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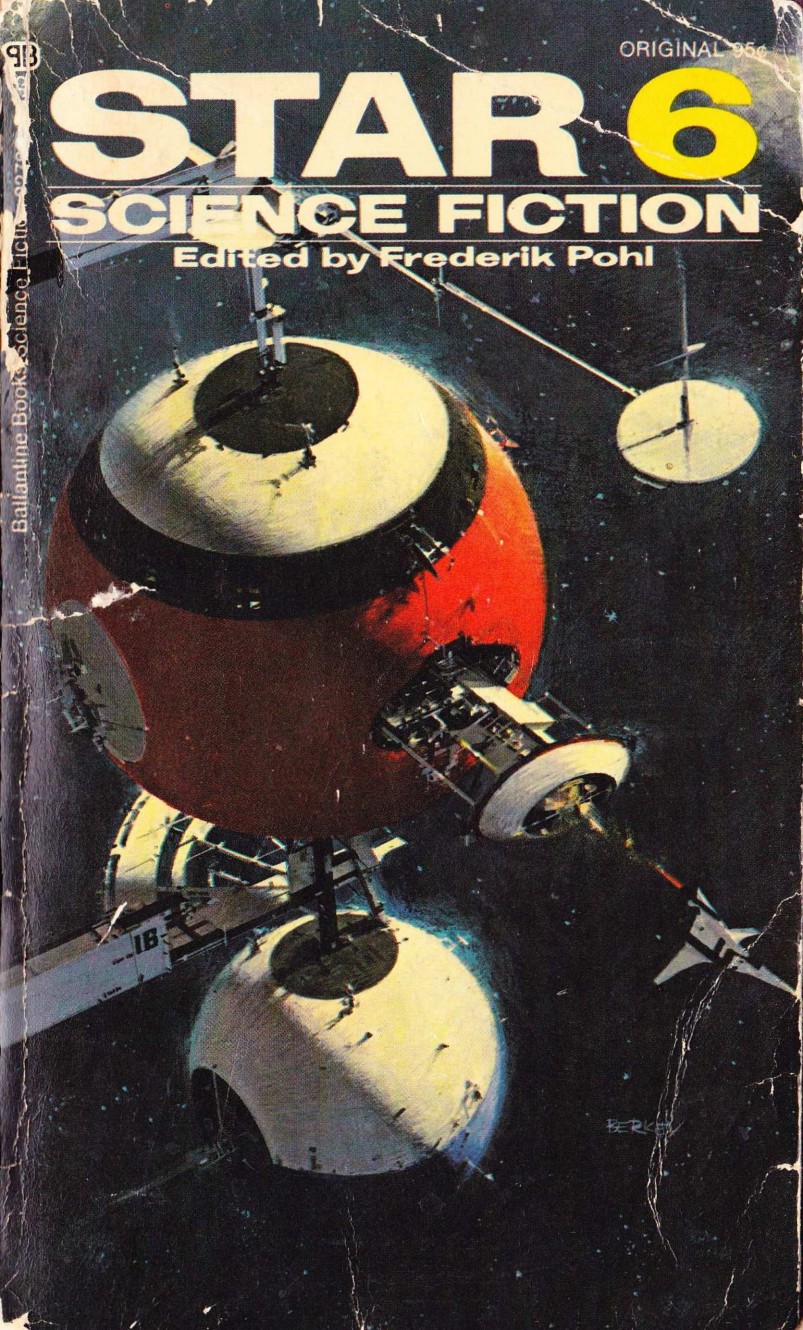
Edited by Frederik Pohl



PEOPLE WHO READ SCIENCE FICTION FOR THE FIRST TIME . . .

are always surprised to discover how much content there is in it. And not just in terms of mechanical marvels.

But, as any fan of this much-maligned form of writing knows, science fiction is primarily concerned with the development and exploration of ideas, ideas in all fields —sociology, psychology, the future, history, mechanics, the sciences—but last (and almost least since it is by now old-hat in s.f.) space travel.

Science fiction *is* the world of new ideas—its functions are in the real frontiers of the mind—and like most frontiers, it is sometimes frightening. Human beings don't really like to believe that some day large numbers of them will have the powers of the terrified little girl in *Danger, Child at Large!* But they may . . . Already scientific tests have proved that the mind alone (of *some* individuals) *can move material objects.* It's the beginning. And it's only a matter of time. About twenty-five years ago, Hugo Gernsback wrote detailed descriptions of radar, *with diagrams.* It was simply a matter of time. Submarines, air travel, radar, radio, the telephone, even the atomic bomb—you name it, sometime, somewhere, it has all appeared in science fiction. And new methods of surgery, tranquilizing drugs, truth serums, psychological conditioning, space travel—all these have been there, *waiting for the world to catch up with them!*

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edited by

Frederik Pohl

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C. L. Cottrell is a career Army officer at present manning the perimeter in Korea—a place which even the Koreans find moderately unattractive, and one where he works under conditions hardly conducive to writing science fiction. Or anything else. All the more marvel, then, that from the rocks of the Korean mountains and the duckboards-and-drillfields of an Army base he should have drawn inspiration to write a moving and sympathetic story of a little girl, eternally lost, in——

DANGER! CHILD AT LARGE

BY C. L. COTTRELL

I

Jill stood back in the shadows as the cars sped swiftly by. She could hear the sound of sirens in the distance between the noise of the cars that zipped by on the road. Each car had lots of people in it, and the cars seemed to be in an awful hurry. She wondered for just a moment where they all were going.

It was almost nighttime and Jill was getting tired and hungry. She had played and explored in and around the woods, and the game no longer interested her. She knew the road led to a town ahead, for she had heard Dr. Prann speak of it many times. She thought that she remembered having been there once, too. And there she would find people and food and sleep. Besides, it was no longer any fun to be away from the school. She felt somehow that she ought to go back, but she wasn't quite sure which way to go. Right now she thought it might be better if she got to the town and got something to eat.

She started to walk along the edge of the highway facing the traffic. It was still coming, only there were not so many cars now. And the policemen on the noisy motorcycles did not come along so very often. Lots of the cars and trucks

were stopped along the road as if they were waiting for something. She walked suspiciously off the edge of the road in the shelter of the trees, occasionally cocking an eye at the sun to see if it had gone below the trees yet. It was almost down. She did not want the people along the road to see her or speak to her. Not now, anyway.

It was fun walking under the trees, thought Jill. Only it was slow. And it was getting darker. She didn't like the dark. Above the trees it was lighter.

She floated to a level just above the trees, until she came to the edge of the town. She halted, silent, easing back into the branches of a large tree, the air like a pillow under her feet. There were lots of trucks on the road ahead. And they were not moving. Lots of men and women and children were close to them. And there were other men standing silently in little groups. Some were spread out in a kind of loose chain. And all of them had guns.

Jill was afraid of guns. They made loud noises, and could hurt you. She wanted to go into the town and get something to eat, but she was afraid of the men with the guns. And there was no way to go into the town without the men seeing her, and she just *had* to get into town. There was no way except . . . except . . .

. . . so she got into town.

Jill was thrilled by all the lights in the town. She had never before seen such a variety of colors and flashing lights. It was awfully quiet, though. She seemed to sense, rather than consciously realize, the absence of the normal noises of a community. She walked along the street and looked for people. But there didn't seem to be anyone at all. She saw a dog and ran toward it, but it slunk away out of sight, suspicious and afraid. Turning her head, she caught sight of a store window and squealed with delight, her moment of loneliness vanishing in her new discovery. *Dolls!* And *toys!* Just look at them!

She pressed her face to the window and stared at them longingly, feasting her eyes on the biggest and most beautiful doll she had ever seen. Suddenly she wanted that doll. She was going to get it.

Jill went to the door and tried the latch. It must be stuck, she thought, as she clenched her little fist around it. She squeezed the handle hard, but it would not give under the pressure of her grip. She went away from the door, dis-

appointed and almost in tears. Once again she looked at the doll in the window and a little wave of anger swept in on her. She was going to have that doll!

She tried the door again, gave it a wrench with her hand, and thought it had *better* come open, or . . .

The door jerked open and almost jerked her inside with it. She quickly ran inside and stopped short. Oh! Oh! There were *so* many toys! Even guns, like the men on the outside had. And teddy bears and games, and—everything.

She walked among them in wonder, her hunger and sleepiness completely forgotten in this wonderful discovery. She hugged one of the teddy bears to her; it squeaked, and she laughed. Then she climbed into a little red wagon, and made it go fast down the lane between the toys until it bumped into a rocking horse and upset it. She flung a toy airplane in the air, where it soared to the ceiling and down across the glass counter, sweeping off small stuffed animals with its wing.

"I can fly, too," she cried, "only *better.*"

Jill began to feel the hunger again and she thought she better go to one of the stores where there are things to eat, and she would eat.

She left the store with three dolls under her arms, forgetting the big beautiful doll from the window.

Jill walked down the street alone, looking for a store that had something to eat in it, vaguely wondering why everything was so quiet and why there were no people. She was a little bit afraid. She walked on, looking apprehensively around her.

She was only eight years old.

II

Gordon began to get suspicious for the second time after the little group had pulled up in front of the cordon guard, at the edge of the town. There was nothing special or noticeable this time either, except the way the major in charge examined the passes of each of the men a little too carefully. The major then said, "Pass on, sir," to the colonel. The two vehicles proceeded on into the deserted town. The twilight was beginning to deepen when the two vehicles stopped just inside the town, across the

bridge. Colonel Battin, in command, got out. He signaled for everyone else to get out of the two vehicles.

