."

"I am right. It was Klieger." Earلمان looked puzzled. "But why, Don? Why?"

Gregson didn't answer. His face was strained, thoughtful.

"Why?" repeated Earلمان. "Why should he want to steal a thing he can't sell, can't eat, can't do anything with but sit and look at? Why?"

General Penn asked the same question but unlike Earلمان he demanded an answer. Slumped in his chair behind the wide desk he looked even older and more harassed than he had when this whole thing had started. Don could understand that. The general, literally, had his neck on the block.

"Well?" The voice reflected the strain. Harsh, heavy with irritating undertones, it carried too much of the barrack square, too little of understanding or patience. "You've found what you said to look for. Now, what's the answer?"

"We've found something I said might possibly happen," corrected Don. "It has. What answer are you looking for?"

"Are you crazy!" Penn surged out of his chair. "You know what the top priority is! Find Klieger! What other answer would I be interested in?"

"You might," said Don quietly, "be interested in finding out just why he left in the first place."

Penn said a word. He repeated it. Don tensed, then forced himself to relax. Slowly he lit a cigarette.

"Three weeks ago," he said, "Albert Klieger decided to leave Cartwright House and did so. Since then you've had all field units concentrate on the one object of finding him. Why?"

"Because he is the greatest potential danger to this country walking on two legs!" Penn spat the words as if they were bullets. "If he gets to the other side and spills what he knows, we'll lose our greatest advantage in the cold war and the hot war when it comes. Gregson, you know all this!"

"I've been told it," said Don. He didn't look at the congested face of the general. "And if we find him and he doesn't want to return, what then?"

"We'll worry about that when we've found him," said Penn grimly. Don nodded.

"Is that why Bronson is always with my team? Why other men just like him accompany all field units?" He didn't press for an answer. "Have you ever wondered just why the English stopped using the Press Gang system? They knew it wasn't humane from the beginning but, for a while, it worked—for a while and up to a point. Maybe we could learn something from that if we tried."

"You talk like a fool." Penn slumped back into his chair. "No one press-ganged Klieger. I found him in a third-rate carnival and gave him the chance to help his country. He took that chance. It's fair to say that we've given him far more than he's given us. After all, Klieger isn't the only one."

"That," said Don, "is the whole point." He stared directly at the general. "How long is it going to be before others in the Project . . . sorry, Cartwright House, decide that they've had enough?"

"There'll be no more walking out." Penn was very positive. "I've tripled the security guards and installed gimmicks which make that impossible."

It was, of course, a matter of locking the stable door

after the horse had been stolen, but Don didn't point that out. Penn, with his reputation and career in the balance, could only be pushed so far at a time. And, to Penn, his career was all-important. Not even Cartwright House came before that.

Which, thought Don bitterly, was the inevitable result of a military machine based on political maneuverings. What a man was, what he could do, that was unimportant against who he knew, what he could do for others. Don himself had no illusions. He was useful but he could be branded, damned, kicked out and made the scapegoat if Penn felt he needed a sacrifice. And time was running out.

"We've got to find him." Penn drummed on the desk. "Gregson, why can't you find him?"

"You know why. I've trailed him and found where he's been a dozen times. But always too late. To catch him I've got to be where he is when he is, or before he gets there. And that's impossible."

"This theft." Penn's mind veered to the latest scrap of information. "Money I can understand but why a Ming vase. The guy must be crazy."

"He isn't normal, but he isn't crazy." Don crushed out his cigarette. "And I've an idea that he has a very good reason for wanting that vase. The chances are that he will be collecting other, similar things, how many depends on circumstances."

"But why?"

"They're beautiful. To those that appreciate them such objects are beyond price. Klieger must have an intensely artistic streak. He has a reason for wanting to own them and it worries me."

Penn snorted.

"I need more information." Don was decisive. "Without it I'm fighting a shadow. I've got to go to where I can get it."

"But—"

"I've got to. There's no other way. None in the world."

No one called it a prison. No one even called it a Project because everyone knew that a "Project" was both military

and important. So it was called Cartwright House and it was a little harder to get into than Fort Knox and far more difficult to leave than Alcatraz.

Don waited patiently as his identification was checked, double-checked, cleared to a higher level and then checked again. It took time but finally he faced Leon Malchin, tall, thin, burning with frustrated zeal and with the courtesy rank of colonel which meant nothing until he tried to act like a civilian when he felt the full impact of military discipline.

"General Penn has contacted me," he said. "I am to offer you every assistance." He stared at Don through old-fashioned spectacles. "How can I help you?"

"Question," said Don. "How do normal men catch a clairvoyant?"

"You mean Klieger, of course?"

"Of course."

"They can't. They don't." Malchin settled back in his chair, a glint of amusement in his eyes. "Next question?"

"There is no next question—not yet." Don took the other chair and produced his cigarettes. Malchin shook his head and sucked at a briar.

"I am a hunter," he said abruptly. "I hunt men. I'm good at it because I have a knack, talent, skill—you name it—for being able to outguess my quarry. You might say that I have a series of lucky hunches. Somehow. I don't know how, I *know* what they will do next, where they will be and when. I have never failed to get my man yet."

"But you haven't got Klieger." Malchin nodded as if he had expected this visit for some time. "And you want to know why."

"I know why. He is a clairvoyant. What I want to know is how. How does he do it? How does he operate? How effective is he?"

"Very effective." Malchin took his pipe from his mouth and stared into the bowl. "He is, was, our star resident. He could see further than anyone I have ever investigated—and I have investigated psi phenomena all my adult life."

"Go on."

"I don't think you fully realize just what you are up against in Klieger. He is a superman, of course; nothing like that, but he has this one talent. You are, in a sense, a blind man trying to trap a man who can see. Trap him in broad daylight on an open plain. You are also wearing a bell around your neck to attract his attention. Personally I do not think you have a ghost of a chance."

"How," Don insisted, "does this talent work?"

"I don't know." Malchin anticipated the next question. "You don't mean that, of course, what you mean is how does he use it. If I knew how it worked, I would be a very happy man." He frowned, searching for words. "This is going to be difficult to describe. How could you explain sight to a man born blind, or sound to a man born deaf? And you, at least, could tell how those senses 'worked.' However—"

Don lit another cigarette, listening to Malchin's explanations, building pictures in his mind. A piece of rough fabric each thread of which was a person's life stretching into the future. Some threads were short, others longer, all meshed and interwoven so that it was almost impossible to follow any single thread. But, with training and skill it could be done. Then events came clear and action could be planned.

A bank where a teller suffered an attack of acute appendicitis just as he was counting out a sheaf of notes—and a man who calmly picked them up as if he had just cashed a check.

A store where the takings were left unattended for just those essential few minutes of time.

A penthouse apartment and an officer who sneezed just as the quarry walked past.

An antique shop and an accident to create the necessary diversion.

So simple when you could see exactly what would happen and exactly how to take advantage of it.

How to catch Klieger?

Don jerked upright as his cigarette burned his fingers and became aware of Malchin's stare.

"I was thinking of your analogy," he said. "You know,

the blind man trying to trap the one who could see. I know how it can be done."

"Yes?"

"The blind man gets eyes."

They were comfortable. They had soft beds and good food, canned music, television, a library of books and private movies. They had games and a swimming pool and even a bowling alley. They wore good clothes and were fit and looked it, but they were intelligent and they knew.

A prison is somewhere you can't leave when you want to and they were in a prison.

For their own protection, naturally. The guards, the gimmicks, the restrictions were solely designed to keep unwanted people out. The secrecy was from fear of spies and patriotism was the excuse for all. But the things designed to keep people out worked just as well to keep others in.

And, sometimes, patriotism as an excuse wears a little thin.

"It's good to see a new face." Sam Edwards, fifty, built like a boy with the face of a boxer, grinned as he gripped Don's hand. "You joining the club?"

"He's just visiting." A wizened oldster sucked at his teeth as he peered at Don from the depths of an easy chair. "Say, Gregson, if you'd fancy a little poker later on I guess we could accommodate you."

He laughed with a wheezy effort then frowned and slammed a thin hand on his knee.

"Goldarn it! I miss my poker!"

"Telepaths," whispered Malchin. "Most of them are in permanent rapport with others who are you-know-where. I won't bother to introduce you around."

Don nodded, staring uneasily at the assembled "residents." Some were old, a few young, most were middle-aged. They watched him with eyes glinting with secret amusement.

"Oddly enough most of them seem to stick together according to their various talents," mused Malchin. "You've seen the telepaths, in this room are those with telekinetic

abilities. Nothing startling in the way of progress as yet but they are getting on. In here are the clairvoyants."

There were fifteen of them. Don was surprised at the number, then he wondered why he was surprised. In the great cross-section of humanity which was the United States every deviation from the norm must have been repeated many times. Shrewdly he guessed that he saw only a part of the whole; that Cartwright House was duplicated many times under many names.

"We have found," whispered Malchin, "that communal use of their talent greatly aids development of that talent. Klieger was little more than a carnival fortuneteller when he joined us; in ten years he became amazingly proficient."

"Ten years?"

"That's what I said. Many of our residents have been here longer than that."

If there was irony in Malchin's voice Don didn't catch it. But one of the men in the room did. He came forward, hand outstretched, a taut smile on his face.

"Tab Wellker," he said. "Maybe you can settle an argument. In England, from what I hear, a man sentenced to life imprisonment usually gets out in about nine years. Right?"

"It depends on his conduct." Don felt his skin tighten as he saw what the man was driving at. "A life term in England is about fifteen years. A third remission would make it about what you say."

"And that's usually given for nothing short of murder." Tab nodded. "You know, I've been here eight years. One more year to go—maybe!"

"You're not a prisoner," said Don. The man laughed.

"Please." He lifted his hand. "No arguments, no speeches!" He lost his smile. "What do you want?"

"Help," said Don simply.

He moved about the room, halting by a small table bearing chessmen set out on a board. They were of wood lovingly carved with the unfinished look of true hand-production. He lifted a knight and studied it, then met Wellker's eyes.

"Klieger's?"

"How did you guess?" Tab's eyes softened as he stared at the men. "Albert loved beautiful things. The thing he missed most while he was here was being able to visit the museums. He always said that man's true achievements were to be found in the things he had made to ornament his life."

"Things like vases?"

"Paintings, statuary, cameos, he liked them all providing they were well made."

"A man with artistic appreciation." Don nodded. "I understand. When did you all decide to help him escape?"

"I . . . What did you say?"

"You heard what I said." Don's eyes locked with those of the other man then, slowly, Wellker smiled.

"You're no fool," he said. Don returned the smile.

"Now I've another question." He paused, conscious of their eyes. "Just what does Klieger hope to gain?"

"No!" General Penn slammed his hand down on the arm of the back seat. "No! No!"

Don sighed, staring through the windows at the rain. It dripped from the trees above, pinging on the roof of the car, dewing the glass with a glitter of transient pearls. Further down the road the rear of another car loomed vague through the rain. Behind them would be another. Their own driver was somewhere up ahead probably cursing the odd exigencies of the Service.

"Listen," said the general, "we've got word that they know about Klieger. Don't ask me how they even guessed he was important to us, but they do. Now it's a race between us. We daren't lose."

"We won't lose," said Don. "But we'll have to do it my way. It's the only way there is."

"No!"

"General!" Don released his pent-up temper and frustration in a furious blast of sound. "What other way is there?"



It stopped Penn as he knew it would, but only for a moment.

"I can't risk it," he snapped. "Klieger's only one man, dangerous but still only one. We can handle one man but can we handle a dozen or more? It's treasonable even to suggest it."

Don fumed as he recognized the emotion-loaded semantic symbol. Penn with his mania for security had probably aroused unwelcome attention in the first place. Like now when he had insisted that they meet in a car on a road in the rain for fear of some undetected electronic ear waiting to catch their conversation.

For long moments the silence dragged, then Don drew a deep breath.

"Treasonable or not it's something you have to consider. For one thing the escape was organized. The lights failed—a telepathically controlled rat gnawed a vital cable. A guard was taken sick for no apparent reason and for a moment there was a blank spot in the defenses. There were other things, all small, not one coincidental. The whole lot could have walked right out."

"But they didn't!" Penn pounded the arm of the rear seat. "Only Klieger. That proves something."

"That he wanted to run to the Reds?" Don shrugged. "Then what's keeping him? He's had plenty of time to make contact if that's what he wanted."

"What's your point?" Penn was losing his patience. "Are you trying to tell me that those . . . freaks back there are holding a gun to my head? They'll help, you say, but on their terms. Terms!" His hand closed into a fist. "Don't they understand that the country is as good as at war?"

"They want the thing we keep saying we are fighting to protect," said Don. "They want a little freedom. Is that such an outrageous demand?"

He leaned back, closing his eyes, seeing again the faces of the men back in Cartwright House. Some of them, so Malchin had said, had been there twelve years. A long time. Too long to be willing guinea pigs so that their talents

could be trained and developed and exploited. But to the general they weren't men. They were "freaks"; just another weapon to be used, to be protected and hidden, to be destroyed if there was a chance they might fall into enemy hands.

"What?" He opened his eyes, conscious that the general was talking to him. Penn glowered and repeated what he had said.

"Can you catch him, even if they won't help you?"

"I don't know." Don pursed his lips, shadowed eyes introspective beneath prominent brows. "I feel that we've gone about this thing in the wrong way. We've thought of it as just another manhunt and we've failed because we're trying to catch no ordinary man. There must be a purpose behind what Klieger did. Find the reason for his leaving and we'll find the purpose."

"Isn't that what you went to find out?" Penn made no effort to hide his sarcasm.

"Yes. I didn't fail."

"Then—?"

"He stole a rare vase of the Ming Dynasty," said Don. "Find out why and you have the answer."

Max Earلمان lay supine on the bed and stared at the ceiling. The small hotel room was warm, littered with the personal effects of the three men. Against one wall a large-scale map of the city hung slightly out of true, the grid-pattern of streets marked with a host of colored pins. Beyond the windows the early evening had softened the harsh outlines of the concrete jungle, turning even the garish illuminations into things of glowing beauty.

Bronson stirred where he sat at a table, the thin reek of gun oil harsh to Earلمان's nostrils. He lit a cigarette to kill the odor and stared distastefully at the other man.

"Do you have to do that?" Smoke plumed from the cigarette as Max gestured toward the pistol Bronson was cleaning. Bronson continued with his business.

"What gives with you, Bronson?" Earلمان swung to his feet, nerves taut with irritation. "You walk and eat and

sleep and I guess you can talk, too, if you set your mind to it, but are you really a man?"

Metal clicked with deadly precision as Bronson reassembled the gun. He tucked it into its holster, drew it with a fantastic turn of speed, returned it again.

Earlman jerked to his feet, anger burning in the deep, bruised-looking eyes. He turned as Don entered the room. He looked tired.

"No luck?" Max knew the answer. Don shook his head.

"We're still on our own." Crossing the room he stood before the map, studying the clusters of colored pins. "Have you got them all?"

"Every single one." Earlman blew smoke at the map. "If anyone ever tells me this city has no culture, I'll tear them apart. The place is lousy with art galleries, museums, exhibitions, antique shops, displays, missions and what have you. I've marked them all." He looked sidewise at Gregson's bleak face. "There are a lot, Don. Too many."

"We can whittle them down." Don sighed, feeling the tension of the past few weeks building up inside, the tautness of the past few days stretching his nerves. He forced himself to relax, taking deep breaths, forgetting the urgency and Penn's hysterical demands.

"Cut out foreign films, contemporary art, modernistic paintings, exhibitions of abstract design. Eliminate the stamp collections, trade missions, engineering displays. Concentrate on the old, the rare, the beautiful."

"How close should I go?"

"Close. Keep the unusual, the short-term, the items loaned from private collections."

Earlman nodded and busied himself with colored pins and a sheaf of catalogues. Don turned and stared out of the window.

Below him the city sprawled, scarlike streets slashing between soaring anthills of concrete, the whole glittering with light. Somewhere in the city another man probably stood staring from a window—a mild man with a love of artistic things. A man who, until recently, had lived a law-abiding

existence and who, suddenly, had broken the conditioning of a lifetime to rob and steal and run.

Why?

Frustration, yes, all the "residents" of Cartwright House were frustrated but they had remained when they could have left. Only Klieger had run and had kept running. Now he was somewhere in the city, his talent warning him of approaching danger, showing him how to dodge and move and avoid so as to remain free.

Free in order to do what?

Don sighed, wondering for the thousandth time just how it must feel to be clairvoyant. He could visualize the future—or could he? The others could have helped but Penn had blocked that. With a dozen other clairvoyants Don could have covered the field and trapped Klieger by sheer weight of numbers. No one man, no matter how gifted, could have beaten such odds.

Now he was on his own.

It had begun to rain and the window glittered with reflected light so that his eyes constantly changed focus from the window to the city beyond then back to the window. Then he stopped trying to focus and just stood, eyes wide, thoughts traveling unfamiliar paths.

How?

How did he know when and where to catch a wanted man? What was it that made him just that little different from other men? All his life Don had had that edge. He could guess—if it was guessing—and those guesses had been right. So, was it guessing? Or did he know?

His record had backed his application to the C.I.A. That same record of unbroken success had paved his way into the Special Detachment. He was a man-hunter who always found his man. And he didn't know how he did it.

As Malchin didn't know how the "residents" at Cartwright House used their talents.

Even whittled down the list was too long. Earlman gestured toward the map, smoke drifting from the cigarette dangling from his lips, pointing to the varicolored pins.

"I can't get it closer than this, Don. From here on it's pure guesswork."

"Not quite." Don scanned the list. "I learned something about Klieger back at Cartwright House. He is an artistic type. My guess is that he's been visiting the museums and art galleries all along."

"Then we've got him!" Earلمان was jubilant. "All we need do is to cover these places and he'll walk right into our hands."

Don raised his eyebrows and Max suddenly sobered.

"No. Every cop in the city has his photograph and description. All routes from the metropolis are covered. All field units are on the hunt. If it was as easy as that, we'd have had him by now." He gestured toward the map. "Then why all this?"

"Concentration of effort." Don sat on the edge of a bed. "The cops can't spot him until they see him and he makes certain they don't. Mostly he's one man in a crowd and that's the best disguise there is. Never forget, Max, he can 'see' our traps and so avoid them."

"Then it's hopeless." Savagely Earلمان stamped on his cigarette. "No matter what we do, where we go, he won't be there. Have I wasted my time, Don?"

"No."

"But—"

"It's between me and him now," said Don. "Up until now I've tackled this like a slightly abnormal operation. I've depended on outside help and even tried to get special assistance but that wasn't the way to do it. Now I've got to use his weakness against him." He looked again at the list in his hand.

"All right, both of you get out. I want to be alone."

Bronson didn't move.

"You heard the man!" Earلمان jerked open the door. "Out!"

Slowly Bronson rose to his feet. His eyes shone as he stared at Don.

"I'm not going anywhere," said Gregson tiredly. "You can wait outside if you want."

Alone he untied his shoes, loosened his tie and slipped off his jacket. Killing the lights he lay back on the bed, eyes toward the window with its glitter of reflected light. Deliberately he relaxed.

For him it was a normal procedure, this quiet relaxation while his mind digested the thousand odd items of assembled fact to come up with a guess that wasn't a guess because it was always right. But now he had to do more than that. Now he had to pit himself against a man who could "see" the future and he had to outguess that other man.

His breathing grew even, regular and deeper as he entered the first stage of self-hypnosis. Outside sounds wouldn't bother him now, there would be no distractions, he could concentrate fully on the problem he had to solve.

Find Klieger.

Find where he would be and when.

Find him as he had found a thousand others with no doubt, no uncertainty, just the conviction that at a certain place at a certain time he would spot his quarry.

Forget the sense that he was beaten before he could start. Forget that he was up against an abnormal talent. Forget the picture of the piece of fabric and the nodes of events. Forget everything but one man and where and when he would be.

"The Lustrum Galleries." Earlman nodded, then grunted, as the cab braked to avoid a jaywalker. "They are having a private showing this evening, invitation only. The exhibition doesn't open until tomorrow." He looked at Don, face even more haggard in the dim light. "Are you certain he will be there?"

"Yes."

"But—" Earlman shrugged and broke off, killing the obvious question. "A display of Chinese art," he read from a crumpled catalogue. "Ceramics from the Ming, Han and Manchu Dynasties. It figures. The Ming Vase?"

Don nodded, then closed his eyes, resting his head on the back of the seat. He felt drained, worn out yet filled with a glowing exultation. He *knew!* How or why he couldn't

guess but he *knew*! Klieger would be at the galleries. He would stake his life on it.

Their badges got them in, past a very punctilious uniformed attendant, past a fussing curator, into a long hall shining with glass cases on which in reverent array stood the exhibits.

"Tomorrow," said the curator, "these will be within the cases; but tonight, because of the selected visitors, we feel it safe to have them as they are."

"Why?" Earlman was blunt. "What's the point?"

"You are not a connoisseur," said the curator. "That is obvious. If you were, you would know that there is more to ceramics than just the visual aspect. There is a feel, a tactile sense which is as much a part of the pottery as the colors. Our visitors, most of them collectors, appreciate that. And, too, the true beauty of these pieces cannot be wholly appreciated when they are seen from only one angle as they will be when sealed in the cases."

He looked suddenly anxious.

"You haven't mentioned your business. I trust that nothing will—"

"There will be no trouble." Don glanced around the gallery, forehead creased in a frown. "Just operate as if we weren't here." He smiled at the anxious expression. "One thing I can promise you, your exhibits are in no danger."

Satisfied, the curator hustled off about his business. Don glanced to either side then led the way toward the far end of the gallery.

"We'll wait here. The cases will screen us and we can watch the whole gallery. When Klieger comes you will go to the stairs, Max, and cut off his escape."

Earlman grunted then paused, a cigarette halfway to his lips.

"How come, Don? How come that Klieger is going to walk right into this setup when we know that he must know we're waiting for him?"

"He wants to see the exhibits."

"But—?"

"This is his only chance to actually touch and examine

them. To him that's important, don't ask me why." Don's voice was sharp. "He'll be here, I know it."

It sounded logical. It sounded as if it could be true but Don knew that wasn't the reason Klieger would come. He would want to see the ceramics, that was true, but would he want to handle them so much that nothing else mattered? And, if so, why? Why tonight?

Waiting between the cases, eyes on the long vista of the gallery with its shining glass and neat exhibits Don fought the question which had puzzled him all along. In a way it was a seeming paradox but he knew that it only seemed that way to him. As the visitors began to arrive and the air vibrated to their murmured comments as they studied the exhibits the question nagged at his peace of mind.

Klieger must know he would be walking into a trap.

Yet he would come, Don was certain of it.

So, if Don wasn't mistaken and he was certain he was not, Klieger must consider the visit to be worth certain capture.

Capture or—

Bronson moved, an automatic gesture, one hand sliding beneath his coat and Don snarled at him with savage impatience.

"There'll be none of that! Do you understand? You won't be needed!"

Inwardly he cursed Penn's cold, inhuman logic. In war it is good sense to destroy material you can't use to prevent it falling into enemy hands, but this wasn't war and Penn wasn't dealing with machines or supplies.

Klieger must know the risk he ran of being shot to death.

Don started as Earlman gripped his arm. Max jerked his head, eyes bright in the haggard face as he stared down the gallery.

"There, Don," he breathed. "Down by that big case. See him?"

Klieger!

He was—ordinary. Engrossed with the hunt Don had mentally fitted the quarry with supernatural peculiarities;



but now, watching him as he stood, entranced by pottery fired before the dawn of Western civilization, he seemed nothing but what he was. An ordinary man with a more than ordinary interest in things considered beautiful by a minority.

And yet he held knowledge which made him the most dangerous man to the security of the West.

"Got him!" Earlman's whisper was triumphant. "You did it again, Don! You called it right on the nose!"

"Get into position." Gregson didn't take his eyes from the slight figure he had hunted so long. "Stand by in case he makes a break for it. You know what to do."

"I know." Earlman hesitated. "Bronson?"

"I'll take care of him."

Don waited as Earlman slipped away, gliding past the cases to lean casually at the top of the far stairs. He sensed the other's relief and understood it. They had worked together for eight years and his failure would, in part, have been shared by Earlman.

But he had not failed.

Savoring the sweet taste of success he walked forward half-conscious of Bronson at his heels. Klieger did not turn. He stood, caressing a shallow, wide-mouthed bowl in his hands, eyes intent on the still-bright colors.

"Klieger!"

Slowly he set down the vase.

"Don't run. Don't fight. Don't do anything stupid." Don's voice was a grim whisper. "You can't get away."

"I know."

"Just in case you're wondering, I'm from the C.I.A."

"I know."

"This is the end of the line, Klieger."

"I know."

The calm, emotionless tones irritated Gregson. The man should have complained, argued, anything but the flat baldness of the repeated statement. Savagely he gripped a shoulder and spun Klieger round to face him.

"Do you know everything?"

Klieger didn't answer. Heavy lids dropped over the eyes

and Don remembered how Levkin had described them. "Remarkable" the owner had said, but the word was misleading. They were haunted. There was no other description, no other word.

Haunted.

"What are you going to do with me?" Klieger opened his eyes and stared up into the grim face of the hunter. Don shrugged.

"Why ask? You're the man who is supposed to know everything."

"I am a clairvoyant," said Klieger calmly. "I can see into the future, but so can you. Do you know everything?"

"I—" Don swallowed. "*What did you say?*"

"How else would you have known that I was here? And I mean know, not guess. You were certain that you would find me, as certain as I am that—"

"Go on."

"You have the talent. By knowing that I would be here at this time you 'saw' into the future. Not far, perhaps, not too clearly, but you 'saw.' What other proof do you need?"

"But I simply had a conviction that— Is that how clairvoyancy works?"

"For you, obviously yes. For others, perhaps not exactly the same. But when you are convinced beyond any shadow of doubt that, at a certain time a thing will happen, or that a thing will happen even if the exact time is not too precise, then you have the gift which General Penn values most highly." Klieger gave a bitter smile. "Much good may it do you."

Don shook his head, conscious of receiving knowledge too fast and too soon. At his elbow Bronson shifted his weight a little, poising on the balls of his feet. Around them was a clear space as the other visitors moved down the line of cases. The three of them stood in an island of isolation.

"I am not coming back with you," announced Klieger. "I have had enough of Cartwright House."

"You have no choice."

Klieger smiled. "You forget," he pointed out gently, "it isn't a question of choice. It is a simple question of knowledge. I shall never see the general again."

Bronson made an incoherent sound deep in his throat.

He was fast, incredibly fast, but Don was even faster. Warned by some unknown sense he spun as the gun flashed into view, snatching at the wrist as it swung level, twisting and forcing the black muzzle from its target with viciously applied leverage. Muscles knotted, then the bone snapped with the dry sound of a breaking stick. Bronson opened his mouth as the gun fell from nerveless fingers, then Don slashed the hard edge of his palm across the nerves in the neck and the mute collapsed.

Quickly Don scooped up the gun and heaved Bronson to his feet, supporting the unconscious man as he fought mounting tides of hate. Hate for Bronson who lived only to take revenge on the world for his disability. Hatred for Penn who could find a use for the psychopathic mute and others like him. Licensed murderers in the sacred name of expediency; safe because they could never talk.

Earlman had seen what the others in the gallery had not. Running forward he met the blaze of Gregson's eyes.

"Get rid of this thing, fast!"

"So he had to try it." Earlman relieved Don of the dead weight. "Penn is going to love you for this."

Don sucked air, fighting to rid himself of hate. "Take him back to the hotel. I'll worry about Penn when I have to."

"And Klieger?"

"I'll take care of him."

Don had almost forgotten Klieger in the savage fury of the past few minutes. He found him standing by one of the exhibits staring at a relic of the past as if he were trying to drink its beauty and impress its image on his brain. Gently he picked up the piece, a man entranced by the artistic perfection of ancient craftsmen and, looking at him, Don felt his stomach tighten with a sudden, sick understanding.

Penn didn't trust women. The receptionist was a man as were all his personnel. He took one look at Don then lunged for a buzzer.

"Why bother?" Don headed past him toward the inner office. "Just tell the general that I'm on my way in."

"But—?"

"How did I get this far without being stopped?" Don shrugged. "You figure it out."

Penn wasn't alone. Earlman, more haggard than ever, sat smoking unhappily and Don guessed that he had been receiving the full weight of the general's anger. He grinned as the door slammed shut behind him.

"Hi, Max, you look as if you've been having a bad time."

"Don!" Earlman lunged to his feet. "Where have you been? It's more than a week now. Where's Klieger?"

"Klieger." Don smiled. "At this moment he is somewhere in Soviet territory being interrogated by every lie-detection device known to man."

For a moment there was a deathly silence, then Penn leaned forward.

"All right, Gregson, you've had your joke. Now produce Klieger, or take the consequences."

"It's no joke." Don stared grimly into the general's eyes. "That's what I've been doing this past week. Talking to Klieger, fixing his passage, dodging your hunters."

"Traitor!"

Don didn't answer.

"You dirty, stinking traitor!" Suddenly Penn became icy calm and his calmness was more terrible than his rage. "This is a Democracy, Gregson, but we know how to protect ourselves. You should have gone with Klieger to the safety of your friends."

"Friends! You think I did it for them?" Don looked down at his hands, they were shaking. Deliberately he sat down, lit a cigarette, waited for his anger to pass.

"You demand loyalty," he said. "Blind, unswerving, unthinking loyalty. You think that those who are not with you must be for the enemy but you are wrong. There is a greater loyalty than to an individual, a nation or a group

of nations. There is a loyalty to the human race. One day, please God, both sides may realize that."

"Don!"

Earlman leaned forward. Gregson gestured him back to his chair.

"Just listen, Max; you too, general. Listen and try to understand."

He paused, dragging at the cigarette, his broad-planed face revealing some of his fatigue.

"The answer," he said, "lay in the Ming Vase."

"The one Klieger stole from the antique shop?" Earlman nodded. "What about it, Don? Why was it important?"

He was, Don knew, acting as a barrier between him and the wrath of the general and he was suddenly glad that he was there. Penn, alone, might never have found the patience to listen.

"Klieger can see into the future," continued Don. "Never forget that. He was the star 'resident' at Cartwright House and stayed there for ten years. Then, for no apparent reason, he decided to take off. He did. He stole money—he had to live, and he stole a vase, to him a thing of wondrous beauty. The answer lies in why he did it."

"A thief!" Penn snorted. "He was a thief. That's the answer."

"No," said Don quietly. "The reason is that time was running out—and he knew it!"

They stared at him. They didn't understand, not even Earlman, certainly not Penn and yet, to Don, it was all clear. So ghastly clear.

"What a man does is determined by his character," said Don. "Given a certain stimulus he will react in a certain way—and this is predictable. Think of Klieger and what he was. Meek, mild, inoffensive, willing to do as he was told without question. He did it for ten years while his talent was being trained so that he could 'see' further and clearer into the future. Then, one day, he 'sees' something which drives him desperate.

"Desperate enough to break the habits of a lifetime. He persuaded the others to help him escape. They thought that

he was doing it to help them, perhaps they wanted to prove something, that isn't important now. Klieger is. He walked out. He stole. He tried to fill every waking hour with what he considered to be the ultimate of beauty. A different man would have gambled, drank, chased women. Klieger loves old and precious things. He stole a Ming vase."

"Why?" Despite himself Penn was interested.

"Because he saw the ultimate war!"

Don leaned forward, the cigarette forgotten, his eyes burning with the necessity of making them see what he knew was the truth.

"He saw the end of everything. He saw his own death and he wanted, poor devil, to live a little before he died!"

It made sense. Even to Penn it made sense. He had seen the secret records, the breakdown of a man's character, the psychological dissection and the extrapolations. Security was very thorough.

"I—" Penn swallowed. "I can't believe it."

"It's the truth." Don remembered his cigarette. "He told me—we had plenty of time for talking. How else do you think we managed to catch him? He could have remained free forever had he tried. But he was tired, afraid, terrified. He wanted to see the exhibition—and he expected to die by Bronson's bullet."

"Now wait a minute!" Earlman frowned, a crease folding his forehead. "No man in his right mind would willingly go to his death. It doesn't make sense."

"No?" Don was grim. "Think about it."

"A bullet is quick and clean," mused Earlman. "But he didn't die! Bronson was stopped!"

"That is why I turned 'traitor.'" Don crushed out his cigarette. "By stopping Bronson I proved that the future is a variable, that even an expert clairvoyant like Klieger can only see the probable future, not the inevitable one. It gave us hope. Both of us."

He rose, looking down at Penn slumped behind his desk, trying not to let the hate he saw in the general's eyes disturb him. He had no need to worry.

"It had to be. The pattern must be broken if we are to

avoid the future Klieger saw. So I gave him to the Reds—he was willing to do his part. They will learn the truth.”

“They will copy us!” Penn reared to his feet. “They will form their own project and we will lose our greatest advantage. Gregson, do you know what you have done?”

“I’ve opened a window to the future—for them as well as for us. Now there will be no ultimate war.”

“Smart!” Penn didn’t trouble to hide his sneer. “You’re so smart! You’ve taken it on yourself to do this without authority. I’ll see you dead for this!”

“No, general.” Don shook his head. “You won’t see me dead.”

“That’s what you think. I’ll have you shot!”

Don smiled, warm in the comforting knowledge of his new awareness.

“No,” he said. “You won’t have me shot.”

*In the introduction to a story called “The Last Day of Summer,” in the first annual SF, I referred to the author, E. C. Tubb, as “almost unknown in this country, but probably Britain’s most popular writer of s-f . . .” The next annual included the first published story of a young writer named J. G. Ballard: “Prima Belladonna.” In the third, Brian W. Aldiss, then already becoming known in England, made his American debut with “Let’s Be Frank.”*

*All of these stories, and many that appeared in later volumes, were from the British Nova publications, Science Fantasy and New Worlds, both of which were, at that time, as little-known here as the authors. I am happy to say that this is no longer true either of the magazines or of the substantial group of authors (John Brunner, John Rackham, James White, among others) who developed in their pages under the editorial guidance of E. J. Carnell.*

*In the past year Mr. Carnell, who has been publicist, critic, business manager, and (probably at times) mailboy as well, since the beginning of the publishing venture, went on to a new position at Corgi Books. The magazines were to cease publication, but happily passed into new hands instead. Some of the best and brightest new ideas in science fiction in the last decade have come from this source.*

*Nova has not, however, been the sole source of good British s-f. Arthur C. Clarke, John Wyndham, A. B. Chandler, John Christopher, to name a few, were writing for the American magazines all along, as were several others whose reputations were primarily “mainstream.”*

*Whether Gerald Kersh, now residing in New York State, can still be called a British writer, I do not know. That he is one of the finest and most consistently entertaining writers of imaginative literature, I am sure.*

## A BARGAIN WITH CASHEL

**Gerald Kersh**

*from The Saturday Evening Post*

If this is a hangover—and if it is not, the joke is on me, with a vengeance—the devil take the vintage! I am no stranger to that sense of half-belonging which comes with the morning after a heavy night. But I never felt so odd as this. “Odd” is the word, like three gloves or half a haircut.

I woke as usual, clambering from a miry sleep joint by joint like a dinosaur coming out of the mud. A smudged lithograph of consciousness came back in a swirl of little black dots. I remembered having drunk champagne with friends and—most remarkable—having paid the check for all of us.

I sat up then and groped for my glasses. The room sprang into focus. It was mine—there was no doubt about that—but, while I was familiar with every dusty corner of it, I felt as a ghost might feel if it returned to haunt a place where it had lived. There should be some revaluation of dimensions—that place would seem ghostly; only the ghost would think itself solid. *And that might be an idea for a story to sell Cashel*, I thought.