When everyone was gathered in front of him, he said: "Lieutenant Jory and his two men will take the truck and trailer to where the bomb was dropped." Addressing the lieutenant he said, "Load it carefully on the trailer and get it out of the town as fast as possible. I'll take the command car and cruise around town. There might be some looters that we haven't heard. Don't wait for me. As soon as you have the bomb on the trailer, head directly for the desert. You know what you have to do there. And take it easy. You'll have a dangerous bundle behind you. And remember, don't give the cordon commander permission to let anyone into town until you hear from me personally! Keep your radio receiver on at all times. And if you see or hear anything unusual, let me know immediately." The colonel looked at Gordon. "Mr. Gordon, you will accompany Lieutenant Jory." And back at the group: "That's all."

And that was the third suspicious event. Gordon wondered why the colonel was going to search the town for possible looters instead of letting a subordinate do a job like that. Why also should he take two civilian "experts" with him and only two airmen, neither of them an air police? And further, just really who were the two men, Prann and Forbes? He made a mental note to look up their professional backgrounds as soon as he got back.

Gordon hopped in the truck in the back alongside a corporal. The corporal grinned at him, offered a cigarette, and said, "Expert?"

Gordon declined the smoke. "Not on dropped bombs. Nor on anything else for that matter, I guess," he replied.

"Do I get two more guesses?" the corporal asked.

"I don't like mysteries either," said Gordon. "I'm a newsman."

"The colonel didn't seem too happy about having you along."

"I noticed that too. Another mystery."

"Considering how relatively unimportant this job is, I guess it is."

Gordon said, "Unimportant? Do you consider removing a radioactive dust bomb unimportant?"

"I said *relatively* unimportant." The corporal threw

his partly smoked butt in the street after mashing it out on the sole of his shoe. "It's a bit out of the ordinary for a full colonel who is the commanding officer to do a job like this. I was kind of wondering why. At first I thought maybe he wanted the personal publicity. But after seeing how he treated you, it can't be that."

The colonel had been openly hostile to Gordon. He had said to Gordon after the latter had presented the press pass issued to him personally by the governor, expressly to cover the story, "You're not welcome, Mr. Gordon. I want you to know that from the start. You will take orders from me directly, and any violation of my orders on your part will be dealt with by the *federal* government—state governor be damned!"

It had been emphatic enough for Gordon. But he couldn't see that the assignment was important enough for him to want to violate any orders. And suspicious act number one had come after he had said to the colonel, "In a matter of as little importance as this, Colonel?" And the colonel had glared at him, shoved his cigar in his mouth and walked away.

Was it, Gordon had wondered, really a matter of little importance? A delayed-action bomb containing a short half-life radioactive dust had been dropped accidentally on the town. In a matter of six hours the town had been completely evacuated, and a National Guard cordon had been stretched around the perimeter of the town to prevent the return of people prematurely, and to prevent possible looting—if someone was crazy enough to want to loot a town that was likely to have radioactive dust blown over it at any time. Besides, the bomb had been dropped in the afternoon and the Air Forces had promised to have it out by midnight.

True, it could be a touchy matter for the military. They were responsible for the bomb dropping on the town; they must suffer the embarrassment of the incident. Maybe the colonel was on edge because the plane that had dropped the bomb had been from a squadron he commanded. The publicity wouldn't do his command much good.

The truck sped on up the street, around corners, and past all traffic lights regardless of color. There was no other traffic. There were very few cars or other vehicles

in town. Occasionally here and there one would be parked with a flat tire, or standing with the hood open, or with a door open as an owner had abandoned it for surer and faster methods of transportation out of the town.

But outside the town, the cars, buses and trucks were lined up along the road by the hundreds. People were waiting impatiently for the Air Force to remove the cause of their discomfort and inconvenience. Dogs and cats were chasing noisily around the vehicles, adding to the confusion. Occasionally a child could be seen squatting behind a car while embarrassed parents stood by. An icecream truck stood near with the driver looking longingly at the crowds, then back at his empty truck. A peanut vendor was selling his last bag of peanuts, and a bakery truck driver was counting his money, whistling. Not all were unhappy.

The truck pulled up to the intersection of two streets and stopped. Gordon looked out and saw the bomb. It lay half in the entrance of a filling station. The oversized parachute, still attached, fluttered feebly in the breeze. He saw a guard surreptitiously reach out with one foot and step on a still smoking butt. The lieutenant chose to overlook the infraction of regulations. "Relax, Sergeant. We've come to remove your charge," he said to the guard.

The sergeant saluted, grinned, and said, "Kinda lonesome here in the city, Lieutenant. Never knew a city could be so dead."

"Put your rifle in the truck, Sergeant, and give us a hand."

The lieutenant and the sergeant uncoupled the trailer from the truck while the corporal swung the winch in position. Gordon stepped up to help but the officer motioned him away. He stood idly watching while the corporal backed the truck into position and lowered the chain hoist to a point just above the bomb. Then he fastened heavy straps around the body of the bomb, in front and in back, and lowered the hook until it could be slid under the chain connecting the straps. In the meantime the officer and the sergeant had moved the bomb carrier in a position so that the hoist could be raised and the bomb swung around and lowered carefully onto the carrier. While the sergeant and the corporal guided the bomb onto its cradle, the lieutenant operated the hoist

by hand. When the bomb finally rested in its cradle, the corporal fastened it with other straps to the floating bed of the trailer. The sergeant rolled the flapping parachute into as compact a ball as he could, stuffed it in a canvas bag and threw the bag in the back of the truck. The officer then swung the truck around until the hitch of the carrier and the hinge on the truck were properly lined up. Then the corporal dropped in the pin and fastened the safety chain in place. The entire operation hadn't taken longer than twenty minutes.

When everything was secure, the lieutenant motioned to Gordon to get in the truck. When Gordon was seated, the officer said, "I don't know what all the fuss was about. The bomb wasn't armed."

"And that hokum they gave us," said the corporal, "about the tamper-proof mechanism. That's used only during actual combat maneuvers! And there are no maneuvers going on around here."

"Isn't it possible," asked Gordon, "for the commanding officer of the air base to be ignorant of those two facts?"

"Could be," said the sergeant. "He'd have to find out for sure from the squadron armament officer."

The lieutenant said, "The bombs are armed by the pilot just before they are dropped." He hesitated. "It wouldn't have done any good to arm this bomb anyway. The bomb is empty."

"What do you mean?" asked Gordon, puzzled by what was being said.

"The thing doesn't weigh enough to have a charge," said the officer.

Was that what the colonel was afraid he'd find out? wondered Gordon. If so, why hadn't the colonel taken him along with him instead of letting him go alone to learn of the deception? Was the colonel aware that it was a deception? And what could he possibly be trying to cover by such a deception?

"Before you go, Lieutenant," said the sergeant who had been on guard at the bomb, "I think I should tell you that I think I saw looters."

"What?" said the lieutenant loudly.

"Yes, sir. At least there were some strange noises. And

I thought I saw one of them. I guess there must have been more than one."

"You guess why, Sergeant?"

"I saw a kid, Lieutenant."

"A *kid?*"

"Yes, sir. Just a kid. Couldn't have been more than eight or ten years old, I'd say. Couldn't tell for sure, but I think it was a girl."

"Now what would a little girl be doing in a deserted town?" scoffed the corporal.

"Where did you see this child?" asked the officer.

" 'Bout four blocks down the road, walking the other way. Was getting dark. It was pretty hard to make out details." The sergeant pointed down the street toward the west. "The sun was right in my eyes."

The lieutenant thought a moment, then reached over and picked up the microphone and squeezed the transmitter button. "Colonel Battin."

The colonel answered from the speaker almost immediately. "Jory?"

"Lieutenant Jory here, sir. The sergeant on guard here says he thinks he heard some looters. Or at least *a* looter."

"Where?"

The officer named the general location then added, "The sergeant says he thought he saw a little girl."

From the speaker a surprised and startled, *"Put him on!"*

The sergeant took the microphone. He repeated what he had told the lieutenant. Then he handed the microphone back to the officer at the request of the colonel.

"Lieutenant Jory, take the bomb out to the desert. And remember, don't let the major in charge of the cordon let anyone in or out of this town unless he hears from me directly."

"Yes, sir. That's all, sir? Out." He hung up the mike and said, "All right, you heard what the colonel said. Let's go."

Gordon hesitated, then said, "Lieutenant, I'm not going with you."

The lieutenant looked closely at Gordon, then decided that he had no right to give orders to a civilian. He said, "I can't stop you. The colonel won't like it—but it's your neck."

Gordon got out of the truck, and the officer drove off. He watched the vehicle drive out of sight with its carrier trailer almost flowing behind it, gyro stabilized for smooth riding.

III

Jill saw the candy in the store window. It looked so pretty and good! There were nuts and lollipops, and peppermint sticks and marshmallows. And those chocolates, how *good* they looked!

Determination invaded her mind. She was going to have the candies—*all* of them. Or as many as she could carry. She tucked the dolls under her arms, reached up and squeezed the latch with her hand. The door was too big and too heavy for her to open with the dolls under her arms. She thought a moment and decided that she had one doll too many, so she put one down on the sidewalk. Then she managed to open the latch. The door squeaked ever so slightly as it swung open. Jill went in and saw that this store, like all the other stores she had seen, had no people in it. Therefore she would have to help herself.

She walked to the window and reached in for some of the candy from the displays. Some of the chocolate melted in her hand. She wiped the hand on her dress, feeling a little guilty. Dr. Prann wouldn't like that. Her mouth was so full that saliva dribbled from the corners of her mouth and down her chin. In a few minutes she had eaten more candy than she really wanted, and eating it was becoming an increasingly difficult chore. Soon she stopped altogether. But she had foresight enough to think of tomorrow, so she stuffed all she could into her little dress pocket. She hesitated, then decided that that would not be enough. She got a paper bag from the counter as she had seen some of the store people do one time and filled it with the nicest looking of the candies in the trays behind the counter. She would eat them later when she got hungry.

Right now she was getting sleepy. She was tired from walking and flying all day. She guessed that she ought to lie down and get some sleep, but there was no bed. It occurred to her that there might be one in the back of the store. She rounded the counter once again and walked

through the doorway behind it. There was a long shelf there with boxes of candy on it, and several more shelves, one above the other, on which many boxes of candy were neatly wrapped. She looked around the little room but saw no bed, not even a couch. Disappointed, she walked toward the store entrance. Outside, she retrieved her other doll but found that she still could not carry all the dolls and the candy too. So she kept the prettiest and biggest of the dolls as well as the bag of candy and left the other doll lying on the sidewalk.

Jill walked down the street until she caught a glimpse of a store that had some beds right in the window. She crossed the street to try the door. It wouldn't open, even when she put the candy and the dolls down and tried with both hands. She tried even harder this time, but the door still wouldn't open. She began to get angry at it. Rage mounted within her quickly as she failed again. She muttered a child's invective at the door and at her futility at not being able to open it. She stood back to use all the power she had. The *sigh* power, Dr. Prann called it, though she didn't know why.

Jill gathered the forces in her mind that she had learned to recognize, and let them build up. Then she let them loose.

"Oh, oh!" she said to herself, and she felt a little abashed. She had done it a little too much; Dr. Prann wouldn't like that if he saw it. The door did not simply break off and fly away as she had really intended it should, but it splintered and flung itself inward with such a force that parts of the walls and the ceiling went with it, breaking the big windows at the same time. The remains left a path of broken furniture clear up to the wall into which it smashed. A bell started ringing loudly and Jill jumped, scared by the sudden sound.

She looked around, half expecting to find Dr. Prann there to reprimand her. No one was near. Dr. Prann would be angry when he found out she used so much *sigh* power. He was always cautioning her to control her thoughts and the power.

Oh, well, she thought. She had the door open. But the bed was in the window. She wouldn't dream of sleeping in a bed in a window—even if there were no people around. Suddenly she saw other beds in the store. She went

through the tattered doorway and into the large room. She gave a gurgle of delight. There were many bedrooms! All along the walls were little bedrooms! Delightedly she ran from one to the other, oh-ohing at the prettiness of the beds and the covers and how nice everything looked. Finally she came to the last one and decided that that was the one she wanted to sleep in. It was the prettiest. And she was so tired.

Jill placed her bag of candy carefully on the bureau and took off her shoes. Then she placed a doll on each side of her after pulling the spread down, and crawled under the blanket. She was a little disappointed because there were no sheets, and she felt a little guilty about getting in bed with her clothes on.

But Jill fell asleep, neither the bell nor her child's problem, bothering her at all.

Gordon was walking in the direction where the sergeant had last seen the child. The night had definitely settled on the town, and there were few lights on. The street lights had come on automatically—some of them—and a few lights had been left on by the fleeing townspeople. He walked slowly, carefully down the street, staying for some reason close to the buildings. He thought he heard the sound of a car in the distance but he couldn't be sure. But he did hear the hooting of a train horn far away, and the sound brought with it the odor of smoke. He sniffed and the odor disappeared. His imagination, he thought. An imagination could work full blast here.

Somewhere in one of the buildings he heard a telephone ringing. The ringing became fainter as Gordon got farther down the street, then abruptly stopped. He heard an air conditioner start up. He smelled the odor of burned potatoes that someone must have left cooking on some stove during the excitement of leaving. Passing by an alley, sudden screams pierced the quiet and Gordon jumped, frightened, then cursed himself aloud as he recognized the screeching of a pair of cats giving vent to their passion.

There was a sound coming from one of the buildings down the street. He stopped and listened, trying to identify it. Then he cautiously went toward it. It was a voice. Like a shadow he slid toward the store it came from. He tried the door; it was unlocked. There was no one in sight. He eased the door open and slipped inside. He shut the door

quietly and looked around, then said aloud, gruffly, "Oh, hell!"

There was a radio on a counter and a news commentator was talking. Someone had left it going in his haste to leave.

". . . and that's the latest international news up to this minute. Locally, a recovery party has gone into the evacuated town of Silverton, as reported earlier, to get the bomb that was dropped on that town this afternoon. An Air Force bomber accidentally dropped the bomb while on a routine training mission, and the authorities from the nearby Air Base claim that the bomb dropped was a practice bomb containing radioactive dust. It is a scatter-type bomb which is equipped with a delayed-action fuse set to explode the bomb sometime by midnight. The bomb is said to contain a non-tamper device and an anti-disturbance unit also. These circuits are supposedly foolproof, and it has been wondered just how the Air Forces plans to remove the bomb from the community. At any rate, if the bomb cannot be taken away by the removal team, the team will be forced to abandon the bomb and leave the town. The bomb on exploding will scatter the short half-life dust in all directions, and if there is any wind, it will be carried to other parts of the town. The active life period of the dust is only about six hours, and the townspeople may return to their normal pursuits by morning at the latest. The evacuation of the town was orderly and rapid, aided by the nearby Air Base vehicles and the State National Guard. The National Guard has been given the task of guarding the town. All railroad service to the town has been temporarily discontinued. The hospital, fortunately, lies well outside the town, and evacuation of the patients and staff was not necessary."

There was more, but Gordon did not pay any attention to it. He had stepped outside the building and was standing on the walk thinking of the puzzling situation when he heard the roar of a car. He looked up. The command car was pulling up to the curb alongside him. Its brilliant spotlight blazed upon his face.

A door from the vehicle burst open and he heard the colonel shout, "Gordon! What the hell are you doing here? I told you to stay with Lieutenant Jory!"

"I came along for a story, Colonel. Chasing down looters makes a better story than the removal of a harmless bomb."

The colonel's eyes narrowed. His voice became nasty. "Gordon, you are under my direct command while you are in this town. When we get this mess straightened out here, I am personally going to see that you are punished. Consider yourself under arrest. And don't leave this group for any reason!"

So, Gordon thought? The Colonel *did* know the bomb was a plant.

Stiffly and furiously, the officer got back in the car. The back door opened and Gordon climbed in silently. He sat down beside the two civilians. They said nothing to him, just turned their heads away as though embarrassed. The car jerked from the curb and drove slowly up the street.

Turning to one of the two civilians, the colonel asked, "How much farther do you think?"

"It's really difficult to say," the tall man said. He was Dr. Prann, Gordon remembered from a brief introduction at the beginning of the trip. "It's non-directional."

"What's non-directional?" asked Gordon determined to get something out of this even if he had to bully everyone to get it.

No one answered him. Presently the other civilian—Forbes—said, "Stop!"

The car stopped. Forbes got out and ran to a store, then stood listening and looking in the distance. He turned and picked up something. A doll. The colonel, Prann, and Gordon hopped out of the vehicle and ran to Forbes. They stopped and listened as Forbes had done, and heard the distant clanging of an alarm bell. The colonel flashed a light and he and Forbes examined the doll. Gordon could see smudges on the outside of the doll but could not recognize what they were until Forbes said: "Chocolate!"

Gordon noticed that they were outside a candy store, its door wide open.

"She must be near here somewhere," the colonel said. He started to go in the store.

"Careful!" shouted Prann. "Let me go—I know her better!" But the colonel was already inside, Forbes on his heels.

Gordon turned to Prann who was standing there as if trying to make up his mind what to do. "Dr. Prann, what's going on here? What did the colonel mean by 'she'?"

"I—I—You'll have to ask Dr. Forbes," the man said, stumbling through the words.

The colonel and Forbes returned with the doll. The colonel said to Prann, "She's been in there. Candy spilled on the floor, and some taken. There's chocolate smeared on the doll. And it looks like finger marks made by small hands."

Gordon made the connection immediately. He said, "Afraid of a little girl raiding the town, Colonel?"

The officer glared at Gordon. "You don't know what we are talking about, Gordon. Mind your own business." He turned to Prann. "Any ideas?"

Dr. Prann shook his head. Then, hesitantly, he said, "Maybe. She's asleep now, but there's a residual memory of what appears to be a bedroom. Only it is incomplete with one wall out. There are a number of similar rooms."

"A hotel, perhaps?" said the colonel.

"Not likely," said Prann. "Not with three-walled rooms."

"How about a furniture store?" suggested Forbes.

"That alarm—" started Colonel Battin.

IV

Jill slept poorly. The strange surroundings made her restless. She dreamed and tossed and turned, aware that she was not in her own bed for the first time in a long time. Only utter fatigue made her sleep at all. She dreamed of walking down a crooked path. There were trees and high bushes on each side, and the noises of strange animals came from the bushes. She became afraid. Suddenly it was black night. The terror in her mounted as the animal noises became loud and threatening, and the noises kept pace with her frantic and futile running. Abruptly the light returned; she came to a clearing and stopped short. There, in the center of the clearing, was a fire-breathing dragon, smoke rippling from its mouth. She tried to scream but no sound came from her throat. She tried to run back up the dark path, but she couldn't make her legs move. She tried to gather her *sigh* forces but they would not gather. The fire-breathing dragon kept coming closer and closer. Then—

Jill woke up.

She sat up wildly in bed clutching her dolls to her, for

a moment even more terrified by her waking surroundings than by the dream. She looked up and there *was* a monster coming toward her. The smoke was coming from its mouth, and it took a claw and threw a bit of it at her. It opened its mouth to devour her.