There was nothing unmaterial about my bare foot, or the chair I stubbed it against. No, no, I was myself, the reprehensible Ira Noxon and none other; and I was at home. There lay my Afghan rug, and there stood my divan and writing desk, and there was the “room divider” made of unpainted bookshelves, beyond which I kept my little stove and my icebox. And there was no getting away from the



throbbing of machinery in the cloak-and-suiters' loft on the floor below. I liked living in a house supposed to be strictly nonresidential, down in the garment district; the quiet of the streets by night; the naughtiness of making neat packages of my garbage—mostly coffee grounds and bottles—and dropping them in strange doorways. Squalor and solitude suit me.

The place pleased me, generally. But not this morning. A subtle, indefinable atmosphere of uneasiness prevailed. Something was lost. Or was something here that ought not to be? Could it be that I had brought home a guest last night, who had left behind some unfamiliar scent, some aura, some memory? Had I made some scandalous fool of myself in the course of the night?

No, not I. A clown, perhaps; yes. But a fool, never—drunk or sober.

My clothes hung over the chair where I had thrown them. I turned out the pockets and discovered to my astonishment that I had \$55 in bills and \$4.50 in change. Yesterday's newspaper was dated April 27. Between this date and the first of the following month, when my aunt's check was due, I could not possibly have had more than a dollar or two—unless I had borrowed money somewhere. *In that case I must have met a rich stranger*, I thought; *nobody I know would lend me this much money, even if he had it.*

I filled my percolator and set it to heat, and went to my tiny bathroom, where I switched on the light and had a long, close look at myself. I was relieved to see my own image in the mirror. I like the way I look, and go to some pains to look that way. It takes more muscles to frown than to smile, they say. They ought to practice the Gothic-arched fixed grin I offer the world. I have a way of never meeting your gaze—I offer my colorless gray eyes for inspection beneath strong lenses in a manner which seems to say, *In these apparently clear drops of stagnant water curious creatures creep and crawl.* It is said that somewhere in the ruined labyrinth of my mind there wanders the ghost of a lost genius, but that some small, necessary bit of me is

missing. Either it was knocked out when I was young or it never grew at all. As I am, like a boy who has lost a front tooth, I have what others have not—a perfect space to spit through—and I use it. I am a master of the studied insult.

I had no fault to find with my appearance, then, as I turned from the mirror. But black coffee was slow in settling my mind. There was some brandy in the cupboard. That helped. Then I found myself feeling in the handkerchief pocket of my coat and sighing with relief as I found and lit a long, thin cigar.

I had never smoked a cigar in my life before.

Could it be perhaps that last night, under the influence of whatever I was drinking, I had smoked a cigar and liked it? This was an expensive cigar. Perhaps the rich man who lent me all that money gave me cigars as well?

And then I remembered that Mourne Cashel had given me the money. That was the most astounding thing of all. Cashel is proprietor and editor of a pulpy little magazine devoted to tenth-rate science fiction. Since storytelling is a dying art and conjecture is its last gasp, little Cashel's back is bowed from stooping to scrape the bottom of an oft-rinsed barrel. He has to adulterate the aqueous solution of strained imagination that he dispenses, with syrupy editorial introductions. Only people who read such stuff are bemused enough to write it, so Cashel's shabby book is subscribed to mainly by part-time hacks who get their livings teaching school or monitoring I.B.M. installations. At less than fifty cents a copy, having a circulation of twenty thousand and carrying no advertisements, the magazine is a dead loss, says Cashel. He will pay a few paltry dollars for a six thousand-word story, the month *after* publication. He never lent anybody a penny. "I haven't got it," he says, almost in physical agony. I believe he really does suffer when he has to say no to a request for a small loan.

This was one of the reasons why, having little else to do, I went out to annoy Mourne Cashel yesterday morning. For, as some men dread cats, so he seemed to dread me. And since some men are fascinated by what they most abhor, Cashel appeared to be attracted to me.

It all came back with vivid clarity while I smoked that inexplicable cigar.

For Cashel's sake I had made an especially careful toilet. Now some men dress to kill. I dress to wound. My contempt for appearances is real and deep. My best suit is black alpaca, carefully made by a theatrical tailor not to fit, skillfully padded and draped to hang just wrong enough to irritate those who notice such things. The left sleeve is a shade longer than the right; the right lapel is a trifle wider than the left; the trousers are too low in the waist, and their legs are of different lengths and widths; the waistcoat is too high at the neck and appears to be buttoned up askew. My shoes are made to give me the appearance of having two left feet. I am perfectly comfortable, however: You are the one who is ill-at-ease, and it serves you right for taking stock of such trivial!

So dressed and, in a manner of speaking, armed, I walked uptown with only eighty-five cents left of my allowance and ran poor Cashel to earth just as he was going out to lunch. Now, while thumbscrews could not get money from him, Cashel was always good for a lunch. Yesterday, with a stifled sigh, he took me to the Crepuscule, the darkest restaurant in New York. It has a domed ceiling, lit only by tiny inset bulbs widely spaced in the designs of the better-known constellations.

Cashel had a cocktail made with vodka because it does not smell. I had one made with rum, because it does smell. "Are you writing anything these days, Ira?" he asked.

"I am more than halfway through my novel," I told him.

"I'd love to read it; my dear fellow."

I said to him, "You don't know how to read, little man, any more than you know how to edit. Having skimmed, you give marks. Once a schoolteacher, always a schoolteacher. You can read my book when it's out, if you've got the price of a copy. Touching that matter, Cashel, I find myself somewhat short of housekeeping money. Lend me fifty."

"I haven't got it!" he said, in a kind of wail.

I laughed. I had known exactly what he would say, of course. I said, "I didn't really mean a loan. I meant an

advance. I'll write a story for you, Cashel—there now. And knowing, as you do what I think of your horrible little magazine, you'll realize that when I offer to write you a story I've touched rock bottom. Well?"

He called for more drinks. "I can't advance! I haven't got it. The accountants—" He half stifled a sigh. "You have so much talent," he said. "Why do you use it to torment people?"

"Can one go through life without treading on worms?" I asked. "But my story. Listen. The title is *Dreadful Little Brat*. Now it seems there is a child of the ash cans who has an utterly evil character. The things she does are something shocking. But she has a face like a flower. Free-lance photographers are always snapping her sitting on doorsteps, looking up to the sky, because she looks so like an angel. Actually she's scheming how to blackmail the candy-store man out of a dollar to buy lipstick. She is a truly dreadful little brat. Now one morning she is loitering by a lamppost, having forged a letter saying she's too sick to go to school, reading a theatrical magazine she has stolen from the drug-store. Her attention is caught by a photograph of a sublimely beautiful actress curtsying within a circle of bouquets on a stage. 'What wouldn't I give to be her!' she says aloud. 'Your soul, for example?' says a voice, and there stands a man with a black box. She nods. 'Step inside, please,' says the man. She does so, and he presses a button."

Cashel said, "Oh, dear; oh, dear!" and ordered more cocktails.

I went on, "Now somewhere in Palm Springs a loathsome old harridan, almost destroyed by her frightful debaucheries, flips through an old album. She finds a picture of a flower-faced little angel sitting on a doorstep. 'What wouldn't I give to be her!' she cries. 'Your soul?' says a voice, and there stands a man with a black box. She nods. 'Step inside, please,' says the man. She does so, and he presses a button."

"I don't want to interrupt—" Cashel began.

"Then be quiet. Now that old harridan and that flower-faced child are one and the same person, with fifty years

of time between them. The sublime creature on the stage is the harridan as she was thirty years ago and the child as she will be twenty years hence. As the one rushes forward, the other rushes back; the two parts of the same self meet in the person of the curtsyng actress at the peak of her triumph. But that actress is in intolerable agony. Not only has she an appalling Charley horse; she knows that the moment she rises something unthinkably embarrassing is going to happen. And she is doomed so to remain forever."

"It won't do; it won't do at all," said Mourne Cashel with vehemence. "It's irrational. It's unworkable. Things simply aren't done like that!"

"Oh, come off it! It's as rational as all your goo about galaxies and space-time continua and passionate robots and whatnot. Time is only imaginary, anyway," I said. "Fifty dollars, please!"

"Even if I liked the story, I couldn't. Won't you order?"

"Tripe," I said. "Tripe à la mode."

He ordered an omelet glumly. I was enjoying myself.

"Order a bottle of wine," I said, "and you may advance me a mere twenty-five."

"Wine, by all means," said he, beckoning. "But money, no. You know you're only teasing me. Why do you do it? It upsets me; you know it does. And time is not imaginary, if you know how to use it, Ira. With your youth— How old are you, by the way?"

"Thirty-three."

"With your youth and your talent. . . . What—time imaginary? Oh, far, far from it—ever so far from imaginary!"

"Imaginary," I said. "But let's assume otherwise, if you like. There's a story in it. You can let me have something on—"

"Ira, please, not again!"

"For example," I said. "You say to an office boy loafing at the water cooler 'Don't loaf on my time.' For  $x$  dollars a year you are actually buying that boy's time. He wants to use that time otherwise. He wants to see people playing baseball. But that time is yours. If you fire him he couldn't

say to you, 'Here's your money back, Mr. Cashel; please give me back eighteen months.' "

Cashel said solemnly—for there is no more inveterate enterer-into-the-spirit-of-things than your science fantasist—"No, of course not. It would be *used-up* time. It wouldn't be any good to him any more; don't you see?"

I pretended to be grave in turn. "One thing I'd like to know," I said, "is, where do people like you get all their time? Because they evidently use up far more than they've got. You know the soapy little biographical bits you slip into your blotted little pulp: 'Lucy Lockett is the author of sixteen novels and more than eleven hundred short stories. She is married to an archaeologist, whom she accompanies on most of his expeditions. Mrs. Lockett keeps house for her husband and six children. She lectures three times a week on ceramics at the Home for Wayward Wives. In her spare time she practices psychiatry.'"

"How can she? I repeat, where does she find the time?"

"Well—" Cashel began.

I went on: " 'Brass Williams is thirty-four, happily married, and father of eleven sons and a daughter (Peewee). He is Professor of astrophysics at East-Western University and has been a gas fitter, a theatrical-costume designer, a heavyweight boxer, a test pilot, a puddler in a steel mill and an optometrist. His published works include three encyclopedias, seven textbooks, nine novels, ten plays, sixteen filmscripts, and he conducts a daily syndicated column. Under three noms de plume he has written sixteen hundred short stories and novellas. In his spare time he makes bent-iron gates. His hobby is watchmaking.' "

"How? Above all, when? There's your story, Cashel; there's your story! These people go about picking up loafers. 'Have you a little time to spare?' they ask. 'All the time in the world, bud!' A bottle of Sneaky Pete changes hands—"

"No, no, no!" Cashel almost squeaked in his excitement. "That couldn't be the way of it. Time, per se, wouldn't be the way of it. Time, per se, wouldn't be of any use at all unless it were connected with a certain human potential.

Your born loafer, your irreclaimable skid-row wino, would have destroyed his potential. His time wouldn't be of any value! The only time worth buying would be that of a man who had disciplined himself to the *use* of time."

I said, "Jargon, little man, jargon! But I love the way you creatures of the scientific fairy-tale clique take yourselves seriously. If you care to purchase a little of my time, by the bye, a small advance will secure—"

"No, please, Ira! I concede we fantasy fellows do form a clique. We have to. Who else talks our language? We make it our business to say 'Let us assume' in such a manner as to stimulate the technologists to think *Why not?* We rationalize the *if*. We—"

"You do nothing of the sort. You fill a blunderbuss with nightmares and fire it into a crowd. If one slug grazes anything, you call yourselves prophets. But we were talking about time—as a commodity. Here's an idea for you. Assume that you are a man who needs time."

"I am; I do," sighed Cashel.

"Ah, but assume you aren't Mourne Cashel, who whimpers 'I haven't got it' when a gentleman mentions a lousy fifty dollars. Imagine yourself to be Mr. X, solvent and in the market for time."

"Hadn't you better have a brandy?" Cashel almost begged.

"Certainly I had better. To continue: Being such a man, you look around for somebody with what you call potential. As you say, an idiot's time isn't worth having. And as luck will have it, you meet Ira Noxon."

Cashel said, "Ah, your time would certainly be worth having. You are a hard worker, Ira."

"Are you trying to be funny?" I asked.

"Not at all. You have a stupendous potential. Just the energy you have put into doing nothing would supply current for a small town."

"Be less familiar, little man," I said. "Now you have met me. You ask, 'How much do you want for some of your time?' Words to that effect. I reply, naturally, 'I am no huckster. This is a buyer's market. How much are you paying

per unit of time? How much an hour, or day, or month?"

Cashel, engrossed in the spirit of the thing, cried, "No, no, no! Years—it must be a term of years."

"Hold hard," I said. "Would that imply a term of servitude? I couldn't go for that, you know."

"Certainly not. Just your time, pure and simple. You wouldn't even miss it, necessarily," said Cashel.

"This being the case, I say to Mr. X, 'I can let you have five years.'"

"But not of your past, as in the analogy of the boss and the office boy," said Cashel. "That couldn't possibly suit, you know."

"I know," I said. "Future."

Cashel said owlishly, after calling for more brandy, "But they'd have to be consecutive years."

"Oh, yes, by all means," I said, "as consecutive as you please. So Mr. X says, 'How about ten thousand a year?'"

"Too much, too much—can't run to it!" cried Cashel.

"Shut up. I say to Mr. X, 'You are talking like an inky little plagiarist I know called Mourne Cashel. I wouldn't consider a penny less than fifteen thousand a year. Think of all the potential!' Mr. X thinks and thinks."

"I can see by your face you have something naughty up your sleeve," said Cashel.

"Wait. I go on to say, 'Naturally, I have read about deals with the devil, and so forth; how deadly it can be to sell even a second of one's time, in which one may utter a fateful word or pull a trigger. I stipulate, none of that! The time I sell may not be used in any way to hurt me or—to be on the safe side—to hurt anyone else. You get into trouble on your own time, not on the valuable time you buy from me.'"

"He'd have to agree to that," said Cashel. "But he'd say, 'Fifteen thousand dollars a year is too much.'"

"My Mr. X is no such cheapjack higgler," I said. "But let us assume that I let myself be beaten down to twelve thousand five hundred a year."

"Very well," said Cashel grudgingly—he was careful with



money even in fantasy. "But the five years of time would have to be handed over on the spot."

"Just what I was coming to. Mr. X and I reach an agreement. The whole five years' pay is to be in advance—and on the nail, you know?"

"Of course," said Cashel.

"Tax-free," I said.

"Ye-es, yes. Tax-free."

"Fine." Seeing Cashel writing on the back of a menu, I said, "Making a note of this, little man? I'll be damned if it doesn't cost you!"

"I was doing figures," he said. "Five years at twelve and a half makes sixty-two thousand, five hundred."

"I daresay it does. And this sum of money I secure before I deliver. Very well. Then I say to my Mr. X, 'Thank you, sir, and good day to you. It has been a pleasure doing business with you. I hope you enjoyed the time I sold you.' Mr. X says, 'What do you mean?' I reply, 'You purchased five consecutive years of my time. *I have sold you exactly two and a half years forward and two and a half years back!*' So saying, I walk out with my satchel of money."

Cashel blinked and said, "Coffee?"

"Yes, and another brandy. A neat story, I flatter myself?"

"It couldn't work quite like that," said Cashel. "Two and a half years forward and two and a half years back wouldn't leave you in exactly the same place at the same time of day."

"Why not?"

"Because time bends, the same way light does. There's no such thing as 'instantaneous'—as yet. Also, the universe moves, as you must know. There'd have to be a few hours and a few miles of difference. As for the gimmick about time forward and time back, it isn't as clever as you might think. Consider: Your Mr. X would be richer by two and a half years of foresight and two and a half years of hindsight—to say nothing of the time itself. He'd get a good sixty-two thousand dollars' worth."

"Sixty-two thousand, five hundred," I said.

"All right."

"Now do I get fifty dollars on account of this fine story?"

"I can't, Ira," said Cashel, "but I wish you'd drink this brandy for me. It makes me sleepy. . . . No, on policy, I can't advance on a story." He sounded slightly tipsy. "But I certainly would like to buy five years of the time a man with a brain like yours fritters away."

"Right!" I said, bored now that I had had my fun. "Sixty-two thousand, five hundred dollars on the nail, and it's yours—two and a half forward, two and a half back."

"You really would sell it, I think," Cashel murmured. He was making calculations on the menu, and looking at his watch—one of those complicated stop watches studded with incomprehensible winders, such as artillerymen use.

"Like a shot!" I replied, helping myself to his brandy.

"It's fascinating, really," said Cashel. He took out a little ivory slide rule and made further calculations. "As it would turn out," he said brightly, "there'd actually be a discrepancy of about twenty-one hours, in going from here to June, 1965, and back. So you wouldn't be able to get the money until about noon tomorrow."

"Free of tax, mind," I said, playing the owl like Cashel, but making a grotesquerie of it. "Of course, this mustn't shorten my life in any way, you understand."

"Of course not, Ira. It's simply a matter of your unused time—you don't even miss it."

"Do I sign a contract?" I asked.

"No, we just shake hands on it."

"Before we do, let's go back to the question of money," I said. "Sixty-odd thousand tomorrow is very nice to contemplate. How about something on account?"

His face fell. Then he sighed and said, "There you go! But assuming that I make this deal with you, I can't talk thousands, Ira—you know that. I think you said it was fifty you wanted?"

"What are you talking about?" I asked. "For five years of the time a man of talent fritters away? Fifty dollars?" I pretended to be indignant. "Why, I'd want five hundred at least, and spot cash. Two and a half years forward, two and a half years back—and I couldn't be on the same spot,

since a pendulum doesn't swing exactly along the same line, or however it is you work it out. You don't catch me with an offer like that, little man. Give me five hundred and another brandy, and it's a deal."