This time her gathered *sigh* forces worked. The creature disappeared. Suddenly Jill realized she had been having a dream. She wondered briefly what the monster had been doing *out* of a dream, and if Dr. Prann would be mad if he knew she had sent the dragon away through *distance*, and wondered if the creature would come out of *distance* in a juicy, drippy ball the way Stinky had done a long time ago. It had made Dr. Prann make the awfullest face, and he told her never to send anything through *distance* again unless he told her she could. Jill thought about it a little more, then hid her head in the pillow. Maybe she shouldn't have done it.

The terror began to come back as the dream returned, only this time she was in a frightfully crowded room with all kinds of people around her. And there was one who kept looking at her. She discovered that it was a funny looking man, and she knew the way he kept following her that he was after her. Slowly she gathered the *sigh* forces. This time the monster would *not* be able to return. She waited for it to reappear. She woke up a minute later waiting, expecting, waiting.

And there it was coming at her from around the side of the wall.

The loud clanging of the burglar alarm led them to the store. The demolished front of the store made it easy to discover the place even in the bad light. The command car was parked some distance from the store, and the men walked silently toward the entrance. Gordon wondered, more and more, just what the real story behind all this was.

In front of the store, the colonel said to Dr. Forbes, "Let me go in first. Maybe I can talk to her."

"Better not, Colonel," objected Prann. "Dr. Forbes better go. He knows her."

How, wondered Gordon, could Dr. Forbes know her?

The colonel paid no attention to Dr. Prann. He lit a fresh cigar, inhaled deeply, then cautiously entered the building.

Gordon tried to see inside the damaged store. He won-

dered if the little girl had anything to do with the damage —then immediately dismissed the thought as ridiculous.

"How about it?" said Forbes impatiently to Prann after a few minutes waiting.

Prann stood white-faced. Then he stiffened and leaned weakly against the vehicle, with Gordon, Forbes and the driver looking at him strangely.

"What is it, Prann?" said Forbes in a voice filled with tension.

Before the man could answer, *something* plopped out of the darkness on the concrete near them. All the men looked down. The driver was the first to recognize the mixture of blood and flesh and torn blue uniform. He dropped to his knees, livid.

"It's the colonel!" he managed to stammer. Then he was noisily sick.

Gordon and Forbes stared at Prann. The scientist still leaned weakly against the vehicle, his eyes fastened on the destroyed mass before them.

"What happened, Prann!" whispered Forbes. "For God's sake, tell us!"

"It's Colonel Battin," Prann said wearily. He managed to straighten himself up. He took his eyes away from the shapeless, bleeding thing on the concrete and said, "She woke up. She was terrified from a dream. She didn't know the colonel, and in the half-dark—" He went no further with his explanation.

"What's going in here, Forbes? *What is all this?"* Gordon asked harshly, grabbing Forbes by the arm.

The driver was spreading his coat over the remains of the colonel. The night air was chilly, but the men were perspiring.

"It's Prann," Dr. Forbes said. "He's telepathic."

Gordon took his hand off the man's arm, staring at Prann. "Telepathic? But—" Prann walked over to Forbes. "She was half asleep when she did it. She thinks now it was a dream. She's asleep again. What do you think?"

"Let's try our original plan," said Forbes. "We'll both go in. You keep a few steps behind me and try to conceal yourself. Watch her reaction. If you get a chance, do something—anything to get her attention."

Prann nodded, not at all confidently. Both men knew the little girl well. There should be no trouble. Still, thought

Prann, these were unusual conditions in unusual surroundings. There was no telling really just how the child would react.

Forbes went to the staff car for a package from the back seat. He put it under his arm and walked slowly toward the building. Prann followed a few paces behind. Gordon followed behind Prann.

Inside the building, Gordon could see Prann picking his way through wrecked furniture that littered the central lane of the big room. A swath of destruction had flung all sorts of furniture into the side displays. Lamps and mirrors had been broken, but not all of them. Some of the lamps were still burning, providing a weak illumination. Gordon stood for a moment, astounded. So much destruction! He wondered what had caused it all. Prann stopped. Gordon came up beside him, looking ahead. He saw Forbes picking his way through the debris carefully so as to avoid any noise. Near the end of the room he stopped, then backed away carefully to remove the contents of the package under his arm.

"What's he doing?" Gordon leaned over and whispered in Prann's ear.

"Hush," said Prann. Whispering close to Gordon's ear, he said, "It's a clown costume—like one that I used on a TV program the little girl likes. Forbes thinks it will ease her mind when she sees it. Then he can talk some sense in her."

Forbes finished donning the costume and began to walk slowly toward the last model bedroom.

"The child must be in there," whispered Prann to Gordon. "Come on."

Gordon followed Prann to a concealed place behind a tall china closet that had been just out of the path of destruction. It hid both the men adequately. They could see Forbes approaching the little girl lying in a rumpled bed. He had a clown mask on his face, wrinkled and distorted from being tied up in the package.

Near the edge of the bed, Forbes began to whisper, "Jill, Jill—"

Prann gave a grunt and moaned, cursing softly to himself. Gordon snapped his head around to look at him. Prann's eyes were opaque. His face turned very white; he looked as if he were going to be ill again.

Something had happened.

Gordon poked his head around the corner of the china closet again, and stopped breathing. Jill was standing upright in the bed. A look of utter fright twisted her little features. She had her two dolls locked under her arms. Forbes, in his clown costume, was standing stiff and unnatural with his arms held high. The mask dropped off his face. Then he turned slightly and Gordon got a look at his face. It was strangely contorted, veins standing out all over it, trying to burst. His eyes bulged. Something came from his nostrils—smoke! Then—with a horrifyingly perverse ludicrousness—smoke came from his ears, and his body twisted completely around and fell.

A second later Gordon was certain Forbes was dead. The body *burned,* sending up volumes of smoke and vapor. In a moment there were only charred remains, hardly recognizable as those of a human being.

Gordon's gaze turned from the remains of Forbes to the little girl. Then he screamed. He realized with deadly sureness that the sound was giving away his position—that he too might be blasted by whatever had destroyed Forbes. But at the moment he didn't care. When he could look up again, he saw that the little girl had fainted. Prann rushed from behind the china closet and was lifting the little girl in his arms.

"Gordon!" Prann shouted.

Gordon wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and then walked weakly toward Prann. He was careful not to look at the corpse. But he forgot to hold his breath, and when he got close to it he first retched and then ran past as quickly as his rubbery legs would let him. He stared at Prann, unable to speak.

"Gordon! For God's sake, go get something to put her to sleep. If we can keep her unconscious—"

Prann did not finish. Gordon thought dazedly of knocking her out with a blow on the head. But he was still weak; it was hard to think; probably Prann didn't mean that. He stumbled out toward the staff car. He leaned against it for support and pointed toward the store entrance, the two airmen looking at him strangely.

"Prann wants something to put her to sleep," he managed to say.

The two airmen looked at each other, then the driver

started toward the building. But before he was halfway there Prann appeared, running and white-faced.

"Gone!" he shouted. "She's gone—and she's frightened!"

"Where did she go?" one of the men demanded.

"How in the hell do I know? But that's not the worst of it. She's afraid—afraid of the dark."

Gordon shook his head, bewildered.

"She's afraid of the dark," repeated Prann, sweat running down his face. "She might do *anything!*"

As if to confirm the man's words, a low building halfway down the block started rumbling. Then it began to explode —in slow motion, as if a giant fist inside it were opening up, forcing the roof and the walls outward. There was a tearing sound of wood and metal, mingling with the bass groan of tortured brick. The walls forced their way in four directions, piling against the adjacent buildings, and filling the street in front. The roof tried to collapse—but it couldn't. Instead, it flew upward with unnatural violence, sending beams and plaster and tile in every direction but downward.

Prann and Gordon ducked behind the car; the two airmen dived inside it. In moments the last brick had fallen, and Prann and Gordon stepped from behind the vehicle to look toward the demolished building. The light was poor. Sparks flashed from severed power lines climbing toward a pole. A fire hydrant that had been in front of the building was sheared off and spouting a geyser of water. Gordon could hear the hiss of escaping water.

Unwisely, one of the men in the vehicle snapped on the spotlight. He swung it toward where the building had stood. Then—everyone held his breath. There was complete silence.

The light beam held in its brilliance the figure of the little girl. She was silent, and her little features too far away to distinguish details. But Prann could imagine her little face contorted with fear and childish hostility. She stood outlined in the brilliant light a moment, statuesque, —until the light melted! The airmen cursed and jumped. The lamp inside burst and the incandescent stump glowed, lighting up the area and splattered molten metal. It faded slowly to a cherry red, dulled—then was covered by darkness.

Someone moaned and cursed. Once again the odor of burning flesh made Gordon ill.

"My whole damned arm!" one of the men sobbed.

"For God's sake, help me!" screamed the other voice. Then the cry was choked off.

Gordon stood near Prann. He could hear the scientist breathing loudly, mumbling helplessly to himself.

One of the airmen stumbled weakly back to the command car and lifted the microphone off its hook, one of his arms dangling uselessly.

"Help!" he spoke into the mike faintly. "Help!"

The loudspeaker in the vehicle came to life. It said, "Colonel Battin? Colonel Battin? What's wrong?"

"The colonel's dead. Everything's crazy. Come here, won't you? *Please!"* the airman said.

"Who is this? Where are you? What's happened?" the loudspeaker boomed.

"Come to us! We're dying!" shouted the airman excitedly. Then he dropped the microphone and slumped, panting.

Gordon looked on helplessly; there was nothing he could do. He heard a crackle of fire and saw new flames starting in the building down the block. The girl had disappeared. Smoke was coming from somewhere else across the street. Gordon turned back and saw Prann dragging the unconscious airman to the command car. Prann pushed the man into the back seat, slammed the door, leaned over to the man in the front seat and said: "Can you drive this thing out of here? Can you make it to the cordon? There's first aid there."