"I haven't got it," he said.

"Come on," I said, like a pushcart peddler. "Four hundred."

"I tell you I haven't got it!"

The game was about worn out. "How much have you got? A hundred and fifty?" I asked, waiting for the inevitable "I never carry more than I can afford to lose, so I haven't got anything."

To my surprise he looked in his wallet and said, "All the ready cash I have in the world is a hundred and twenty dollars, Ira."

"I'm sorry," I said firmly. "I can't possibly sell time like mine at less than thirty dollars a year, you know. Give me the hundred and twenty, then, but you can only have two years forward and two years back. One has one's pride, damn it all!"

Cashel amazed me by saying, "Oh, very well." He gave me the one hundred twenty dollars, and we shook hands. "You've got more in your wallet," I said, bending forward to look.

"Only a few dollars I need for expenses," he said.

"What a skinflint you are!" I cried. "I offer you over sixty-two thousand dollars' worth of my precious time for a hundred and fifty, and you beat me down another thirty!" But I put the money in my pocket, thinking, *This is the easiest bit of cash I ever bullied anybody out of*. "And what about that brandy?" I demanded.

"If you're sure you haven't had enough already."

"And you've got to have one too."

"Yes, we must seal the bargain."

So we drank for the last time, and he signed the bill and darted away. I remained and had more brandy, until the bartender said if I didn't mind he'd rather not serve me again just now.

I must have left then and made my zigzag way down to

the village from the Crepuscule, but I could not recall how. I recollected vaguely the smoky interior of the Café Verlaine, an old haunt of mine, and my penetrating voice crying, "Drinks are on me! The impossible is achieved! I have put the bite on Mourne Cashell!"

And so to my distasteful awakening this morning, and my confusion.

The coffeepot was empty now, and the brandy was gone. I decided to visit the Café Verlaine again for a late breakfast.

"Well, well, well!" said Lonergan, the bartender. "Look who's here! Champagne Charlie!"

"I can't get the taste of the vile stuff out of my mouth," I said. "Give me a double cognac and a cup of coffee."

"Oh, come," said Lonergan. "It wasn't Veuve Cliquot, but it couldn't have been as bad as all that."

"How many bottles did I buy, may I ask?"

"Let me see," he said, scratching his head. "It was six or seven bottles, I believe. 'I have put the bite on Mourne Cashell!' says you. And, man, you made an evening of it! Here, have this one on the house, Mr. Noxon. Mourne Cashell, and you'd put the bite on him, you said. Ah, that was a sad business, a sad business, with Mourne Cashell!" He shook his big Irish head. "What do you think of it all?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," I said.

"Why, don't you read the papers?"

"Occasionally. What's this sad business with little Cashell?"

"Why, the fortune he made with his publishing empire and his television programs and all. But that's the way of it—the bigger they are the harder they fall, and what with the taxes and the overheads it's a case of rob Peter to pay Paul. And there's many's the big shot that, if he was called on to lay down all his cards this very minute, it would be seen that all was paper and credit. It's always a little playing for time here and a bank renewal there. Poor Mr. Cashell, I served him at this very bar more than once. And to jump out of a thirtieth-story window! A man must be desperate indeed to do such a terrible thing!"

"When was this?" I asked.

"This very morning. He was down by twenty million, and an inquiry pending. But if they had not pushed him to the wall, the Madison Avenue and the Wall Street men, why, given another three months he'd have doubled the money and nobody would have been the wiser or the worse."

"Thirty dollars would have got the cheapskate six months more," I said. "But I never heard anything of Cashel's publishing empire and television programs and whatnot."

Lonergan said, "I don't get the gag."

"Never mind. Since when was Cashel a magnate, for heaven's sake?"

Lonergan stared at me. "Why," he said, "everybody in this whole world knew about Mourne Cashel. Where on God's earth have you been these past two years, Mr. Noxon?"

*Throughout these notes, I have placed much emphasis on matters of definition. Time, as a coordinate of space, has been defined with some degree of precision, mathematically, but time, as we ordinarily use the word, a subjective measurement of awareness, is even more difficult to pin down than, for instance, subjective or awareness.*

*In the Playboy symposium, William Tenn mentioned "intelligence of some sort" as a prerequisite for civilization, and added that the factor we were most likely to share with an alien civilization would be "imagination, the essential ingredient of our culture."*

*All right. But what is imagination? What is the relationship between intelligence and imagination? What is intelligence?*

*And these are all "easy" words; we can usually understand each other when we use them in ordinary conversation, even without clear definitions. But what about intuition, neurotic, creative, secure, art?*

*Or how about curiosity, wonder, humor, communication? Writers and philosophers have repeatedly pointed to one or another of these qualities as setting mankind apart from other Earth animals. But what—exactly—do we mean when we say them?*

*The search for practical, working definitions is going on in many fields of sociological and psychological study today. A new kind of science is being born in the process.*

*When we understand, in the way that we now understand the word atmosphere (composition, behavior, etc.), what we mean by subjectiv-*

ity, we will be able to make the same allowance for it, in our study of "humanics," that the spectrographer now can make for the content of Earth's atmosphere.

We may then come to a further understanding of the true and complete potential of the (subjective) human mind.

## DRUNKBOAT

**Cordwainer Smith**

*from Amazing*

Perhaps it is the saddest, maddest, wildest story in the whole long history of space. It is true that no one else had ever done anything like it before, to travel at such a distance, and at such speeds, and by such means. The hero looked like such an ordinary man—when people looked at him for the first time. The second time, ah! that was different.

And the heroine. Small she was, and ash-blond, intelligent, perky, and hurt. Hurt—yes, that's the right word. She looked as though she needed comforting or helping, even when she was perfectly all right. Men felt more like men when she was near. Her name was Elizabeth.

Who would have thought that her name would ring loud and clear in the wild vomiting nothing which made up space?

He took an old, old rocket, of an ancient design. With it he outflew, outfled, outjumped all the machines which had ever existed before. You might almost think that he went so fast that he shocked the great vaults of the sky, so that the ancient poem might have been written for him alone. "All the stars threw down their spears and watered heaven with their tears."

Go he did, so fast, so far that people simply did not believe it at first. They thought it was a joke told by men, a farce spun forth by rumor, a wild story to while away the summer afternoon.

We know his name now.

And our children and their children will know it for always.

Rambo. Artyr Rambo of Earth Four.

But he followed his Elizabeth where no space was. He went where men could not go, had not been, did not dare, would not think.

He did all this of his own free will.

Of course people thought it was a joke at first, and got to making up silly songs about the reported trip.

"Dig me a hole for that reeling feeling . . . !" sang one.

"Push me the call for the umber number . . . !" sang another.

"Where is the ship of the ochre joker . . . ?" sang a third.

Then people everywhere found it was true. Some stood stock still and got gooseflesh. Others turned quickly to everyday things. Space<sub>3</sub> had been found, and it had been pierced. Their world would never be the same again. The solid rock had become an open door.

Space itself, so clean, so empty, so tidy, now looked like a million million light-years of tapioca pudding—gummy, mushy, sticky, not fit to breathe, not fit to swim in.

How did it happen?

Everybody took the credit, each in his own different way.

"He came for me," said Elizabeth. "I died and he came for me because the machines were making a mess of my life when they tried to heal my terrible, useless death."

"I went myself," said Rambo. "They tricked me and lied to me and fooled me, but I took the boat and I became the boat and I got there. Nobody made me do it. I was angry, but I went. And I came back, didn't I?"

He too was right, even when he twisted and whined on the green grass of earth, his ship lost in a space so terribly far and strange that it might have been beneath his living hand, or might have been half a galaxy away.

How can anybody tell, with space three?

It was Rambo who got back, looking for his Elizabeth.

He loved her. So the trip was his, and the credit his.

But the Lord Crudelta said, many years later, when he spoke in a soft voice and talked confidentially among friends, "The experiment was mine. I designed it, I picked Rambo. I drove the selectors mad, trying to find a man who would meet those specifications. And I had that rocket built to the old, old plans. It was the sort of thing which human beings first used when they jumped out of the air a little bit, leaping like flying fish from one wave to the next and already thinking that they were eagles. If I had used one of the regular planoform ships, it would have disappeared with a sort of reverse gurgle, leaving space milky for a little bit while it faded into nastiness and obliteration. But I did not risk that. I put the rocket on a launching pad. *And the launching pad itself was an interstellar ship!* Since we were using an ancient rocket, we did it up right, with the old, old writing, mysterious letters printed all over the machine. We even had the name of our Organization—I and O and M—for 'the Instrumentality of Mankind' written on it good and sharp.

"How would I know," went on the Lord Crudelta, "that we would succeed more than we wanted to succeed, that Rambo would tear space itself loose from its hinges and leave that ship behind, just because he loved Elizabeth so sharply much, so fiercely much?"

Crudelta sighed.

"I know it and I don't know it. I'm like that ancient man who tried to take a water boat the wrong way around the planet Earth and found a new world instead. Columbus, he was called. And the land, that was Australia or America or something like that. That's what I did. I sent Rambo out in that ancient rocket and he found a way through space. Now none of us will ever know who might come bulking through the floor or take shape out of the air in front of us."

Crudelta added, almost wistfully: "What's the use of telling the story? Everybody knows it, anyhow. My part in it isn't very glorious. Now the end of it, that's pretty. The



bungalow by the waterfall and all the wonderful children that other people gave to them, you could write a poem about that. But the next to the end, how he showed up at the hospital helpless and insane, looking for his own Elizabeth. That was sad and eerie, that was frightening. I'm glad it all came to the happy ending with the bungalow by the waterfall, but it took a crashing long time to get there. And there are parts of it that we will never quite understand, the naked skin against naked space, the eyeballs riding something much faster than light ever was. Do you know what an *aoudad* is? It's an ancient sheep that used to live on Old Earth, and here we are, thousands of years later, with a children's nonsense rhyme about it. The animals are gone but the rhyme remains. It'll be like that with Rambo someday. Everybody will know his name and all about his drunkboat, but they will forget the scientific milestone that he crossed, hunting for Elizabeth in an ancient rocket that couldn't fly from peetle to pootle. . . . Oh, the rhyme? Don't you know that? It's a silly thing. It goes,

Point your gun at a murky lurky.

*(Now you're talking ham or turkey!)*

Shoot a shot at a dying aoudad.

*(Don't ask the lady why or how, dad!)*

Don't ask me what 'ham' and 'turkey' are. Probably parts of ancient animals, like beefsteak or sirloin. But the children still say the words. They'll do that with Rambo and his drunken boat some day. They may even tell the story of Elizabeth. But they will never tell the part about how he got to the hospital. That part is too terrible, too real, too sad and wonderful at the end. They found him on the grass. Mind you, naked on the grass, and nobody knew where he had come from!"

They found him naked on the grass and nobody knew where he had come from. They did not even know about the ancient rocket which the Lord Crudelta had sent beyond the end of nowhere with the letters I, O and M written on it. They did not know that this was Rambo, who

had gone through space three. The robots noticed him first and brought him in, photographing everything that they did. They had been programed that way, to make sure that anything unusual was kept in the records.

Then the nurses found him in an outside room.

They assumed that he was alive, since he was not dead, but they could not prove that he was alive, either.

That heightened the puzzle.

The doctors were called in. Real doctors, not machines. They were very important men. Citizen Doctor Timofeyev, Citizen Doctor Grosbeck and the director himself, Sir and Doctor Vomact. They took the case.

*(Over on the other side of the hospital Elizabeth waited, unconscious, and nobody knew it at all. Elizabeth, for whom he had jumped space, and pierced the stars, but nobody knew it yet!)*

The young man could not speak. When they ran eye-prints and fingerprints through the Population Machine, they found that he had been bred on earth itself, but had been shipped out as a frozen and unborn baby to Earth Four. At tremendous cost, they queried Earth Four with an "instant message," only to discover that the young man who lay before them in the hospital had been lost from an experimental ship on an intergalactic trip.

Lost.

No ship and no sign of ship.

And here he was.

They stood at the edge of space, and did not know what they were looking at. They were doctors and it was their business to repair or rebuild people, not to ship them around. How should such men know about space<sub>3</sub> when they did not even know about space<sub>2</sub>, except for the fact that people got on the planoform ships and made trips through it? They were looking for sickness when their eyes saw engineering. They treated him when he was well.

All he needed was time, to get over the shock of the most tremendous trip ever made by a human being, but the doctors did not know that and they tried to rush his recovery.

When they put clothes on him, he moved from coma to a kind of mechanical spasm and tore the clothing off. Once again stripped, he lay himself roughly on the floor and refused food or speech.

They fed him with needles while the whole energy of space, had they only known it, was radiating out of his body in new forms.

They put him all by himself in a locked room and watched him through the peephole.

He was a nice-looking young man, even though his mind was blank and his body was rigid and unconscious. His hair was very fair and his eyes were light blue but his face showed character—a square chin; a handsome, resolute sullen mouth; old lines in the face which looked as though, when conscious, he must have lived many days or months on the edge of rage.

When they studied him the third day in the hospital, their patient had not changed at all.

He had torn off his pajamas again and lay naked, face down, on the floor.

His body was as immobile and tense as it had been on the day before.

*(One year later, this room was going to be a museum with a bronze sign reading, "Here lay Rambo after he left the Old Rocket for Space Three," but the doctors still had no idea of what they were dealing with.)*

His face was turned so sharply to the left that the neck muscles showed. His right arm stuck out straight from the body. The left arm formed an exact right angle from the body, with the left forearm and hand pointing rigidly upward at 90° from the upper arm. The legs were in the grotesque parody of a running position.

Doctor Grosbeck said, "It looks to me like he's swimming. Let's drop him in a tank of water and see if he moves." Grosbeck sometimes went in for drastic solutions to problems.

Timofeyev took his place at the peephole. "Spasm, still," he murmured. "I hope the poor fellow is not feeling pain when his cortical defenses are down. How can a man fight

pain if he does not even know what he is experiencing?"

"And you, sir and doctor," said Grosbeck to Vomact, "what do you see?"

Vomact did not need to look. He had come early and had looked long and quietly at the patient through the peephole before the other doctors arrived. Vomact was a wise man, with good insight and rich intuitions. He could guess in an hour more than a machine could diagnose in a year; he was already beginning to understand that this was a sickness which no man had ever had before. Still, there were remedies waiting.

The three doctors tried them.

They tried hypnosis, electrotherapy, massage, subsonics, atropine, surgical, a whole family of the digitalinids, and some quasi-narcotic viruses which had been grown in orbit where they mutated fast. They got the beginning of a response when they tried gas hypnosis combined with an electronically amplified telepath; this showed that something still went on inside the patient's mind. Otherwise the brain might have seemed to be mere fatty tissue, without a nerve in it. The other attempts had shown nothing. The gas showed a faint stirring away from fear and pain. The telepath reported glimpses of unknown skies. (The doctors turned the telepath over to the Space Police promptly, so they could try to code the star patterns which he had seen in a patient's mind, but the patterns did not fit. The telepath, though a keen-witted man, could not remember them in enough detail for them to be scanned against the samples of piloting sheets.)

The doctors went back to their drugs and tried ancient, simple remedies—morphine and caffeine to counteract each other, and a rough massage to make him dream again, so that the telepath could pick it up.

There was no further result that day, or the next.

Meanwhile the Earth authorities were getting restless. They thought, quite rightly, that the hospital had done a good job of proving that the patient had not been on Earth until a few moments before the robots found him on the grass. How had he gotten on the grass?

The airspace of Earth reported no intrusion at all, no vehicle marking a blazing arc of air incandescing against metal, no whisper of the great forces which drove a plano-form ship through space.

*(Crudelta, using faster-than-light ships, was creeping slow as a snail back toward Earth, racing his best to see if Rambo had gotten there first.)*

On the fifth day, there was the beginning of a breakthrough.

*Elizabeth had passed.*

This was found out only much later, by a careful check of the hospital records.

The doctors only knew this much: Patients had been moved down the corridor, sheet-covered figures immobile on wheeled beds.

Suddenly the beds stopped rolling.

A nurse screamed.

The heavy steel-and-plastic wall was bending inward. Some slow, silent force was pushing the wall into the corridor itself.

The wall ripped.

A human hand emerged.

One of the quick-witted nurses screamed, "*Push* those beds! *Push* them out of the way."

The nurses and robots obeyed.

The beds rocked like a group of boats crossing a wave when they came to the place where the floor, bonded to the wall, had bent upward to meet the wall as it tore inward. The peace-colored glow of the lights flicked. Robots appeared.

A second human hand came through the wall. Pushing in opposite directions, the hands tore the wall as though it had been wet paper.

The patient from the grass put his head through.

He looked blindly up and down the corridor, his eyes not quite focusing, his skin glowing a strange red-brown from the burns of open space.

"No," he said. Just that one word.

But that "No" was heard. Though the volume was not loud, it carried throughout the hospital. The internal telecommunications system relayed it. Every switch in the place went negative. Frantic nurses and robots, with even the doctors helping them, rushed to turn all the machines back on—the pumps, the ventilators, the artificial kidneys, the brain re-recorders, even the simple air engines which kept the atmosphere clean.

Far overhead an aircraft spun giddily. Its "off" switch, surrounded by triple safeguards, had suddenly been thrown into the negative position. Fortunately the robot-pilot got it going again before crashing into earth.

The patient did not seem to know that his word had this effect.

*(Later the world knew that this was part of the "drunk-boat effect." The man himself had developed the capacity for using his neurophysical system as a machine control.)*

In the corridor, the machine robot who served as policeman arrived. He wore sterile, padded velvet gloves with a grip of sixty metric tons inside his hands. He approached the patient. The robot had been carefully trained to recognize all kinds of danger from delirious or psychotic humans; later he reported that he had an input of "danger, extreme" on every band of sensation. He had been expecting to seize the prisoner with irreversible firmness and to return him to his bed, but with this kind of danger sizzling in the air, the robot took no chances. His wrist itself contained a hypodermic pistol which operated on compressed argon.

He reached out toward the unknown, naked man who stood in the big torn gap of the wall. The wrist-weapon hissed and a sizeable injection of condamine, the most powerful narcotic in the known universe, spat its way through the skin of Rambo's neck. The patient collapsed.

The robot picked him up gently and tenderly, lifted him through the torn wall, pushed the door open with a kick which broke the lock and put the patient back on his bed. The robot could hear doctors coming, so he used his enormous hands to pat the steel wall back into its proper shape.

Work-robots or underpeople could finish the job later, but meanwhile it looked better to have that part of the building set at right angles again.

Doctor Vomact arrived, followed closely by Grosbeck.

"What happened?" he yelled, shaken out of a lifelong calm. The robot pointed at the ripped wall.

"He tore it open. I put it back," said the robot.

The doctors turned to look at the patient. He had crawled off his bed again and was on the floor, but his breathing was light and natural.

"What did you give him?" cried Vomact to the robot.

"Condamine," said the robot, "according to rule 47-B. The drug is not to be mentioned outside the hospital."

"I know that," said Vomact absent-mindedly and a little crossly. "You can go along now. Thank you."

"It is not usual to thank robots," said the robot, "but you can read a commendation into my record if you want to."

"Get the blazes out of here!" shouted Vomact at the officious robot.

The robot blinked. "There are no blazes but I have the impression you mean me. I shall leave, with your permission." He jumped with odd gracefulness around the two doctors, fingered the broken doorlock absentmindedly, as though he might have wished to repair it; and then, seeing Vomact glare at him, left the room completely.

A moment later soft muted thuds began. Both doctors listened a moment and then gave up. The robot was out in the corridor, gently patting the steel floor back into shape. He was a tidy robot, probably animated by an amplified chicken-brain, and when he got tidy he became obstinate.

"Two questions, Grosbeck," said the sir and doctor Vomact.

"Your service, sir!"

"Where was the patient standing when he pushed the wall into the corridor, and how did he get the leverage to do it?"

Grosbeck narrowed his eyes in puzzlement. "Now that you mention it, I have no idea of how he did it. In fact, he

could not have done it. But he has. And the other question?"

"What do you think of condamine?"

"Dangerous, of course, as always. Addiction can—"

"Can you have addiction with no cortical activity?" interrupted Vomact.

"Of course," said Grosbeck promptly. "Tissue addiction."

"Look for it, then," said Vomact.

Grosbeck knelt beside the patient and felt with his fingertips for the muscle endings. He felt where they knotted themselves into the base of the skull, the tips of the shoulders, the striped area of the back.

When he stood up there was a look of puzzlement on his face. "I never felt a human body like this one before. I am not even sure that it *is* human any longer."

Vomact said nothing. The two doctors confronted one another. Grosbeck fidgeted under the calm stare of the senior man. Finally he blurted out,

"Sir and Doctor, I know what we *could* do."

"And that," said Vomact levelly, without the faintest hint of encouragement or of warning, "is what?"

"It wouldn't be the first time that it's been done in a hospital."

"What?" said Vomact, his eyes—those dreaded eyes!—making Grosbeck say what he did not want to say.

Grosbeck flushed. He leaned toward Vomact so as to whisper, even though there was no one standing near them. His words, when they came, had the hasty indecency of a lover's improper suggestion:

"Kill the patient, Sir and Doctor. Kill him. We have plenty of records of him. We can get a cadaver out of the basement and make it into a good simulacrum. Who knows what we will turn loose among mankind if we let him get well?"

"Who knows?" said Vomact without tone or quality to his voice. "But citizen and doctor, what is the twelfth duty of a physician?"

"Not to take the law into his own hands, keeping healing for the healers and giving to the state or the Instrumentality whatever properly belongs to the state or the Instru-



mentality.' " Grosbeck sighed as he retracted his own suggestion. "Sir and Doctor, I take it back. It wasn't medicine which I was talking about. It was government and politics which were really in my mind."

"And now . . . ?" asked Vomact.

"Heal him, or let him be until he heals himself."

"And which would you do?"

"I'd try to heal him."

"How?" said Vomact.

"Sir and Doctor," cried Grosbeck, "do not ride my weaknesses in this case! I know that you like me because I am a bold, confident sort of man. Do not ask me to be myself when we do not even know where this body came from. If I were bold as usual, I would give him typhoid and condamine, stationing telepaths nearby. But this is something new in the history of man. We are people and perhaps he is not a person any more. Perhaps he represents the combination of people with some kind of a new force. How did he get here from the far side of nowhere? How many million times has he been enlarged or reduced? We do not know what he is or what has happened to him. How can we treat a man when we are treating the cold of space, the heat of suns, the frigidity of distance? We know what to do with flesh, but this is not quite flesh any more. Feel him yourself, Sir and Doctor! You will touch something which nobody has ever touched before."

"I have," Vomact declared, "already felt him. You are right. We will try typhoid and condamine for half a day. Twelve hours from now let us meet each other at this place. I will tell the nurses and the robots what to do in the interim."

They both gave the red-tanned spread-eagled figure on the floor a parting glance. Grosbeck looked at the body with something like distaste mingled with fear; Vomact was expressionless, save for a wry wan smile of pity.

At the door the head nurse awaited them. Grosbeck was surprised at his chief's orders.

"Ma'am and nurse, do you have a weapon-proof vault in this hospital?"

"Yes, sir," she said. "We used to keep our records in it until we telemetered all our records into Computer Orbit. Now it is dirty and empty."

"Clean it out. Run a ventilator tube into it. Who is your military protector?"

"My what?" she cried, in surprise.

"Everyone on Earth has military protection. Where are the forces, the soldiers, who protect this hospital of yours?"

"My sir and doctor!" she called out, "my sir and doctor! I'm an old woman and I have been allowed to work here for three hundred years, but I never thought of that idea before. Why would I need soldiers?"

"Find who they are and ask them to stand by. They are specialists too, with a different kind of art from ours. Let them stand by. They may be needed before this day is out. Give my name as authority to their lieutenant or sergeant. Now here is the medication which I want you to apply to this patient."

Her eyes widened as he went on talking, but she was a disciplined woman and she nodded as she heard him out, point by point. Her eyes looked very sad and weary at the end but she was a trained expert herself and she had enormous respect for the skill and wisdom of the Sir and Doctor Vomact. She also had a warm, feminine pity for the motionless young male figure on the floor, swimming forever on the heavy floor, swimming between archipelagoes of which no man living had ever dreamed before.

Crisis came that night.

The patient had worn handprints into the inner wall of the vault, but he had not escaped.

The soldiers, looking oddly alert with their weapons gleaming in the bright corridor of the hospital, were really very bored, as soldiers always become when they are on duty with no action.

Their lieutenant was keyed up. The wirepoint in his hand buzzed like a dangerous insect. Sir and Doctor Vomact, who knew more about weapons than the soldiers thought he knew, saw that the wirepoint was set to HIGH,

with a capacity of paralyzing people five stories up, five stories down or a kilometer sideways. He said nothing. He merely thanked the lieutenant and entered the vault, closely followed by Grosbeck and Timofeyev.

The patient swam here too.

He had changed to an arm-over-arm motion, kicking his legs against the floor. It was as though he had swum on the other floor with the sole purpose of staying afloat, and had now discovered some direction in which to go, albeit very slowly. His motions were deliberate, tense, rigid, and so reduced in time that it seemed as though he hardly moved at all. The ripped pajamas lay on the floor beside him.

Vomact glanced around, wondering what forces the man could have used to make those handprints on the steel wall. He remembered Grosbeck's warning that the patient should die, rather than subject all mankind to new and unthought risks, but though he shared the feeling, he could not condone the recommendation.

Almost irritably, the great doctor thought to himself—where could the man be going?

*(To Elizabeth, the truth was, to Elizabeth, now only sixty meters away. Not till much later did people understand what Rambo had been trying to do—crossing sixty mere meters to reach his Elizabeth when he had already jumped an un-count of light-years to return to her. To his own, his dear, his well-beloved who needed him!)*

The condamine did not leave its characteristic mark of deep lassitude and glowing skin: perhaps the typhoid was successfully contradicting it. Rambo did seem more lively than before. The name had come through on the regular message system, but it still did not mean anything to the Sir and Doctor Vomact. It would. It would.

Meanwhile the other two doctors, briefed ahead of time, got busy with the apparatus which the robots and the nurses had installed.

Vomact murmured to the others, "I think he's better off. Looser all around. I'll try shouting."

So busy were they that they just nodded.

Vomact screamed at the patient, "Who are you? What are you? Where do you come from?"

The sad blue eyes of the man on the floor glanced at him with a surprisingly quick glance, but there was no other real sign of communication. The limbs kept up their swim against the rough concrete floor of the vault. Two of the bandages which the hospital staff had put on him had worn off again. The right knee, scraped and bruised, deposited a sixty-centimeter trail of blood—some old and black and coagulated, some fresh, new and liquid—on the floor as it moved back and forth.

Vomact stood up and spoke to Grosbeck and Timofeyev. "Now," he said, "let us see what happens when we apply the pain."

The two stepped back without being told to do so.

Timofeyev waved his hand at a small white-enameled orderly-robot who stood in the doorway.

The pain net, a fragile cage of wires, dropped down from the ceiling.

It was Vomact's duty, as senior doctor, to take the greatest risk. The patient was wholly encased by the net of wires, but Vomact dropped to his hands and knees, lifted the net at one corner with his right hand, thrust his own head into it next to the head of the patient. Doctor Vomact's robe trailed on the clean concrete, touching the black old stains of blood left from the patient's "swim" throughout the night.

Now Vomact's mouth was centimeters from the patient's ear.

Said Vomact, "Oh."

The net hummed.

The patient stopped his slow motion, arched his back, looked steadfastly at the doctor.

Doctors Grosbeck and Timofeyev could see Vomact's face go white with the impact of the pain machine, but Vomact kept his voice under control and said evenly and loudly to the patient, "*Who—are—you?*"

The patient said flatly, "Elizabeth."

The answer was foolish but the tone was rational.

Vomact pulled his head out from under the net, shouting again at the patient, "*Who—are—you?*"

The naked man replied, speaking very clearly:

"Chwinkle, chwinkle, little chweeble  
I am feeling very feeble!"

Vomact frowned and murmured to the robot, "More pain. Turn it up to pain ultimate."

The body thrashed under the net, trying to resume its swim on the concrete.

A loud wild braying cry came from the victim under the net. It sounded like a screamed distortion of the name Elizabeth, echoing out from endless remoteness.

It did not make sense.

Vomact screamed back, "*Who—are—you?*"

With unexpected clarity and resonance, the voice came back to the three doctors from the twisting body under the net of pain:

"I'm the shipped man, the ripped man, the gypped man, the dipped man, the hipped man, the tripped man, the tipped man, the slipped man, the flipped man, the nipped man, the ripped man, the clipped man—aah!" His voice choked off with a cry and he went back to swimming on the floor, despite the intensity of the pain net immediately above him.

The doctor lifted his hand. The pain net stopped buzzing and lifted high into the air.

He felt the patient's pulse. It was quick. He lifted an eyelid. The reactions were much closer to normal.

"Stand back," he said to the others.

"Pain on both of us," he said to the robot.

The net came down on the two of them.

"*Who are you?*" shrieked Vomact, right into the patient's ear, holding the man halfway off the floor and not quite knowing whether the body which tore steel walls might not, somehow, tear both of them apart as they stood.

The man babbled back at him: "I'm the most man, the post man, the host man, the ghost man, the coast man,

the boast man, the dosed man, the grossed man, the toast man, the roast man, no! no! no!"

He struggled in Vomact's arms. Grosbeck and Timofeyev stepped forward to rescue their chief when the patient added, very calmly and clearly:

"Your procedure is all right, doctor, whoever you are. More fever, please. More pain, please. Some of that dope to fight the pain. You're pulling me back. I know I am on Earth. Elizabeth is near. For the love of God, get me Elizabeth! But don't rush me. I need days and days to get well."

The rationality was so startling that Grosbeck, without waiting for orders from Vomact, as chief doctor, ordered the pain net lifted.

The patient began babbling again: "I'm the three man, the he man, the tree man, the me man, the three man, the three man. . . ." His voice faded and he slumped unconscious.

Vomact walked out of the vault. He was a little unsteady.

His colleagues took him by the elbows.

He smiled wanly at them: "I wish it were lawful. . . . I could use some of that condamine myself. No wonder the pain nets wake the patients up and even make dead people do twitches! Get me some liquor. My heart is old."

Grosbeck sat him down while Timofeyev ran down the corridor in search of medicinal liquor.

Vomact murmured, "How are we going to find *his* Elizabeth? There must be millions of them. And he's from Earth Four too."

"Sir and Doctor, you have worked wonders," said Grosbeck. "To go under the net. To take those chances. To bring him to speech. I will never see anything like it again. It's enough for any one lifetime, to have seen this day."

"But what do we do next?" asked Vomact wearily, almost in confusion.

That particular question needed no answer.

The Lord Crudelta had reached Earth.

His pilot landed the craft and fainted at the controls with sheer exhaustion.

Of the escort cats, who had ridden alongside the space craft in the miniature spaceships, three were dead, one was comatose and the fourth was spitting and raving.

When the port authorities tried to slow the Lord Crudelta down to ascertain his authority, he invoked Top Emergency, took over the command of troops in the name of the Instrumentality, arrested everyone in sight but the troop commander, and requisitioned the troop commander to take him to the hospital. The computers at the port had told him that one Rambo, "sans origine," had arrived mysteriously on the grass of a designated hospital.

Outside the hospital, the Lord Crudelta invoked Top Emergency again, placed all armed men under his own command, ordered a recording monitor to cover all his actions if he should later be channeled into a court-martial, and arrested everyone in sight.

The tramp of heavily armed men, marching in combat order, overtook Timofeyev as he hurried back to Vomact with a drink. The men were jogging along on the double. All of them had live helmets and their wirepoints were buzzing.

Nurses ran forward to drive the intruders out, ran backward when the sting of the stun-rays brushed cruelly over them. The whole hospital was in an uproar.

The Lord Crudelta later admitted that he had made a serious mistake.

The Two Minutes' War broke out immediately.

You have to understand the pattern of the Instrumentality to see how it happened. The Instrumentality was a self-perpetuating body of men with enormous powers and a strict code. Each was a plenum of the low, the middle and the high justice. Each could do anything he found necessary or proper to maintain the Instrumentality and to keep the peace between the worlds. But if he made a mistake or committed a wrong—ah, then, it was suddenly different. Any Lord could put another Lord to death in an emergency, but he was assured of death and disgrace himself if he as-

sumed this responsibility. The only difference between ratification and repudiation came in the fact that Lords who killed in an emergency and were proved wrong were marked down on a very shameful list, while those who killed other Lords rightly (as later examination might prove) were listed on a very honorable list, but still killed.

With three Lords, the situation was different. Three lords made an emergency court; if they acted together, acted in good faith, and reported to the computers of the Instrumentality, they were exempt from punishment, though not from blame or even reduction to citizen status. Seven Lords, or all the Lords on a given planet at a given moment, were beyond any criticism except that of a dignified reversal of their actions should a later ruling prove them wrong.

This was all the business of the Instrumentality. The Instrumentality had the perpetual slogan: "Watch, but do not govern; stop war but do not wage it; protect, but do not control; and first, survive!"

The Lord Crudelta had seized the troops—not his troops, but the light regular troops of Manhome Government—because he feared that the greatest danger in the history of man might come from the person whom he himself had sent through Space.

He never expected that the troops would be plucked out from his command—an overriding power reinforced by robotic telepathy and the incomparable communications net, both open and secret, reinforced by thousands of years in trickery, defeat, secrecy, victory, and sheer experience, which the Instrumentality had perfected since it emerged from the Ancient Wars.

*Overriding, overridden!*

These were the commands which the Instrumentality had used before recorded time began. Sometimes they suspended their antagonists on points of law, sometimes by the deft and deadly insertion of weapons, most often by cutting in on other peoples' mechanical and social controls and doing their will, only to drop the controls as suddenly as they had taken them.

But not Crudelta's hastily called troops.



The war broke out with a change of pace.

Two squads of men were moving into that part of the hospital where Elizabeth lay, waiting the endless returns to the jelly baths which would rebuild her poor ruined body.

The squads changed pace.

The survivors could not account for what happened.

They all admitted to great mental confusion—afterward.

At the time it seemed that they had received a clear, logical command to turn and to defend the women's section by counterattacking their own main battalion right in their rear.

The hospital was a very strong building. Otherwise it would have melted to the ground or shot up in flame.

The leading soldiers suddenly turned around, dropped for cover and blazed their wirepoints at the comrades who followed them. The wirepoints were cued to organic material, though fairly harmless to inorganic. They were powered by the power relays which every soldier wore on his back.

In the first ten seconds of the turnaround, twenty-seven soldiers, two nurses, three patients and one orderly were killed. One hundred and nine other people were wounded in that first exchange of fire.

The troop commander had never seen battle, but he had been well trained. He immediately deployed his reserves around the external exits of the building and sent his favorite squad, commanded by a Sergeant Lansdale whom he trusted well, down into the basement, so that it could rise vertically from the basement into the women's quarters and find out who the enemy was.

As yet, he had no idea that it was his own leading troops turning and fighting their comrades.

He testified later, at the trial, that he personally had no sensations of eerie interference with his own mind. He merely knew that his men had unexpectedly come upon armed resistance from antagonists—identity unknown!—who had weapons identical with theirs. Since the Lord Crudelta had brought them along in case there might be a fight with unspecified antagonists, he felt right in assuming

that a Lord of the Instrumentality knew what he was doing. This was the enemy all right.

In less than a minute, the two sides had balanced out. The line of fire had moved right into his own force. The lead men, some of whom were wounded, simply turned around and began defending themselves against the men immediately behind them. It was as though an invisible line, moving rapidly, had parted the two sections of the military force.