Gordon started around the side of the vehicle to the driver's side. He said, "I'll take them."

Prann shouted, "No! I want you to come with me." He leaned over to the airman who was struggling to get into the driver's seat, and said once again, "Can you?"

The airman muttered thickly, "My arm. . . ."

"Try!" shouted Prann. To Gordon he said: "It's my problem now. I'm going to get her. Will you come?" Without waiting for an answer he started off into the night.

Gordon hesitated a moment, then started following Prann. He caught up with the man and fell in step beside him. For a few minutes they picked their way through the wreckage of the building that filled the street. Smoke ob-

scured their vision and made their eyes sting. Both men coughed. They walked in water up to their ankles as they passed the wrecked fire hydrant. Gordon wondered about the broken power lines, hoping they would not encounter any of the open lines. He wanted to tell Prann they should keep out of the water, but the man was moving forward with determined purpose. When they had cleared the debris, Gordon asked, "Where is she?"

Prann did not answer. He was deep in thought.

V

They walked through the streets until they came to a low brick building giving off from within the soft glow of fluorescent lights from nearly every window. Prann stopped and Gordon stopped with him. There was a bench in front of the building facing a small fountain that was not spouting water. Prann and Gordon sat down together.

"I'm glad you came along, Gordon," said Prann. His face looked years older than it had minutes before. "This will blow the lid off the whole project. Print the story. Then the people will find out what we're doing—what we've *been* doing," he corrected himself. "How can you explain wrecked buildings in different parts of the town in terms of one delayed action dust bomb? And the deaths of the colonel, and Dr. Forbes—and *how* they died? Maybe others," he added, remembering the airmen in the car who was burned by the molten metal of the spotlight. "Tell them everything, Gordon. Then maybe no one else will ever attempt to accelerate a process that God is trying to do slowly."

Prann sighed and pointed to the building across the grass. "She's in there, I think."

"How do you know?" asked Gordon.

"I'm a telepath," said Prann simply.

Gordon wanted to ask Prann a thousand wild, irrelevant questions—what it was like to read the minds of men. And if he could catch the rudimentary thoughts of dogs and rats and fish and spiders. And, thinking of Dr. Forbes and Colonel Battin, what it was like to have his mind linked with the mind of a man dying a violent death. . . .

"She could be in a book store, but I don't think so,"

said Prann thoughtfully. "The arrangement of the books as I can see them through her mind makes me sure it's that building. The library."

"What in God's name are you going to do?" asked Gordon.

"In God's name, I don't know," said Prann. "It was our original plan to drug her if necessary until we could do something—talk her out of it, who knows?" he said bitterly. "What *can* you do with a child like that?"

Prann stopped for want of adequate words. Then he went on.

"Gordon, you don't know what it is to go into the mind of a child. It's bad enough to read an adult. But a child is much worse. Their minds sometimes have cold, uncontrollable furies that . . ." Again he stopped. "But not always. I've grown to love Jill." There was tenderness in his words. He was silent a bit.

"Gordon, I think I love Jill as much as if she were my own child. I have known her since she was two years old. I've lived with her and taught her. Listened to her sing and cry, laugh and scold. And I've watched her psi powers grow. God knows, I should have stopped them. But I was fascinated by them—and her."

"What *is* she?" asked Gordon.

"Jill is a freak," said Prann. "A psionic freak."

Gordon nodded. "I know. Telepathy. Psychokinesis. Clairvoyance. That sort of thing."

"They are the glamorous ones," Prann agreed. "The well-known ones. There are dozens of others, some so subtle they are almost undetectable. And there are others so strong and violent. . . ."

He paused, his face that of a hanged man.

"Normally a psionic will have only one talent. Sometimes even that does not amount to much—maybe a telepath can read ten per cent of the time, or only in times of stress. Or a PK can operate under only certain conditions, or influence only a few grams of matter a few inches. But, occasionally, there comes one who is—different, stronger. One, let's say, who can read minds whenever he chooses, or a PK who can influence a dozen pounds of matter, or a teleport who can send himself a distance of a hundred yards. No one knows what the limits can really be. Each generation seems to bring forth some additional

power in psionics. And there are a few people who have two talents, duo-talented, we call them. Their talents are always related, such as psychokinesis and teleportation. Or precognition and clairvoyance. They are invariably people whose talents are greater and stronger. It is believed that the power of one talent reinforces the other. But the one common thing to all duo-talented people is—was, I should say—that talents are not maturated until the person is an adult. All except Jill. She is a child psionic, and the only one I know."

"Oh, I begin to see," said Gordon. "Being a child, you are having trouble trying to channel the talents she has."

"It's not as simple as that," said Prann dully. "Jill is *multi-talented.* The only one born as far as we know. She is a PK and a teleport as well as a levitant. She is also a pyrophoric, a rare and a powerful talent. And her four talents give her a power whose limitations we can only guess at."

Gordon's mind was whirling, trying to square what Prann had just said with what had happened to Forbes and the colonel and the disintegration of the building and the melting of the spotlight. If that represented only a part of the power Jill had—then indeed, *what were her limitations?*

"Where do you fit in?" Gordon asked Prann.

"When Jill's parents discovered that she was abnormal, they had to commit her to an institution. Then the government became interested in her talents. And since she was just a child, her case gave rise to complications." He shrugged.

"You can't reason with a child as you can with an adult. A child psychologist was needed. I was chosen for the project because of—my talents. As I told you, I am a telepath. And it has been extremely difficult the last few years to keep the child from tearing the Institution apart, or burning it up. Dr. Forbes was the psineuro-psychiatrist assigned to study Jill—for studying her was our project, with emphasis on developing and accelerating her talents."

"Was," he repeated thoughtfully, and was silent for a second. Then he went on.

"Other than her talents, she is a normal, healthy child, with a child's usual passions and tantrums and inhumaneness. If you have any children, you know what devilment

they are capable of. Only . . . Jill can get away with anything she wants to. How can you punish a child who can disappear? Or can burn the clothes off you—and laugh while doing it? We had no choice between the reward and punishment methods of guiding her behavior. It had to be reward—but Jill soon tired of rewards. And when we attempted punishments, they excited her. Most of the time she was a sweet kid—but when she wasn't, she was a hellish little monster."

"What has all that to do with all this?" asked Gordon.

"Jill became bored. She got fed up with it all. She could not associate with other children. And so, this afternoon she TP'd herself out of the Institute and headed toward this town. There was no way we could stop her. I'm surprised it didn't happen sooner."

"Then—that was a fake bomb?"

Prann nodded.

"I begin to see," said Gordon. "You couldn't very well evacuate the townspeople because a little girl was headed this way."

"Hardly," said Prann, with a grim smile. "But knowing the facts that we know, it was imperative that the town be evacuated."

"What are you going to do now?" asked Gordon.

"Jill has to be stopped," Prann said, hesitating. "By this if necessary." And he pulled a revolver out of his pocket.

"I don't want to use it," he said. "But what else can I do? She's dangerous. You've seen that! Children just don't know what adult love is, can't comprehend it," he added desperately.

Gordon stared at him in the semi-darkness looking for signs of madness. He saw none. He looked at the revolver and said, "You don't mean it?"

Prann shook his head helplessly. "If there is some other way—if God could show me some other way . . ."

He let the words trail off unfinished. "What she could do if she got loose in the world with this power? What *couldn't* she do! She is a *child!* It's her life against many, and her talents are just beginning!"

Gordon thought he understood. He had three children of his own. What damage and disaster could *they* do if

they were multi-talented and were loosened on the world? He shuddered to think about it. But he loved them—as only a parent can love a child. And he knew without thinking about it twice that he would die for any of them, if it were a matter of their lives or his. He abruptly shut out that line of thought.

"It's her life or many," repeated Prann. "The governor knows that there may be only one solution."

"What happened to the colonel?" asked Gordon. He understood that Jill was a pyrophoric; that meant she had burned Forbes and had melted the spotlight on the command car. But he was puzzled about how Forbes had died.

Prann said, "She TP'd him out of her sight. She can't teleport any living thing other than herself—not and have it stay alive. Something happens to their organic structure."

This was all a disjointed mass of information to Gordon —he did not, could not comprehend it. A little girl with such unbelievable powers!

"I've seen these things that happened tonight. I guess I have to believe them," Gordon said. "But to lay them to the strange powers of a little girl is a lot to ask a man to digest. There *must* be some way she can be controlled!"

Prann was silent for a time, as if taking time to formulate an explanation for Gordon.

"Gordon, there is only one out—and we have to catch her first. And that will be nearly impossible at our present rate. She is learning and strengthening her powers by the hour. Gordon, relax your mind a moment, will you?"

There was an abrupt transition. Gordon was startled momentarily. Then he realized he was receiving the thoughts of Prann. More than thoughts—sensations, a *living* something. . . .

VI

He was actually seeing things with the help of Prann's mind.

The scientist was using his telepathic powers to show him what had happened; through it, Gordon was living a piece of someone else's life—someone who (Gordon caught himself)—someone who was hardly human!

First, there was a grayness.

No—a blackness. Only it wasn't a blackness; it was colorless, a complete absence of light.

Then—images began clarifying themselves in Gordon's mind—then there was an awareness, and the beginnings of impatience. There was heat. And pressure. And stirrings and bumps from *outside*. Outside of what? Gordon couldn't tell; and the mindless, hardly-human lump he was inhabiting, it didn't think in those terms. It only knew that there was something *outside*.

And it—the lump—wanted to be *outside*.