The oily black smoke of dissolving bodies began to glut the ventilators.

Patients were screaming, doctors cursing, robots stamping around and nurses trying to call each other.

The war ended when the troop commander saw Sergeant Lansdale, whom he himself had sent upstairs, leading a charge out of the women's quarters—directly at his own commander!

The officer kept his head.

He dropped to the floor and rolled sidewise as the air chittered at him, the emanations of Lansdale's wirepoint killing all the tiny bacteria in the air. On his helmet phone he pushed the manual controls to TOP VOLUME and to NON-COMS ONLY, and he commanded, with a sudden flash of brilliant mother-wit, "Good job, Lansdale!"

Lansdale's voice came back as weak as if it had been off-planet, "We'll keep them out of this section yet, sir!"

The troop commander called back very loudly but calmly, not letting on that he thought his sergeant was psychotic.

"Easy now. Hold on. I'll be with you."

He changed to the other channel and said to his nearby men, "Cease fire. Take cover and wait."

A wild scream came to him from the phones.

It was Lansdale. "Sir! Sir! I'm fighting *you*, sir. I just caught on. It's getting me again. Watch out."

The buzz and burr of the weapons suddenly stopped.

The wild human uproar of the hospital continued.

A tall doctor, with the insignia of high seniority, came gently to the troop commander and said, "You can stand

up and take your soldiers out now, young fellow. The fight was a mistake."

"I'm not under your orders," snapped the young officer. "I'm under the Lord Crudelta. He requisitioned this force from the Manhome Government. Who are you?"

"You may salute me, captain," said the doctor, "I am Colonel General Vomact of the Earth Medical Reserve. But you had better not wait for the Lord Crudelta."

"But *where* is he?"

"In my bed," said Vomact.

"Your *bed*?" cried the young officer in complete amazement.

"In bed. Doped to the teeth. I fixed him up. He was excited. Take your men out. We'll treat the wounded on the lawn. You can see the dead in the refrigerators downstairs in a few minutes, except for the ones that went smoky from direct hits."

"But the fight . . . ?"

"A mistake, young man, or else—"

"Or else what?" shouted the young officer, horrified at the utter mess of his own combat experience.

"Or else a weapon no man has ever seen before. Your troops fought each other. Your command was intercepted."

"I could see that," snapped the officer, "as soon as I saw Lansdale coming at me."

"But do you know what took him over?" said Vomact gently, while taking the officer by the arm and beginning to lead him out of the hospital. The captain went willingly, not noticing where he was going, so eagerly did he watch for the other man's words.

"I think I know," said Vomact. "Another man's dreams. Dreams which have learned how to turn themselves into electricity or plastic or stone. Or anything else. Dreams coming to us out of space three."

The young officer nodded dumbly. This was too much. "Space three?" he murmured. It was like being told that the really alien invaders, whom men had been expecting for thirteen thousand years and had never met, were waiting for

him on the grass. Until now space three had been a mathematical idea, a romancer's daydream, but not a fact.

The sir and doctor Vomact did not even ask the young officer. He brushed the young man gently at the nape of the neck and shot him through with tranquilizer. Vomact then led him out to the grass. The young captain stood alone and whistled happily at the stars in the sky. Behind him, his sergeants and corporals were sorting out the survivors and getting treatment for the wounded.

The Two Minutes' War was over.

Rambo had stopped dreaming that his Elizabeth was in danger. He had recognized, even in his deep sick sleep, that the tramping in the corridor was the movement of armed men. His mind had set up defenses to protect Elizabeth. He took over command of the forward troops and set them to stopping the main body. The powers which space<sub>3</sub> had worked into him made this easy for him to do, even though he did not know that he was doing it.

"How many dead?" said Vomact to Grosbeck and Timofeyev.

"About two hundred."

"And how many irrecoverable dead?"

"The ones that got turned into smoke. A dozen, maybe fourteen. The other dead can be fixed up, but most of them will have to get new personality prints."

"Do you know what happened?" asked Vomact.

"No, Sir and Doctor," they both chorused.

"I do. I think I do. No, I *know* I do. It's the wildest story in the history of man. Our patient did it—Rambo. He took over the troops and set them against each other. That Lord of the Instrumentality who came charging in—Crudelta. I've known him for a long long time. He's behind this case. He thought that troops would help, not sensing that troops would invite attack upon themselves. And there is something else."

"Yes?" they said, in unison.

"Rambo's woman—the one he's looking for. She must be here."

"Why?" said Timofeyev.

"Because *he's* here."

"You're assuming that he came here because of his own will, Sir and Doctor."

Vomact smiled the wise crafty smile of his family; it was almost a trademark of the Vomact house.

"I am assuming all the things which I cannot otherwise prove.

"First, I assume that he came here naked out of space itself, driven by some kind of force of which we cannot even guess.

"Second, I assume he came *here* because he wanted something. A woman named Elizabeth, who must already be here. In a moment we can go inventory all our Elizabeths.

"Third, I assume that the Lord Crudelta knew something about it. He has led troops into the building. He began raving when he saw me. I know hysterical fatigue, as do you, my brothers, so I condemned him for a night's sleep.

"Fourth, let's leave our man alone. There'll be hearings and trials enough, Space knows, when all these events get scrambled out."

Vomact was right.

He usually was.

Trials did follow.

It was lucky that Old Earth no longer permitted newspapers or television news. The population would have been frothed up to riot and terror if they had ever found out what happened at the Old Main Hospital just to the west of Meeya Meefla.

Twenty-one days later, Vomact, Timofeyev and Grosbeck were summoned to the trial of the Lord Crudelta. A full panel of seven Lords of the Instrumentality were there to give Crudelta an ample hearing and, if required, a sudden death. The doctors were present both as doctors for Elizabeth and Rambo and as witnesses for the Investigating Lord.

Elizabeth, fresh up from being dead, was as beautiful as a newborn baby in exquisite, adult feminine form. Rambo could not take his eyes off her, but a look of bewilderment went over his face every time she gave him a friendly, calm

remote little smile. (She had been told that she was his girl, and she was prepared to believe it, but she had no memory of him or of anything else more than sixty hours back, when speech had been reinstalled in her mind; and he, for his part, was still thick of speech and subject to strains which the doctors could not quite figure out.)

The Investigating Lord was a man named Starmount.

He asked the panel to rise.

They did so.

He faced the Lord Crudelta with great solemnity, "You are obliged, my Lord Crudelta, to speak quickly and clearly to this court."

"Yes, my Lord," he answered.

"We have the summary power."

"You have the summary power. I recognize it."

"You will tell the truth or else you will lie."

"I shall tell the truth or I will lie."

"You may lie, if you wish, about matters of fact and opinion, but you will in no case lie about human relationships. If you do lie, nevertheless, you will ask that your name be entered in the Roster of Dishonor."

"I understand the panel and the rights of this panel. I will lie if I wish—though I don't think I will need to do so"—and here Crudelta flashed a weary intelligent smile at all of them—"but I will not lie about matters of relationship. If I do, I will ask for dishonor."

"You have yourself been well trained as a Lord of the Instrumentality?"

"I have been so trained and I love the Instrumentality well. In fact, I am myself the Instrumentality, as are you, and as are the honorable Lords beside you. I shall behave well, for as long as I live this afternoon."

"Do you credit him, my Lords?" asked Starmount.

The members of the panel nodded their mitred heads. They had dressed ceremonially for the occasion.

"Do you have a relationship to the woman Elizabeth?"

The members of the trial panel caught their breath as they saw Crudelta turn white: "My Lords!" he cried, and answered no further.

"It is the custom," said Starmount firmly, "that you answer promptly or that you die."

The Lord Crudelta got control of himself. "I am answering. I did not know who she was, except for the fact that Rambo loved her. I sent her to Earth from Earth Four, where I then was. Then I told Rambo that she had been murdered and hung desperately at the edge of death, wanting only his help to return to the green fields of life."

Said Starmount: "Was that the truth?"

"My Lord and Lords, it was a lie."

"Why did you tell it?"

"To induce rage in Rambo and to give him an overriding reason for wanting to come to Earth faster than any man has ever come before."

"A-a-ah! A-a-ah!" Two wild cries came from Rambo, more like the call of an animal than like the sound of a man.

Vomact looked at his patient, felt himself beginning to growl with a deep internal rage. Rambo's powers, generated in the depths of space<sub>3</sub>, had begun to operate again. Vomact made a sign. The robot behind Rambo had been coded to keep Rambo calm. Though the robot had been enameled to look like a white gleaming hospital orderly, he was actually a police robot of high powers, built up with an electronic cortex based on the frozen midbrain of an old wolf. (A wolf was a rare animal, something like a dog.) The robot touched Rambo, who dropped off to sleep. Doctor Vomact felt the anger in his own mind fade away. He lifted his hand gently; the robot caught the signal and stopped applying the narcoleptic radiation. Rambo slept normally; Elizabeth looked worriedly at the man whom she had been told was her own.

The Lords turned back from the glances at Rambo.

Said Starmount, icily: "And why did you do that?"

"Because I wanted him to travel through space three."

"Why?"

"To show it could be done."

"And do you, my Lord Crudelta, affirm that this man has in fact traveled through space three?"

"I do."

"Are you lying?"

"I have the right to lie, but I have no wish to do so. In the name of the Instrumentality itself, I tell you that this is the truth."

The panel members gasped. Now there was no way out. Either the Lord Crudelta was telling the truth, *which meant that all former times had come to an end and that a new age had begun for all the kinds of mankind*, or else he was lying in the face of the most powerful form of affirmation which any of them knew.

Even Starmount himself took a different tone. His teasing, restless, intelligent voice took on a new timbre of kindness.

"You do therefore assert that this man has come back from outside our galaxy with nothing more than his own natural skin to cover him? No instruments? No power?"

"I did not say that," said Crudelta. "Other people have begun to pretend I used such words. I tell you, my Lords, that I planoformed for twelve consecutive Earth days and nights. Some of you may remember where Outpost Baiter Gator is. Well, I had a good Go-captain, and he took me four long jumps beyond there, out into intergalactic space. I left this man there. When I reached Earth, he had been here twelve days, more or less. I have assumed, therefore, that his trip was more or less instantaneous. I was on my way back to Baiter Gator, counting by Earth time, when the doctor here found this man on the grass outside the hospital."

Vomact raised his hand. The Lord Starmount gave him the right to speak. "My sirs and Lords, we did not find this man on the grass. The robots did, and made a record. But even the robots did not see or photograph his arrival."

"We know that," said Starmount angrily, "and we know that we have been told that nothing came to Earth by any means whatever, in that particular quarter hour. Go on, my Lord Crudelta. What relation are you to Rambo?"

"He is my victim."

"Explain yourself!"



"I computered him out. I asked the machines where I would be most apt to find a man with a tremendous lot of rage in him, and was informed that on Earth Four the rage level had been left high because that particular planet had a considerable need for explorers and adventurers, in whom rage was a strong survival trait. When I got to Earth Four, I commanded the authorities to find out which border cases had exceeded the limits of allowable rage. They gave me four men. One was much too large. Two were old. This man was the only candidate for my excitement. I chose him."

"What did you tell him?"

"Tell him? I told him his sweetheart was dead or dying."

"No, no," said Starmount. "Not at the moment of crisis. What did you tell him to make him cooperate in the first place?"

"I told him," said the Lord Crudelta evenly, "that I was myself a Lord of the Instrumentality and that I would kill him myself if he did not obey, and obey promptly."

"And under what custom or law did you act?"

"Reserved material," said the Lord Crudelta promptly. "There are telepaths here who are not a part of the Instrumentality. I beg leave to defer until we have a shielded place."

Several members of the panel nodded and Starmount agreed with them. He changed the line of questioning.

"You forced this man, therefore, to do something which he did not wish to do?"

"That is right," said the Lord Crudelta.

"Why didn't you go yourself, if it is that dangerous?"

"My Lords and honorables, it was the nature of the experiment that the experimenter himself should not be expended in the first try. Artyr Rambo has indeed traveled through space three. I shall follow him myself, in due course." (How the Lord Crudelta did do so is another tale, told about another time.) "If I had gone and if I had been lost, that would have been the end of the space-three trials. At least for our time."

"Tell us the exact circumstances under which you last

saw Artyr Rambo before you met after the battle in the old Main Hospital."

"We had put him in a rocket of the most ancient style. We also wrote writing on the outside of it, just the way the Ancients did when they first ventured into space. Ah, that was a beautiful piece of engineering and archaeology! We copied everything right down to the correct models of fourteen thousand years ago, when the Paroskii and Murkins were racing each other into space. The rocket was white, with a red and white gantry beside it. The letters IOM were on the rocket, not that the words mattered. The rocket has gone into nowhere, but the passenger sits here. It rose on a stool of fire. The stool became a column. Then the landing field disappeared."

"And the landing field," said Starmount quietly, "what was that?"

"A modified planoform ship. We have had ships go milky in space because they faded molecule by molecule. We have had others disappear utterly. The engineers had changed this around. We took out all the machinery needed for circumnavigation, for survival or for comfort. The landing field was to last three or four seconds, no more. Instead, we put in fourteen planoform devices, all operating in tandem, so that the ship would do what other ships do when they planoform—namely, drop one of our familiar dimensions and pick up a new dimension from some unknown category of space—but do it with such force as to get out of what people call space two and move over into space three."

"And space three, what did you expect of that?"

"I thought that it was universal and instantaneous, in relation to our universe. That everything was equally distant from everything else. That Rambo, wanting to see his girl again, would move in a thousandth of a second from the empty space beyond Outpost Baiter Gator into the hospital where she was."

"And, my Lord Crudelta, what made you think so?"

"A hunch, my Lord, for which you are welcome to kill me."

Starmount turned to the panel. "I suspect, my Lords, that you are more likely to doom him to long life, great responsibility, immense rewards, and the fatigue of being his own difficult and complicated self."

The miters moved gently and the members of the panel rose.

"You, my Lord Crudelta, will sleep till the trial is finished."

A robot stroked him and he fell asleep.

"Next witness," said the Lord Starmount, "in five minutes."

Vomact tried to keep Rambo from being heard as a witness. He argued fiercely with the Lord Starmount in the intermission. "You Lords have shot up my hospital, abducted two of my patients and now you are going to torment both Rambo and Elizabeth. Can't you leave them alone? Rambo is in no condition to give coherent answers and Elizabeth may be damaged if she sees him suffer."

The Lord Starmount said to him, "You have your rules, doctor, and we have ours. This trial is being recorded, inch by inch and moment by moment. Nothing is going to be done to Rambo unless we find that he has planet-killing powers. If that is true, of course, we will ask you to take him back to the hospital and to put him to death very pleasantly. But I don't think it will happen. We want his story so that we can judge my colleague Crudelta. Do you think that the Instrumentality would survive if it did not have fierce internal discipline?"

Vomact nodded sadly; he went back to Grosbeck and Timofeyev, murmuring sadly to them, "Rambo's in for it. There's nothing we could do."

The panel reassembled. They put on their judicial miters. The lights of the room darkened and the weird blue light of justice was turned on.

The robot orderly helped Rambo to the witness chair.

"You are obliged," said Starmount, "to speak quickly and clearly to this court."

"You're not Elizabeth," said Rambo.

"I am the Lord Starmount," said the investigating lord, quickly deciding to dispense with the formalities. "Do you know me?"

"No," said Rambo.

"Do you know where you are?"

"Earth," said Rambo.

"Do you wish to lie or to tell the truth?"

"A lie," said Rambo, "is the only truth which men can share with each other, so I will tell you lies, the way we always do."

"Can you report your trip?"

"No."

"Why not, citizen Rambo?"

"Words won't describe it."

"Do you remember your trip?"

"Do you remember your pulse of two minutes ago?" countered Rambo.

"I am not playing with you," said Starmount. "We think you have been in space three and we want you to testify about the Lord Crudelta."

"Oh!" said Rambo. "I don't like him. I never did like him."

"Will you nevertheless try to tell us what happened to you?"

"Should I, Elizabeth?" asked Rambo of the girl, who sat in the audience.

She did not stammer. "Yes," she said, in a clear voice which rang through the big room. "Tell them, so that we can find our lives again."

"I will tell you," said Rambo.

"When did you last see the Lord Crudelta?"

"When I was stripped and fitted to the rocket, four jumps out beyond Outpost Baiter Gator. He was on the ground. He waved good-bye to me."

"And then what happened?"

"The rocket rose. It felt very strange, like no craft I had ever been in before. I weighed many, many gravities."

"And then?"

"The engines went on. I was thrown out of space itself."

"What did it seem like?"

"Behind me I left the working ships, the cloth and the food which goes through space. I went down rivers which did not exist. I felt people around me though I could not see them, red people shooting arrows at live bodies."

"Where were you?" asked a panel member.

"In the wintertime where there is no summer. In an emptiness like a child's mind. In peninsulas which had torn loose from the land. And I was the ship."

"You were what?" asked the same panel member.

"The rocket nose. The cone. The boat. I was drunk. I was drunk. I was the drunkboat myself," said Rambo.

"And where did you go?" resumed Starmount.

"Where crazy lanterns stared with idiot eyes. Where the waves washed back and forth with the dead of all the ages. Where the stars became a pool, and I swam in it. Where blue turns to liquor, stronger than alcohol, wilder than music, fermented with the *red red reds* of love. I saw all the things that men have ever thought they saw, but it was me who really saw them. I've heard phosphorescence singing and tides that seemed like crazy cattle clawing their way out of the ocean, their hooves beating the reefs. You will not believe me, but I found Floridas wilder than this, where the flowers had human skins and eyes like big cats."

"What are you talking about?" asked the Lord Starmount.