There was no passage of time, only a seemingly endless series of movements and sounds, that led alternately to fright, and to a rudimentary curiosity. And then—to fury!

The desire to get outside built up and built up, and—

Something blasted the senses.

The warmth and the pressure were gone. There was a cold, violent brightness that lashed the senses unmercifully, and strange sensations beat and mingled. But it was *outside*—

The strange yet briefly familiar tenor of thoughts broke off suddenly, and Gordon was looking at Prann.

"That was the prenatal mind of Jill," Prann said. "Jill *wanted* to be born."

Like smoothly meshing gears, facts slipped together in Gordon's mind. Prann was a projectionist. A wonderful talent, that gave its possessor the ability to project into the minds of others not only his own thoughts, feelings and experiences, but also the thoughts and experiences of others. It was this method, Gordon knew, that Prann must have used on the governor and Colonel Battin in order to persuade them to evacuate the town. No other type of reasoning could have cut so quickly through the red tape. The method was thorough. It taught—by vicarious experience—in an incredibly short time.

Gordon felt a new respect for the man. But there must be more. There had to be more.

"What do you mean, Jill wanted to be born?" Gordon said in a low voice.

"That was the birth of Jill—and the birth of a talent. Jill's talents begin *before* her birth, Gordon. She wanted to be born, so she was. She used psychokinesis to make herself be born."

Gordon was silent, trying to comprehend a foetus with

such inherent power that it could make itself be born. The concept was too stunning.

"I got this from her memory banks, of course, after we got her at the Institute," Prann continued. "It was a vital factor in properly evaluating the strength of her talents."

"But premature babies happen often!"

"True," said Prann grimly. "But the cause of premature births is usually physical, not psionic. I say usually, because there are some cases where prematures were born without apparent physical cause. It is possible that there were PK forces at work in those cases. We don't know."

"How about the doctor who delivered Jill?"

"There was no delivering doctor. When he got there it was all over."

Prann stirred restlessly. "Her PK talent," he said, "grew to such proportions in the next two years that her parents had to give her up. Then—her other talents began to appear. We knew we had something unique on our hands. Then—"

There was a pause again, and the sense of something *shifting.*

Once again Gordon felt his mind inhabiting another body—Prann's body, this time. Prann, sleeping.

The sleeping Prann was shaken awake by a man—a hospital orderly. Hospital? Oh, yes. The place where the child had been taken.

"Dr. Prann. *Dr. Prann!*" The orderly cried frantically. "She's gone!"

Prann jumped up and reached for his bathrobe. "Again? When?"

"In the last fifteen minutes!"

"Where?"

"We don't know, doctor!"

Prann walked out (Gordon's mind still inhabited his body) into the summer night after throwing on his robe. He knew just about where to look.

"Jill. Oh, Jilly," he called softly.

Out near the willow trees beside the garage he saw a wisp of white in the moonlight. It was Jill in her nightgown. Slowly he walked toward her. She had her arms wrapped around her, for the night was late and the air

had cooled; she was standing there barefooted, gazing at something in fascination.

"Jill, what are you doing out here in the night? Want to catch a cold?"

Without looking at Prann she said, "I cold. What?" She pointed.

"Fireflies, Jill. Now let's go back inside where it is warm and you can go back to bed."

"Fi-fies? Oh, 'em's *nice!*"

She was all little girl, and enchanted. The fireflies were weaving a mosaic of yellow around the hanging branches and around Jill. A full moon was halfway above the horizon, beaming through the streaming thin branches of the tree. There was a gentle breeze that made Jill's nightgown flutter around her feet.

"Let's go back, Jill," he whispered.

"Me 'ikes fi-fies."

"Everyone likes fireflies, Jill. But it is night and you should be in bed asleep. Come with me now."

Jill pouted and she turned away from the fireflies. She bent her head reluctantly and let herself be led by the hand—back to the building, into the long hallway, up the stairs, to her room.

Transition.

The two of them relived another earlier day:

Jill sat in concentration, one hand propping up her chin. It was hot, and Jill's hair was tied behind her head in a tight pony tail. Part of a jar of jam was spread out across the little back patio that led into the kitchen. She was watching the air around it in concentration.

Prann walked up silently behind her and gave the end of the pony tail a little playful jerk.

"What's my Jilly doing?"

"Watchin' fi-fies!"

"Silly Jilly! They are not fireflies. They're plain, ordinary house flies. Fireflies come out only at night."

Jill screwed her little face up in concentration. Then she said doubtfully, " 'Em's don't 'ook 'ike houses."

Prann couldn't help laughing. "Fireflies light up. You saw them light up last night, out by the willow tree. These flies don't light up. See?"

She chuckled. "Me *makes* 'em 'ite up!"

"Jill, you can't make house flies light up. Only fireflies light up. That's the way they're made."

"Me *makes* 'em 'ite up," she repeated stubbornly, and chuckled again.

And Prann watched a tiny dark spot in the air suddenly glow into flame and drop. Then another. And another. And he heard Jill laugh: *"Now* 'em's fi-fies!"

"Jill! *What are you doing?"*

"Me makin' fi-fies," she said cheerfully. " 'Ook!"

Little bursts of flame sparkled in the air. They dropped toward the patio, never quite reaching it, turning to almost invisible puffs of ash before they hit the concrete.

It took a long time before Prann comprehended what Jill was doing. Then he just stood astounded, and a strange fear trickled into his mind, a chill of apprehension.

It was the *birth of a talent.*

VII

Again they were seated on the bench outside the library.

Gordon leaned back, almost toppling. He stared at Prann wordlessly: He had been *inside* that man. He had seen through Prann's eyes, he had remembered what Prann remembered, he had done what Prann did; he had *been* Prann.

It was a fantastic, frightening experience—

But Prann had no patience for the strain on Gordon. Prann's eyes were the eyes of a man who sees neither hope nor future. He closed them; his face looked as if carved of stone.

"There was more. It didn't stop with flies," he said wearily.

"In a month we had her melting five-pound lead balls—then ten. You know what she can do with that talent now."

Gordon did. He recalled vividly the burning spotlight and the smell of burning flesh. He shuddered.

"Then," said Prann—and paused.

Gordon felt Prann's mind slipping again into his own. . . .

"Can you move the heavy ball, Jill, through distance?"

That was Forbes speaking. It was another day. Through Prann's eyes, Gordon saw Forbes pick the lead ball off the table and roll it toward Jill. It disappeared.

"Where is it, Jill?"

"Godge."

"How do you know it is in the garage?"

Jill looked disdainfully at Forbes. Clearly, it was a ridiculous, grown-up question. Forbes laughed and said, "Never mind, Jill. Can you bring it back?"

It was back. It rolled a little, and Stinky reached for it playfully.

" 'Tinky!" said Jill, "get off 'at hebby ball!"

Stinky stayed put, his tail swishing back and forth slowly, and his paws making playful motions toward the lead ball.

Forbes bent down, stroked the kitten, and the creature rolled on its back to claw harmlessly at Forbes' hand.

Prann said, "Maybe Stinky wants to go through distance too, Jill." They had not yet let Jill teleport any living creature.

"Me don't fink so," said Jill uncertainly.

"I think he does," said Forbes encouragingly. "Look how he likes to play with the heavy ball."

Forbes rolled the ball a little, and the kitten attacked it with playful ferocity.

Then it disappeared.

Forbes and Prann looked at each other. Forbes said, "I think Stinky wants to come back, Jilly."

"Aw wight," said Jill, beginning to be bored.

Stinky returned—different. Jill looked and turned her little nose up. " 'Tinky's *real* 'tinky now," she said.

There was an odor of a freshly eviscerated animal, and fresh blood. Forbes and Prann looked down at the shambles that had been a cat.

"What *happened* to it?" said Prann.

Forbes rolled the mess over with the toe of his shoe. "It looks like it's—inside out," he said, and stared at Prann.

Both men turned to Jill. Abrupt tears were welling from her eyes.

" 'Tinky don't move," she said.

"I—I think Stinky's dead, Jill," Forbes said softly, placing his hand on her head.

"I'm sorry, Jill," Prann said.

There was a moment of silence. Then Jill asked, "What's 'dead,' Docker Pann?"

"It's . . . like going to sleep and never waking up. You

stop breathing and thinking and . . . doing things. And you go to Heaven," Prann added.

"Will me go to hebben when me gets dead?" asked Jill.

"I'm sure you will, Jilly," said Prann. And his voice didn't sound quite right.

"Will 'Tinky go to hebben?"

"Yes, Jilly, Stinky will go to Heaven. Stinky will go to Kitten Heaven."

Jill began to cry.

Again Gordon was looking at the lights in the library windows.

Prann started to talk.

"We tried to explain to her what death was. It was impossible, of course. A child can't comprehend death. A child's mind is an incomplete thing. It must learn in order to comprehend. It must have experience. That was the first time she had seen death, other than the flies she burned, and then there was no thought of death. She did not know she had killed the kitten. She couldn't know she was killing Forbes and Battin, tonight. She was using the only methods of defense she knew when that happened, Gordon. Children live in a private kind of a world. It is partly fantasy. Small things like losing a toy are of great importance to them. Things like death and birth and life have no significance for them. A child will cry bitterly if a doll is broken, but will look at you uncomprehendingly if you tell it its dog has died."

"As you might suspect, the story doesn't end there. Let me show you one more thing."

Again Gordon felt the overlapping effect of strange thoughts entering his mind. . . .

This time there was a strong sense of impending danger! Prann sat upright in his bed, wide awake in an instant, ready for any action that might be necessary, every faculty alert.

There was silence in the room—a strange silence, for there were the usual night noises; outside the distant and near chirping of crickets, the bleeping of tree toads, and the hushed threnody of a million, million insects. Prann did not listen to these sounds. He listened *between* them, for something foreign, not belonging. He strained for long seconds. There was nothing. Then—

His mind reached out toward the thoughts of Jill, ex-

pecting to find her mind filled with child-sleep thoughts, fantasmal dreams, or dormant, idle, slow-flowing thoughts. There were none of these; no dream thoughts, erratic, unfinished, melting out of one sequence and dissolving into another. Prann gripped the sides of his bed with both hands. He squeezed until his fists turned white, and it took all his effort not to scream.

Jill's thoughts came through hard and crystal clear. She was not asleep.

There was a dizzying interplay of lights and darkness, changing, flashing, sweeping across his vision with frantic speed. And there was a fearful sensation that Prann could not at once place, yet it stopped his heart from beating and made his muscles freeze into immobility. He tried frantically to pull his mind away from Jill's—without success.

The crazy pattern of lights and darkness steadied abruptly. Everything stopped—hung motionless. Then Prann let go of the sides of the bed. Giddily he slid to the floor of his room in vast relief, glad of the solidity of the floor beneath him. He stopped trying to detach his mind from Jill's. Then he recognized the pattern of lights and darkness. He had experienced it himself, as a child. It was one of the fears that was born with him, and that he could never fully conquer.

"Jill, Jill," he muttered to himself, feeling strength and relief flow back into his body. "What are you doing?" It was a pointless question, for he knew now what it was.

Jill looked *down* at the top of the willow tree—now an indistinct form far below her, casting a faint shadow on the ground from the moonlight. Then she looked up at the stars. With uncertainty she looked back at the building—hundreds of feet below—and at the window where her bed was. She felt a little guilty. She knew she should not be doing this, but it was such fun; the night was so hot, and the sky was so empty except for the stars. It was so much fun to go up and up—and try to reach the stars and the big, big moon—and then to stop the *sigh* force and drop toward the willow tree, tumbling and turning. And the night and the stars were making such silly designs in her eyes; the wind as she dropped made her nightgown twist and flap around her body, and made her skin feel cold.

Maybe she should go back to her bed and go to sleep.

No. Just once more she would fly like the birds she had seen—and the fireflies. It was wonderful, but it scared her. The first time, she had panicked and *sighed* herself quickly through distance back into her room. She had not been so scared the next time, and even less scared the time after that. And tonight she loved it, scary or not, and she was going to do it once more before she had to go back to bed.

Jill rose steadily up in the sky. This time Prann was prepared for what was going to happen. He hugged the floor of his room as tightly as he could and got a grip on the leg of his bed with both hands. The lights below Jill became smaller. He could feel the chill of the breeze on her skin. He tried to estimate how high she was going, but there was no reference point. Off on the horizon he noted a flashing beacon but couldn't make anything of its code. Beyond the flashing beacon were the multiple lights of the town, spread out flat and unwinking. Beyond that—blackness.

Jill's eyes turned upward. The town lights and the blackness beyond them disappeared and were replaced by the lights of the stars, blinking, brightening, and fading.

Prann wanted to withdraw his mind from Jill's! But the intensity of the experience would not let him. He gripped the leg of the bed crushingly, expecting what would come soon. It seemed hours before Jill decided to stop rising. When she did, she hung in the sky looking around, curious, marvelling at the ever wonderful night panorama, looking from horizon to horizon. Then she looked down. And—

To Prann the fall to a point just above the willow tree was nightmarish. But to Jill it was a delight.

Prann's withdrawal, when at last he could accomplish it, was sudden and violent. Looking around his room, he found that he had pulled off the covers from his bed. He was drenched with perspiration and still shaking.

He knew he had missed the birth of a talent by several nights. But he had felt its growth, and it was something he never wanted to do again.

He donned his bathrobe and walked to Jill's room. Quietly he stood beside her bed. She was in a deep sleep already, the corners of her lips turned up in a little smile, and covered to her chin with the sheet.

"What has God given me?" whispered Prann to himself. *"Lusus naturae psionic."*

VIII

Gordon's mind returned to his own body again. Gordon stared incredulously at the man named Prann.

"You see?" said Prann conversationally. He might have been pointing out the fact that the sun had, after all, set. "There are no limits for her."

"No limits," said Gordon.

Prann sighed and changed position again. In a voice that was tired and very old he said to empty space: "It happens over and over again."

"What does?" demanded Gordon.

Prann shook his head without looking at him.

After a moment he said, "You can't reason with a child." An infant squalls to get what it wants—how can you reason with an infant? A child uses temper tantrums.

"Not Jill, though. Jill doesn't need temper tantrums. She can *get* what she wants. She merely takes it.

"Jill can PK a glass of milk out of the refrigerator when she wants it. Or candy. Or—what forbidden thing can a child want? Whatever it is, Jill can get it. Or she can teleport herself where she wishes to go. Or levitate whenever she feels the urge. These powers she uses to get her own way, and the things she wants. She uses them whenever she thinks of it, except when I can control her. And that is becoming more and more difficult. Don't you see, Gordon, where it is leading? What will she do when she realizes her full powers?"

Prann was silent for a time.

"You are seeing," he said, "the fantastic rebellion of a psi-trained child. A child who has been brought up in a false environment and who has had false orientation. So far, she is purely on the defensive. There are the startings of many independent thoughts deep in her mind. In time they will surface and she will consider them—and more than likely experiment a little. Gordon, I wish I could take you deep into her mind. But that is impossible without your having been preconditioned—you just wouldn't be able to take it."

Gordon shook his head. "Prann, it's all beyond me. I don't see how a child can be dangerous and not be aware

of it. And I think if a child is dangerous, it would stop at hurting those it loves."

"No, no, Gordon! A child can be deadly and not know it. This child Jill is dangerous not only to us and to herself but potentially dangerous to everyone with whom she comes in contact. Especially now, because she's terrified. Fear makes her impossible to control. It's like a panicky baby with a rattle made of dynamite caps—only much worse, Gordon, much worse! So much worse that—"

He paused.

"Gordon," he said softly, looking away from him, "I want to show you one more thing. Not about Jill. About me."

Gordon's viewpoint *shifted*—

And the view of the library disappeared abruptly again.

Gordon looked out through Prann's eyes upon a dead, frozen panorama.

"Poland," whispered the faint voice of Prann's mind next to his own.

Poland—where Prann had been born. Prann, with Gordon inside his mind, was walking along a pathway that led through a wide marsh. On each side of the pathway windrows of dead reeds lay thick on the ice-covered surface. The ground underneath was hard and cold. The swamp trees stood low and barren, inert with little wisps of dead summer foliage still clinging obstinately to some of the branches. The trunks and branches were still entwined with parasitic creeping vines, also dead, but still clinging as if ready to continue their strangling action at the first sign of spring.

Prann walked along the pathway as it wound through the swamp trees. His mind was alert, listening. From the silent voice of Prann, Gordon knew that this was at the height of the Polish Rebellion thirty-five years ago. Prann was nineteen, just learning of his talent. He was trying it out, barely able to detect the thoughts of others but as yet unpracticed and unreliable. He was leading a group of twelve refugees across the border to safety. Prann was the only man.

Looking back through Prann's eyes, thirty-five years later, Gordon approved the plan. The time for the escape from Poland could hardly be more ideal. It was cold, so the patrols would be lazy. The marsh could be traveled

with a minimum of danger. Their footprints would not show in the frozen ground, and the marsh itself was not treacherous.

Prann leaned back over his shoulder and whispered to his sister, "Freda, you must be quiet. We are very near the border. There are men ahead."

His sister, who had lately been awed by her brother's unexplained ability, turned her face toward him and whispered back, "Wolf, please not so fast. The baby is cold."

The others were padding up to them on burlap-wrapped feet, their breaths making little clouds in the air that disappeared almost immediately. They were dressed in men's clothing. Only Prann's sister had a child.

"There is a border patrol near," Prann told them. "There must be no sounds, no talking. Don't even breathe if I tell you not to."

His sister followed, whispering inaudibly to the baby to keep it from crying.

They went another two kilometers through the marsh. Then Prann halted short, stopping the others, motioning for them to make no sound.

"My God!" he whispered to himself—and, even thirty-five years later and through the filter of another mind, Gordon felt the shock of horror that filled him—*"It wasn't working for a while!"*

His flickering, immature sense of telepathy had failed him temporarily. Now—suddenly—he detected a group of men coming toward them. It was too late to turn back—and they couldn't change their course without taking a longer way to the border.

"Quick!" he whispered harshly. "Six of you get over there. The rest follow me!"

The group split into two parts. The first group left the path and melted into the rushes, suddenly invisible.

A fallen trunk of a swamp tree lay half buried in the marsh to the left of the path. Those with Prann dispersed themselves beyond the stump; Prann motioned to his sister to follow him. He settled behind the stump, Freda and the baby close beside him. He wished now it were summer so that there would be dense foliage to hide them—and the sounds of frogs and animals and insects that could cover the accidental sounds that any in the group might make. But there were not. The three border guards came clump-

ing along the pathway from around a bend. Twenty meters away one of the guards started a coughing spell. The three men stopped.

That incident saved them—for the moment. For the baby in Freda's arms began to cry weakly.

"Damn!" whispered Prann to his sister. *"Give him to me!"*

Prann pressed the baby close to his breast, the heavy coat he wore muffing the cries to a minimum. It was not enough. The three men had continued down the path toward the hidden group, laughing and talking again together loudly. That would help somewhat—but not enough.

And, just abreast of the stump, the three guards decided to stop for a smoke. Prann cursed the gods of fate for their action. His mind radiated a hate which he felt sure the men must be able to feel. He had cupped his hand over the baby's mouth and pressed tightly so no sound came. . . .