"What I found in space," snapped Artyr Rambo. "Believe it or not. This is what I now remember. Maybe it's a dream, but it's all I have. It was years and years and it was the blink of an eye. I dreamed green nights. I felt places where the whole horizon became one big waterfall. The boat that was me met children and I showed them El Dorado, where the gold men live. The people drowned in space washed gently past me. I was a boat where all the lost spaceships lay drowned and still. Seahorses which were not real ran beside me. The summer month came and hammered down the sun. I went past archipelagoes of stars, where the delirious skies opened up for wanderers. I cried for me. I wept

for man. I wanted to be the drunkboat sinking. I sank. I fell. It seemed to me that the grass was a lake, where a sad child, on hands and knees, sailed a toy boat as fragile as a butterfly in spring. I can't forget the pride of unremembered flags, the arrogance of prisons which I suspected, the swimming of the businessmen! Then I was on the grass."

"This may have scientific value," said the Lord Star-mount, "but it is not of judicial importance. Do you have any comment on what you did during the battle in the hospital?"

Rambo was quick and looked sane: "What I did, I did not do. What I did not do, I cannot tell. Let me go, because I am tired of you and space, big men and big things. Let me sleep and let me get well."

Starmount lifted his hand for silence.

The panel members stared at him.

Only the few telepaths present knew that they had all said, "*Aye. Let the man go. Let the girl go. Let the doctors go.* But bring back the Lord Crudelta later on. He has many troubles ahead of him, and we wish to add to them."

Between the Instrumentality, the Manhome Government and the authorities at the Old Main Hospital, everyone wished to give Rambo and Elizabeth happiness.

As Rambo got well, much of his Earth Four memory returned. The trip faded from his mind.

When he came to know Elizabeth, he hated the girl.

This was not his girl—his bold, saucy, Elizabeth of the markets and the valleys, of the snowy hills and the long boat rides. This was somebody meek, sweet, sad and hopelessly loving.

Vomact cured that.

He sent Rambo to the Pleasure City of the Herperides, where bold and talkative women pursued him because he was rich and famous.

In a few weeks—a very few indeed—he wanted *his* Elizabeth, this strange shy girl who had been cooked back from the dead while he rode space with his own fragile bones.

"Tell the truth, darling." He spoke to her once gravely

and seriously. "The Lord Crudelta did not arrange the accident which killed you?"

"They say he wasn't there," said Elizabeth. "They say it was an actual accident. I don't know. I will never know."

"It doesn't matter now," said Rambo. "Crudelta's off among the stars, looking for trouble and finding it. We have our bungalow, and our waterfall, and each other."

"Yes, my darling," she said, "each other. And no fantastic Floridas for us."

He blinked at this reference to the past, but he said nothing. A man who has been through space, needs very little in life, outside of *not* going back to space. Sometimes he dreamed he was the rocket again, the old rocket taking off on an impossible trip. Let other men follow! he thought, let other men go! I have Elizabeth and I am here.

# **SUMMATION: SF, 1963**

**by Judith Merril**

Never before have so many been threatened with so much.

If the fallout doesn't get you, the fault slip will. The next ice age, we are shiveringly reminded, is practically upon us. It may be a matter of only thousands, or hundreds, of generations before our sun goes nova. And if neither natural nor man-made Doomsday befall us, it will be not hundreds, but ten or less generations before we must cope with the prospects of starvation—or suffocation—in the foul-aired plankton-fed single supermegapolis of Earth's sardine-can-packed population.

It is not that the dangers are new: just that we are newly aware of them.

Never has so much been promised to so many.

The wealth of our technological civilization, today, is beyond the wildest fantasies of earlier times: wealth measured not in such abstractions as "capital goods" or "national incomes," but in the actualities of physical comfort, health, leisure, longevity, and even that most vital (and most alienable) of "natural rights," the freedom-and-capacity to pursue individual happiness.

That wealth, like technology, is unevenly distributed, we know. But even the most horrifying (to us) conditions of life on Earth today were only the norm for the human condition until a few scant centuries ago. (Neither Plato nor Lao-tse would have paused long in their dialogues on politics or morality, to be shocked at the deaths of four children in a rebellion-quelling like Birmingham's bombing. Apartheid standards of living would have seemed slave-coddling to Cheops or Genghis Khan. The civil rights available to a Red Chinese peasant today would have dazzled a serf in the kitchens of Louis XIV of France.) And the increment in knowledge and productivity continues to accelerate while it spreads. The real-wealth potential is constantly greater both in total quantity and in wide availability.

The resources of our world are not new; we have just started to make use of them.

Never has so much uncertainty been felt by so many.

In our relations with the physical environment, we first learned simple



skills to use it, then acquired some understanding of it; only then could we start to remake it to our advantage. The accumulation of observations by countless naturalists and discoverers provided a basis for analytical science; the scientist's hypothesis-and-experiment is the base on which the inventor and engineer stand.

As far back as any history goes, human beings have observed each other; primitive techniques for controlling and utilizing human intelligence and personality were discovered in the age of myths. But the first systematic, analytic, scientific studies of mankind by man began barely a century ago—five hundred years behind physical science. If the rate of progress has been swifter, it is because we had already learned something of the techniques of scientific investigation, and because we now have the products of earlier sciences to use as tools and mirrors for self-study. (Electroencephalography probes and measures the functions of the brain; a cybernetic machine mirrors it.)

We are now rapidly approaching the kind of understanding of our own thoughts, emotions, capacities, and behavior which will, abruptly (next year? next decade?), break through to the level of application and invention. The true science of humanics, when it emerges, will of necessity convey the power to remake our intellects and personalities to our advantage . . . or to our final doom.

The concept of self-determination is not new, but we are now about to acquire the capacity for it.

Science fantasy is not so new now either; it has apparently just reached the level of self-consciousness. That is: never before has so much been published by or about writers and writing of speculative fiction.

There was the usual scattering of individual items:

Fredric Brown had a page of poetic definition in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Isaac Asimov had two pages in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, urging the use of an early taste for good science fiction as a selection test for creative scientific potential more effective than any combination of intelligence, aptitude, and personality tests now in use in our schools.

Walt Kelly had four pages in the *Atlantic*: "Ka-Platz! The Delight in the Unexpected." Robert Bloch devoted his column in one issue of *Rogue* to the annual World Science Fiction Convention. At least two pieces by Soviet authors appeared here: one by Arkadi Strugatsky, in *USSR*, about Soviet science fiction; and "A Soviet View of American Science Fiction," by Alexander Karantsev, in *Amazing*.

The first series of Sam Moskowitz's bibliographic biographies of

leading writers in the genre appeared in book form as *Explorers of the Infinite* (World Publishing Company, 1963). Michael Moorcock began a series which has since completed a scholarly analysis of fantasy fiction, in *Science Fantasy*. *Life* had a lengthy photo-biographic essay on Hugo Gernsback and "scientifiction."

In addition to these individual statements, some fifty-two writers of s-f, and nine assorted editors, agents, reviewers, producers, publishers, etc.,\* were involved in three separate publishing ventures: the *Playboy* symposium, the *Double Bill* survey, and a series of guest editorials in *New Worlds*.

The opinions expressed in the editorials would take too much space to summarize individually; as a group, they fall largely within the range of attitudes more concisely formulated in the *Double Bill* survey.

The questionnaire, compiled by Lloyd Biggle, Jr., asked eleven questions, most of which concentrated on advice to new writers. The three that evoked the most widely interesting responses were the *raison d'être* question quoted earlier, and these two: "For what reason or reasons do you write (or edit) science fiction in preference to other forms of literature?" and "What is your appraisal of the relationship of science fiction to the 'mainstream' of literature?"

Among forty-three participants, there were at least six or seven distinct notions of what "mainstream" meant—and even more differences about the relationship between mainstream and s-f. Some felt the first was a subdivision of the second; some that the second was a subdivision of the first; and some said there was no real distinction between the two, except that imposed by artificial labels. A large and vigorous minority felt the two forms are radically different and probably will not—certainly *should not*—merge and lose their separate identities. And cutting across all other differences (except among those who saw none) was a roughly half-and-half split on which is "better" literature.

In view of all these permutations of disagreement, the clear-cut response on the other two questions is startling. Discounting the several authors who gave as reason for personal preference, "easier to write and sell" or "entertainment" as the major significance (since these are applicable to any field in which a writer happens to work), the overwhelming majority gave as their main answer to both these questions the freedom offered in s-f, as compared with other contemporary forms: freedom to express any and all opinions, to explore unconventional and unpopular ideas, to examine human problems and relation-

\* A list of the participants will be found at the end of the Summation.

ships, and to experiment with style and technique. ("It stretches the imagination." "I am a surrealist at heart." "The most iconoclastic form of literature." Or John Campbell's, "There's room to think and move.")

Next most important, and mentioned by at least half the authors, was the use of s-f (in this case primarily science fiction) as a learning medium. For some, this meant simply a vehicle for teaching (or preaching); others—and rather more—were interested in what they themselves learned, both as readers and writers; the largest number referred to the sheer intellectual exercise involved. ("Mind-stretching." "Exhilaration." "Kicks." "Creative challenge.")

The *Playboy* discussion was a showcase for this kind of thought-kick. The twelve participants were invited, not to discuss their work, but to demonstrate it. Although the published version did not appear until the summer of 1963, the project was initiated almost a year earlier, at a taped midnight discussion during the World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago in 1962.

Seven of the final panel members were present at that first session, and it was the only actual "session." Many tapes and mailings later, much-revised and re-exchanged, the symposium emerged as a wide-ranging, colorful résumé of science-fiction thinking over the past twenty-five years. If there was a certain lack of freshness of idea, at least for the case-hardened s-f reader, in most of the subjects covered (space race, aliens, nuclear war, population explosion, genetic control, ocean farming, automation, robots, transportation and communication), it was a different matter when the discussion turned to the prospects for what I have called here *humanics*.

This is, of course, the true frontier of science in our day. When we have crossed it, we may come to new perceptions which will require a genuine re-evaluation of our understanding of the physical world. But for now, outside the most esoteric work in cosmology and, on the other end, subnucleonics, the largest part of our physical science is in the engineering stage. And by definition, it is where the breakthroughs are just about to come, that speculative fiction becomes exciting and fruitful.

Among the subjects covered were *psychochemicals*, as specifics for mental disease, as education conditioners, as sleep substitutes, and as pleasure enhancers; current work in mapping the brain with *psychoelectronics*, and the possibilities of its application in all the areas mentioned above; progress in *medicine*, *surgery*, and *cybernetics*, toward the total elimination of physical disease—and for a dramatic increase in the ordinary lifespan; the use of *cryogenics* to preserve bodies until new biochemical or surgical techniques are available; and of course the

effects of these developments, and of other aspects of technology already in hand, on the sexual, domestic, intellectual, ethical, religious, and social behavior of human beings.

Lightly touched on, here and there, were the upheavals in economics, politics, religion, and education, which are already irrevocably under way, as a result of automation and communications advances—but which are still due for much more radical changes as psychological and physiological innovations occur, and as the more adventurous engineering research projects begin to bear fruit: broadcast power (solar or atomic), domestic automation, exploration of the solar system; or, less immediate, antigravity and perhaps the matter duplicator.

Noticeably absent from the discussion were two major themes of the last generation of science fiction: time travel and ESP. In the case of time travel, one might feel the vein has been thoroughly worked; pending new information, there is nothing much more to be said. But ESP, or "psionics," has been one of the most active areas of inquiry in the past decade, and still is. Presumably, *Playboy* is happy to be unconventional and iconoclastic, and willing to give space to eccentric or even possibly subversive ideas, but not quite prepared to be called "crackpot."

This distinction—and I mean "honor"—belongs to the specialty science-fiction magazines. (Remember—it was crackpot, not long ago, to believe in the future of rocketry or space travel; and that "crackpots" was security-guard slang for Manhattan District scientists.) It was precisely this extra dimension of freedom of thought that the writers were talking about in the *Double Bill* survey. It was in terms of this much latitude that Campbell said, "There's room to think and move."

The increasing pressures for conformity and homogeneity in today's culture are unfortunately not limited to suburban housing developments, clothing styles, or automobile shapes; nor even to the more rigid areas of religion, politics, and education. They work on science, art, and philosophy as well.

These pressures are not new. In the past they have operated against rationalism and scientific inquiry, even as today they inveigh against what institutionalized science finds irrational. At the height of the Inquisition, Johannes Kepler could publish his theories only as science fiction in *Journeys to the Moon*. In our present-day commonsensical philosophic atmosphere, imaginative literature still gives scope to inquiry in those areas of human experience not recognized by any currently sanctified systems of classification. When the vast body of phenomena now stigmatized by association with "magic" and "mysticism" are finally incorporated into a more inclusive view of nature and

cosmology, some of the credit, one hopes, will go to the free-wheeling thinkers who are now busily prying the lid off Pandora's psi box, and to the magazines and editors who are providing the outlet for "crackpot" ideas.

This is perhaps the place to record my deep sense of loss—both personal and literary—at the death of Mark Clifton, in the fall of 1963. The first Clifton story, "What Have I Done?" appeared in *Astounding* (forerunner of *Analog*) in May, 1952, and shortly afterward in my anthology, *Beyond Human Ken*. Our first exchange of business letters turned quickly to a voluminous and stimulating correspondence which continued, with only occasional breaks, until his final illness. His active career in science fiction was short; there were five or six years during which his work appeared regularly; after that, only occasional short stories and one recent novel.

When he started writing, Mark had already retired as a semi-invalid from a long and successful career in personnel work and industrial relations. He was fascinated by people; he knew people; he cared about people. He wrote about them, when he had to stop working directly with them. He was passionately concerned with the necessity for integrating the humanist and scientific viewpoints in our time; tirelessly curious about everything people do, and why and how; often frighteningly clear-eyed in his insights.

I do not know whether it was Mark, or John Campbell, who coined the word *psionics*, but it had its first currency during "the Clifton period" in *Astounding*. He broke ground for a dozen new roads of thought that are still being traveled, explored, exploited, by writers today—roads leading to greater comprehension of human behavior, and in particular to those "crackpot" areas of the psi functions.

His work was sometimes too crude in style for my taste, although he could, and occasionally did (as with that first story), write with elegance; he was usually concerned only with speaking clearly and loudly. He knew from the first that even in science fiction there would be a large and unmovable block of readers, editors, and other writers who would shudder fastidiously at his "crackpot" thinking.

I tried to convince him that he could woo many of them with more attention to style. He did not care. He had a lot to say, and he always knew he did not have time enough. He was tired when he started. But he wanted to get everything he had learned, and everything he had learned to wonder about, down on paper for the young minds, the fresh minds, the readers whose thinking had not yet set into molds.

I know he died dissatisfied; it was not in Mark to be satisfied; there

was always something more. But as I read the work of the new young writers, I know how much more he accomplished than he would ever have believed.

Two other writers of special interest to this field died last year, but both were essentially "mainstream" writers, and have received their literary funeral orations elsewhere.

William Lindsay Gresham will be best remembered for his vivid novel of carnival life, *Nightmare Alley*, but he was also the author of some first-rate science fantasy.

C. S. Lewis was eulogized—among other places—in Edmund Fuller's regular column in the *Sunday Times Book Review*, and Mr. Fuller took the occasion to discuss imaginative literature in general: "Good fantasy is not escapist in the pejorative sense of the word. It may offer temporary refuge and relief from the pressure of the immediate world, but at the same time we are given new perceptions of our actual lives. . . . Fantasy is an art of equivalents," and, he concluded, "opens to writers the added dimensions needed to grapple with immense, awesome realities in our potentially apocalyptic age."

Few mainstream critics approach a work of fantasy or science fiction with this much sympathy. Among the more memorable of last year's s-f books was *A Sense of Reality*, a collection of four of Graham Greene's novelettes, each of which attempted to explore, through the unreal, the nature of "reality." Two of these I feel were excellent (I should have liked to have included "A Discovery in the Woods" in this volume). Granville Hicks, reviewing the book for the *Saturday Review*, seemed to like all the stories, but found the main significance in Greene's love for paradox, which "is the point of the title." And Kingsley Amis (also in SR) seemed to believe that André Maurois, in "The Earth Dwellers," was writing a fable designed to convert followers of Fabre away from belief in ant-insect.

Meantime, the critics and the editors of quality fiction magazines have joyously discovered Slawomir Mrozek, the Polish satirist, whose short sharp fables (and these *are* fables) generally fall just short of fantasy, but well within the range of speculative or imaginative literature. Perhaps that elusive line between the genres of s-f and mainstream is related to the critics' enjoyment of the Mrozek fables as specific criticisms of Communism. The fables are barbed and excellent. They are true satires on mankind, with special reference to his political-social organizations. Most of them, with no more than some change in nomenclature and occasionally in minor procedures, could be aimed as pointedly at American customs. But in that case, would *Mademoiselle* and *Playboy* enjoy them as much?

I mentioned a story of Graham Greene's which would have been included here, had it been possible. There are always a few such disappointments in compiling an anthology. It may be due to the growing respectability of the field, or to the increasing number of mainstream entries, or both—but there seem to be more such problems each year. Some of these are due to previous exclusive reprint commitments. Others are budget problems: many anthologies proportion their funds to allow for larger payments to "name" authors; I prefer not to.

These dropouts are, of course, listed in the Honorable Mentions, together with stories that were too long, or for other reasons not quite right for the book. But there are two stories I should like to mention here, if only because both are the work of comparatively new writers of unusual ability. These were Roger Zelazny's extraordinarily thoughtful and tender "A Rose for Ecclesiastes," and Rick Raphael's very funny, very human "Sonny."

There were two other dropouts not listed at all because I do not feel that my coverage of poetry is wide enough for me to name individual items as "The Best." I use—or try to use—what I happen to see that I like. This time I was unable to secure rights to some poems from John Updike's new collection, *Telephone Poles*, and to excerpts from Harry Martinson's *Aniara* (both published by Knopf, 1963).

Fifteen or twenty of the poems in the Updike volume qualify readily as s-f; I liked, in particular, "Cosmic Gall," "In Praise of  $(C_{10}H_9O_5)^x$ ," "White Dwarf," "Comp. Religion," "Fever," and the title poem, "Telephone Poles."

*Aniara* is the book of poems on which the Swedish space opera (no joke; opera, about space) of the same name is based. The opera was published here in 1962; the poems in 1963.

In addition to these, several individual poems came to my (delighted) attention during the year: John Ciardi's "A New Fable of the Grasshopper and the Ant," in *McCall's*; May Swenson's "Models of the Universe," written on commission for the Steuben Glass Company; Doris Pitkin Buck's "No Trading Voyage," in *Fantasy and Science Fiction*; Robert Cullen's "Dolphin," in *Commonweal*; "Helpmeet," by "Sec," in the *Reporter*; J. S. Bigelow's "The Bat and the Scientist," in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

I come now to the paragraph where I must thank those people who assisted in the preparation of the anthology. This (like the securing of stories) is increasingly difficult: the number of people who offer suggestions, read stories, or lend clerical help, seems to grow with each book. With apologies, then, to the many who are not mentioned here—

my especial gratitude to Carol Emshwiller and Anthony Boucher for their recommendations; to Virginia Blish, Gerard Dorion, and James Walker for reader reactions; to Mary Lou Collard, Marcia Pley, George Roeder, and Ann Pohl, for clerical and other assistance; and above all to Barbara Norville, at Simon and Schuster, for every conceivable kind of help and cooperation.

The following authors participated in the *Playboy* symposium, the Double Bill survey, and/or the *New Worlds* guest-editorial series:

Brian W. Aldiss DB  
 Poul Anderson DB, P  
 John Ashcroft NW  
 John Ashton NW  
 Isaac Asimov DB, P  
 Alfred Bester DB  
 James Blish P  
 Ray Bradbury DB, P  
 John Brunner DB  
 A. J. Budrys P  
 John Christopher DB  
 Arthur C. Clarke P  
 Mark Clifton DB  
 Charles De Vet DB  
 Philip K. Dick DB  
 Gordon R. Dickson DB  
 G. H. Doherty NW  
 Harlan Ellison DB  
 Daniel F. Galouye DB  
 Rod Serling P  
 Clifford D. Simak DB  
 Jerry Sohl DB  
 Theodore Sturgeon DB, P  
 Jeff Sutton DB  
 William Tenn P  
 E. C. Tubb NW

James E. Gunn DB  
 Lee Harding NW  
 Robert A. Heinlein P  
 Zenna Henderson DB  
 Damon Knight DB  
 Allen Kim Lang DB  
 Fritz Leiber DB  
 Katherine MacLean DB  
 Donald Malcolm NW  
 Dean McLaughlin DB  
 Michael Moorcock NW  
 Andre Norton DB  
 Alan E. Nourse DB  
 H. Beam Piper DB  
 Frederik Pohl DB, P  
 Arthur Porges DB  
 Robert Presslie NW  
 David Rome NW  
 Fred Saberhagen DB  
 Wilson Tucker DB  
 A. E. van Vogt P  
 Pierre Versins DB  
 Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. DB  
 James White NW  
 Richard Wilson DB  
 Roger Zelazny DB

The following editors, anthologists, publishers, producers, etc., also participated: John W. Campbell, Jr., E. J. Carnell, Groff Conklin, Basil Davenport, Martin Greenberg, J. F. McComas, P. Schuyler Miller, all in Double Bill; Dr. I. F. Clarke and Roberta Rambelli, in *New Worlds*.



## BOOKS

### Anthony Boucher

Remember 1953? *More Than Human*, *Bring the Jubilee*, *The Space Merchants*, *The Lights in the Sky Are Stars* . . . hell, even the titles of science-fiction novels were more memorably exciting in that so recent and so remote aureate age. Today a reviewer receives an unending series of machine-made and all but indistinguishable paperback novels of the spaceways among which even the "lesser" novels of 1953 (remember *The Syndic?* or *The Green Millennium?*) would shine like novae.

But 1963 still had its own distinctions, few but marked. It was the year in which Robert A. Heinlein favored us with not one but two book-length stories, and it was the year in which Anthony Burgess entered the s-f field.

The first 1963 Heinlein, and one of his best in many years, was *Podkayne of Mars* (Putnam's; Avon), a shrewd and successful effort to widen the s-f audience by a teen-age heroine. Poddy's first-person narrative reveals her as a genuinely charming girl (perhaps the most delightful young female in s-f since Isaac Asimov's Arkady Darell), and her creator as the master absolute of detailed indirect exposition of a future civilization. Just to prove that Heinlein can do anything, his later *Glory Road* (Putnam's) is an all-out swashbuckling swords-and-sorcery, yellow-brick-road adventure tale, and a splendid one—at least until, as has happened before with Heinlein, the philosophy outlasts the plot and the book bogs down in overt lecturing.

Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (Norton) is one of the most remarkable of s-f debuts: a penetrating novel of the next century's juvenile delinquency, brilliant enough in its insights into the nature of crime and free will, but made doubly dazzling by the fact that it is related entirely in the *nadsat* (teen-age) jargon of the future—a curious slang so vividly compelling that you find yourself thinking in it for weeks afterward. Burgess's later *The Wanting Seed* (Norton), on the theme of the population explosion, is more conventional, but still offers plentiful evidence that this is a mainstream writer who can create genuine s-f while writing with astonishing wit, grace, and distinction.

Of the year's other novels the most noteworthy was Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s, *Cat's Cradle* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston), a mad caprice which combines mad-scientist-destruction-of-earth with the swinging antireligion of Bokononism to create a freewheeling vehicle that may not take you

anywhere but gives you an unforgettable ride.

Anthologies, which have been largely regrettable in recent years, brightened considerably in 1963, with several unusual specialized collections. The often unreliable "my favorite story" gimmick comes off well in Robert P. Mills's *The Worlds of Science Fiction* (Dial), largely because of the inclusion of interesting writers not strictly "in the field" (Mark Van Doren, George P. Elliott, R. V. Cassill, and others). L. Sprague de Camp's *Swords and Sorcery* (Pyramid) is so well edited (and so well illustrated by Virgil Finlay) as to delight the most die-hard resisters to heroic fantasy. D. R. Benson's *The Unknown* and (in early 1964) *The Unknown Five* (both Pyramid) are well-selected samplers from that greatest of fantasy magazines, *Unknown Worlds*. Damon Knight's *First Flight* (Lancer) offers the first published stories (1937-1956) of ten of today's leading s-f writers; and as with *Mystery Writers of America's* similar collection, *Maiden Murders* (Harper, 1952), it's amazing how good these novice efforts are.

Suggestion for a parlor game: Name the Big Name science-fiction authors whose careers began with the following sentences:

*Nick looked at the cop, and the cop looked at Nick.*

*The chairman rapped loudly for order.*

*It was "The Seashell." It would have to be "The Seashell."*

*Margaret reached over to the other side of the bed where Hank should have been.*

*On and on Coeurl prowled*

Volumes of one-author short stories included the first collection of the work of Kate Wilhelm, *The Mile-Long Spaceship* (Berkley) and more of the charming nostalgic time-fantasies of Jack Finney, *I Love Galesburg in the Springtime* (Simon & Schuster). *Who Fears the Devil?* (Arkham) is a complete collection of Manly Wade Wellman's rich and idiomatic folktales of John the Ballad Singer (from *Fantasy and Science Fiction*). S-f, in its broad sense, turns up in a few of *The Stories of William Sansom* (Atlantic-Little, Brown), in Evan Hunter's *Happy New Year, Herbie* (Simon and Schuster), and in Graham Greene's *A Sense of Reality* (Viking), especially in Greene's "Under the Garden," an extraordinary novelette on the nature of fantasy-and-reality. Readers who last year discovered Jorge Luis Borges may relish the comparably unclassifiable tales in Tommaso Landolfi's *Gogol's Wife*, translated by Raymond Rosenthal and others (New Directions).

Enthusiasts of H. P. Lovecraft could welcome two distinguished volumes: *Collected Poems* (Arkham), admirably illustrated by Frank Utpatel, and *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Arkham; abridged, Lancer)—an ideal introduction to H.P.L., especially for August Derleth's fine

critical-biographical essay.

I do not know how to classify or even to describe the work of Edward Gorey, whose verses and pictures so eerily evoke "... feelings of horror, resentment, and pity/For things, which so seldom turn out for the best." Let me simply say that the most disturbing (and morally instructive) work of pure fantasy in 1963 was Gorey's three-volume *The Vinegar Works* (Simon and Schuster).

[Answers to parlor game, in order of listing: L. Sprague de Camp, Robert A. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, Judith Merrill, A. E. van Vogt.]

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

<b>Abbreviations:</b>	<b>Amz</b> <i>Amazing Stories</i>
	<b>Anal</b> <i>Analog Science Fact &amp; Fiction</i>
	<b>Atl</b> <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>
	<b>BW</b> <i>Book Week</i>
	<b>CY</b> <i>Catholic Youth</i>
	<b>Csm</b> <i>Cosmopolitan</i>
	<b>DC</b> <i>The Diner's Club Magazine</i>
	<b>Dude</b> <i>The Dude</i>
	<b>Fant</b> <i>Fantastic</i>
	<b>F&amp;SF</b> <i>Fantasy and Science Fiction</i>
	<b>Gal</b> <i>Galaxy</i>
	<b>Gam</b> <i>Gamma</i>
	<b>Gent</b> <i>Gent</i>
	<b>GH</b> <i>Good Housekeeping</i>
	<b>If</b> <i>If</i>
	<b>LHJ</b> <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i>
	<b>McC</b> <i>McCall's</i>
	<b>Mlle</b> <i>Mademoiselle</i>
	<b>NL</b> <i>The New Leader</i>
	<b>NW</b> <i>New Worlds (British)</i>
	<b>Plby</b> <i>Playboy</i>
	<b>Rep</b> <i>The Reporter</i>
	<b>R&amp;T</b> <i>Road and Track</i>
	<b>Rog</b> <i>Rogue</i>
	<b>SEP</b> <i>The Saturday Evening Post</i>
	<b>SciF</b> <i>Science Fantasy (British)</i>
	<b>SSI</b> <i>Short Story International</i>
	<b>WoT</b> <i>Worlds of Tomorrow</i>
	<b>WRD</b> <i>The Worm Runner's Digest</i>

- VANCE AANDAHL "The Weremartini," *F&SF*, Jun.  
 BRIAN W. ALDISS "Skeleton Crew," *SciF*, Dec.  
 POUL ANDERSON "Turning Point," *If*, May.  
 PIERS ANTHONY "Quinquipedalian," *Amz*, Nov.  
 CHRISTOPHER ANVIL "Not in the Literature," *Anal*, Mar.  
 JOHN ASHCROFT "The Shtarman," *NW*, Aug.  
 ISAAC ASIMOV "My Son, the Physicist," *F&SF*, Apr.  
 J. G. BALLARD "The Sherrington Theory," *Amz*, Mar.  
 STEPHEN BARR "The Mirror of Gigantic Shadows," *Plby*, Sep.  
 JOHN BAXTER "Eviction," *NW*, Mar.  
 PETER S. BEAGLE "Come, Lady Death," *Atl*, Sep.  
 K. W. BENNETT "The Seventeenth Summer," *SciF*, Apr.  
 FRANK BEQUAERT "Alice Grebel and the Doomsday Machine,"  
*Csm*  
 JEROME BIXBY "The God-Plllnk," *WoT*, Dec.  
 ROBERT BLOCH "Beelzebub," *Plby*, Dec.  
 JUAN BOSCH "The Indelible Spot," *SEP*, Nov. 16.  
 LYLE G. BOYD "The Provenance of Swift," *WoT*, Feb.  
 RAY BRADBURY "Bright Phoenix," *F&SF*, May;  
 "To the Chicago Abyss," in the *Machineries of Joy* (Simon and Schuster, 1964).  
 CHRISTIANNA BRAND "Akin to Love," *Rog*, Apr.  
 FREDRIC BROWN "It Didn't Happen," *Plby*, Oct.  
 JOHN BRUNNER "Singleminded," *If*, May;  
 "The Totally Rich," *WoT*, Jun.  
 WALTER BUPP "The Right Time," *Anal*, Dec.  
 OTIS KIDWELL BURGER "The Pleiades," *F&SF*, Feb.  
 JONATHAN BURKE "When I Come Back," *NW*, Dec.  
 ALFRED CHESTER "The Word," *BW*, Dec. 29.  
 PRICE DAY "Four O'clock," *DC*, Apr.  
 HARRISON DENMARK "The Stainless Steel Leech," *Amz*, Apr.  
 PHILIP K. DICK "If There Were No Benny Cemoli," *Gal*, Dec.  
 JACK EGAN "Cully," *Amz*, Jan.  
 LARRY EISENBERG "The Fastest Draw," *Amz*, Oct.  
 DAVID ELY "The Human Factor," *SEP*, Nov. 16.  
 FREDERICK ELY "Chance the Prairie Prey," *Rog*, Jul.  
 MICHAEL FESSIER "The H. K. Brock," *Rog*, Feb.  
 DAVID E. FISHER "Mr. Mateosian and the Chinaman," *Gent*, Dec.  
 GERTRUDE FRIEDBERG "The Short and Happy Death of George Frumkin," *F&SF*, Apr.  
 DANIEL F. GALOUYE "Recovery Area," *Amz*, Feb.;  
 "Reign of the Telepuppets," *Amz*, Aug.

- DAVID GORDON "With No Strings Attached," *Anal*, Feb.  
GRAHAM GREENE Stories in *A Sense of Reality* (Viking, 1963)  
WILLIAM LINDSAY GRESHAM "Punch Line," *Rog*, Apr.  
DAVIS GRUBB "The Enchanted Room," *GH*, Mar.  
LARRY HARRIS & DONALD WESTLAKE "The Question," *F&SF*, Mar.  
ZENNA HENDERSON "Deluge," *F&SF*, Oct.  
JAMES LEO HERLIHY "The Astral Body of a U. S. Mail Truck,"  
*Mlle*, Feb.  
P. M. HUBBARD "The Golden Brick," *F&SF*, Jan.  
EILEEN JENSEN "Androcles and the Librarian," *LHJ*, Sep.  
WARD S. JUST "The Day the News Managers Quit," *Rep*, May.  
HERBERT D. KASTLE "The God on the 36th Floor," *Amz*, Dec.  
DANIEL KEYES "A Jury of Its Peers," *WoT*, Aug.  
DAMON KNIGHT "The Second-Class Citizen," *If*, Nov.  
AARON L. KOLOM "Heavenly Gifts," *WoT*, Apr.  
KEITH LAUMER "It Could Be Anything," *Amz*, Jan.  
FRITZ LEIBER "Game for Motel Room," *F&SF*, Mar.  
MURRAY LEINSTER "The Hate Disease," *Anal*, Aug.  
MAGNUS LUDENS "My Lady Selene," *Gal*, Apr.  
DONALD MALCOLM "Twice Bitten," *NW*, Feb.  
DAVID MASON "Road Stop," *If*, Jan.  
JOHN J. MCGUIRE "Take the Reason Prisoner," *Anal*, Nov.  
RICHARD MCKENNA "Hunter, Come Home," *F&SF*, Mar.  
SEATON MCKETTRIG "A World by the Tale," *Anal*, Oct.  
SLAWOMIR MROZEK "The Elephant," *Mlle*, May.  
WILLIAM F. NOLAN "The Last Three Months," *R&T*, Sep.  
GERALD W. PAGE "The Happy Man," *Anal*, Mar.  
ALEXEI PANSHIN "Down to the Worlds of Men," *If*, Jul.  
MERVYN PEAKE "Same Time, Same Place," *SciF*, Aug.  
TERRY PRACHETT "The Hades Business," *SciF*, Aug.  
THEODORE PRATT "Robert Robot," *CY*, May  
ROBERT PRESSLIE "No Brother of Mine," *NW*, Dec.  
KEN W. PURDY "The Golden Frog," *Plby*, Jan.  
JOHN RACKHAM "Dossier," *NW*, Apr.  
RICK RAPHAEL "Sonny," *Anal*, Apr.;  
"The Thirst Quenchers," *Anal*, Sep.  
MACK REYNOLDS "Expediter," *Anal*, May.  
DAVID ROME "Inside," *SciF*, Feb.  
JAMES H. SCHMITZ "Ham Sandwich," *Anal*, Jun.;  
"Oneness," *Anal*, May.  
EUGENE S. SCHWARTZ "The Shelter in the Jungle," *NL*; *SSI*, Dec.  
JACK SHARKEY "Transient," *Rog*, Oct.

- CLIFFORD D. SIMAK "New Folks' Home," *Anal*, Jul.  
HERBERT A. SIMMONS "One Night Stand," *Gam* #1.  
B. F. SKINNER "A Christmas Caramel" (a play), *WRD*, Aug.  
HENRY SLESAR "The Valley of Good News," *Dude*, Mar.  
CORDWAINER SMITH "Think Blue, Count Two," *Gal*, Feb.  
ALBERT TEICHNER "Cerebrum," *Amz*, Jan.;  
    "The Forelife Myth," *Fant*, Jan.  
WILLIAM TENN "The Men in the Walls," *Gal*, Oct.  
THEODORE L. THOMAS "The Lonely Man," *Gal*, Apr.  
DOBBIN THORPE "Minnesota Gothic," *Fant*, Jun.  
JACK VANCE "Green Magic," *F&SF*, Jun.  
JOHN J. WELLS & MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY "Another Rib,"  
    *F&SF*, Jun.  
JAMES WHITE "Counter Security," *F&SF*, Feb.  
TED WHITE & TERRY CARR "I, Executioner," *If*, Mar.  
JACK WILLIAMSON "The Masked World," *WoT*, Oct.  
ROBERT F. YOUNG "Sweet Tooth," *Gal*, Oct.  
ROGER ZELAZNY "A Rose for Ecclesiastes," *F&SF*, Nov.



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