No sound at all.

The guards passed a bottle among them and cursed their duty and the weather. The bottle was passed again. . . .

The baby under Prann's palm shook and tried to breathe, but could not. Then it was quiet.

When at last the men were gone, Prann tried for a solid hour to breathe life back into the little body. But he knew—all the time he knew—his mind went out into where the tiny mind of the baby *should* be. And there was nothing.

Like wraiths, the others came out of the reeds to watch.

For a long time, his sister said nothing.

Then she whispered, "Wolf, you could do no more."

IX

Prann said, "So you see, Gordon. Nothing happens only once."

But his eyes were calm now—and sure. He got up, glanced briefly at Gordon, and moved toward the library.

Gordon stood paralyzed, shaking off the blistering cold of the marsh, the horror of the moment when, with Prann's mind, he had reached out for Freda's child—and felt the emptiness there.

Then he heard a tinkle of breaking glass.

Prann had broken a window; already he was climbing into the library.

Gordon broke the spell and hurried after him.

Prann stopped to seek out Jill's mind to discover if she had heard their entry. She had. At once he felt the sudden increase in tension and fear in her mind. It was not going to be easy to make contact with her.

He whispered to Gordon, "She knows we are here. She's terrified and will probably use lots of power."

"Couldn't you use projection on her," whispered Gordon, "as you used it on me?"

Prann shook his head. "Her mind is like a steel barrier. And she is stronger than I."

Prann led Gordon past the main desk, where books were piled up where the librarians had dropped them, then down a dark hallway. Gordon watched him peer cautiously at each room as they came to it. Then he paused, nodded, and entered a room. Gordon followed. When he came to the corner, he peered around it as Prann had done. There were rows of book shelves. Down the central aisle he could see Prann peeking around one of the shelves. He watched the man carefully remove the revolver from his pocket, grasp it barrel-first in his fist so that the butt made it a bludgeon. Prann wanted to kock the girl unconscious if he could.

"Jill," Prann called softly. "Ji—"

Prann did a full somersault in the air before his head hit the ceiling. There was a loud snap like a piece of wood breaking. Something hit Gordon's shoulder. It was the revolver. Gordon looked at it dumbly then looked back at Prann. The man's head was a mess of pulp and blood and broken bone from the force with which he had hit the ceiling. There were bits of plaster imbedded in his head; a red and gray ooze smeared the floor. It happened so quickly that it was over before Gordon realized the full impact of it. He stared down at the gray ooze and the numbness of shock began to sweep over him. He looked at the floor and picked up the revolver. It was slippery with blood. He looked up and saw Jill creeping through the far doorway. Her head turned toward him, her eyes staring straight into his eyes.

Something happened in his mind. He raised the revolver and took careful aim. Down the barrel he saw Jill's saucer

eyes looking fearfully at him over a slim shoulder. Her eyes opened a little wider. His fingers started squeezing the trigger, then every atom in him screamed:

She's just a child! Just a child! You can't shoot!

The gun fired.

The revolver dropped from his seared hand and started burning its way through the floor. There was a scatter of explosions from the bursting shells in the clip—Jill's terrified mind, frantically striking back, had set them off.

The last thing it would ever do on earth.

Though the bullets from the exploding gun lashed all about him, Gordon made no attempt to dodge. He hardly knew they were there. He hardly heard the gun go off, hardly knew he had been in danger.

He didn't care.

He slumped against a book rack, dazed and numb in mind and body. He bore the stacks over with him and ponderous volumes of Civil War commentaries tumbled down battering his head and arms. He didn't feel them either; he was past feeling He only saw Jill. He only felt what had happened in his own mind when he pulled that trigger.

Eight years old, with dolls. She still had a doll under each arm. Her dress was dirty but still gay; she lay almost as though asleep on the bare narrow floor of the corridor. And her face, mercifully, was out of his sight.

After a while, Gordon got up and walked out.

He sat on the bench outside the library, waiting—alone in that part of the town except for Prann's mangled body and the dead girl. That was how the soldiers found him when, cautiously, they began to close in.

The child of the Great Writer is a familiar stereotype—petulant brat, fattening on his father's royalties, stomping his miserable adolescent boots over his father's reputation. It is time to destroy this stereotype with the others. Thomas Mann's family shows how wrong it is. His daughter Erika has long shown that one child could inherit his talent; that another daughter shares it as well is now demonstrated, with insight and beauty, in——

TWIN'S WAIL

BY ELIZABETH MANN BORGESE

When he first said, "It is not Martha's fault, why, any Martha would have done it; he got her to be that way; I too had a Martha like that," people simply thought he was crazy. But after he had pieced the facts together, patiently and humbly, they made sense. People began to wonder about the sense they made and wanted to hope for the best, wish them well, Phil and Martha, whoever they were. Somehow it seemed the toll was paid; what for, no one could quite discern, but a toll was paid. They could go ahead now, Phil and Martha.

Vanyambadi, April 24, 1918.

Today James christened them. Willoughby and Theophil. Willoughby, after Dad. "Willy" just suits him, the cute thing. And if one is Willy, it is nice that the other be Philly. We thought of Philip, too; but, come to think of it, it doesn't make much sense, in our family. "Theophil" augurs well. Let him be dear to God.

June 6.

Will always has to be on the left side, Phil always on the right, in the crib and in the buggy too. If you put them the other way, they'll cry. It's really easier that way to tell them apart. Dr. Edgecomb says to separate them. They would grow better, he says. But it can't be done. They'll cry. Will keeps his left arm under his head, Phil the right one.

And when people stare at them—they have never seen a pair of twins here; they stare at them as if they were monsters—they both start crying at the same time. And when I rock the buggy they are quiet and begin to suck their thumbs: Will the right one, Phil the left. It's always like that. One is always the mirror image of the other.

July 24.

The kind of service you've got to put up with! I am frankly scared of Yoshi, but if I fire her the next one may be worse yet. Yoshi says they want to be two but the dasus prevent it. Chewing a parrot feather for a toothpick, she says if they cannot be two they'll bring on the earthquake, a terrible earthquake.

November 11.

They both spat out their spinach. They have the same likes and the same dislikes. They wet their diapers at the same time. Woe, if I changed Phil without changing Will! And Will must always be first.

May 1.

Yoshi says, and she wears an old stocking of mine on her head for a turban, help them be two. She says: Do shave Will's hair and sacrifice it to Shiva-with-the-Four-Arms that he sever them into two times two. Burn Will's hair. But Phil's hair should be done up with cow dung. That will help them be two.

November 9.

Will's cold is hanging on. We still kept him indoors today. He's rather cross and a bit run down. Got himself badly scratched up, along the left leg, while playing in his playpen with some train tracks. When Phil came home I'll be darned if he hadn't *his* leg scratched up too. The right one. He had crawled off towards the garden fence and fallen against the barbed wire.

December 13.

Yoshi said, in a magical singsong voice not her own: Don't bathe them in water, which makes for sameness. Will should be rubbed with the fat of a hilsa, but for Phil you should get the twice-chewed hay of a sacred cow and boil it in palm oil, with leaves of sandalwood and minusops. That you should rub on Phil. It will make them different.

February 12.

There is a Peter Toledo and a Peter MacGregor among the boys down at the Mission Nursery. Peter Toledo is

small and dark and flabby, and Peter MacGregor is tall and blond and springy. They haven't got a thing in common but their name. And that Phil is picking on Peter Toledo and Will is bothering Peter MacGregor. Today Phil took Peter Toledo's cookies, up in the dining room, and bit him when he cried, while Will kicked Peter MacGregor off the swing, down in the backyard, and rocked himself wildly and burst with laughter when he saw that Peter had got hurt.

Christmas.

It seems so strange, these two children who are really only one. And you don't know where one ends and the other begins. Will is for Phil, Phil is for Will, and there seems to be no room for anybody else. The space between them seems different from the space around, permeated by invisible communications. I've looked it up in the books, and it seems to be all perfectly normal the way it is. James says each one has a soul, each one of them is alone before God. But sometimes I wonder.

May 5.

Phil has grown faster than Will. He is almost an inch taller now. But Will is getting so bossy. Phil—"My Phil"—he has to do everything just the way Will wants him to. Phil is such a good boy. He does not mind. This morning Will wetted Phil's bed. I know he did, because Phil's bed was dry when I picked him up for his bath. But Will said: "Phil made wettywetty in his beddy. Bad Phil." And Phil looked at us so sorrowfully with guilty eyes. I really think he believed he did it.

Halloween.

Yoshi said: Their karmas are two. They are two. She sat on a stool by the bead curtain front door, spreading her shawl over Will and Phil on her sides, and she held their hands—Will's left, Phil's right—joined on her lap. The heart and the head line will never meet on Will's palm; he's going to be an impulsive boy. Phil will be pensive. See, where they join, the head and the heart line, in one. This swelling shows fortune and foresight. The life line is long but the mountain of love is shrivelled; dimpled and broken his pride and reliance. Will too shows good fortune but is reckless and wild. The field of Dishnana augurs abundance, but the mountain of love is like Phil's, just like Phil's, and

his life line is cut through by Asuras. Their karmas are two, said Yoshi.

Palm Sunday.

I gave Phil a bunny with floppy ears, but he cried till Will got one just like it. I gave Willy a set of jinglebells but he broke them in two, half for him, half for Philly. I gave them a team of galloping horses hitched to a covered wagon. They cried they did not want one but two. But there wasn't another one, not in all of Vanyambadi. So they cried and they said: We are scared of it, take it away!

This is as far as she got. Poor mother. Here her hand was halted.

Had she listened to Yoshi, perhaps the earth would have tarried. And we were to leave anyway, for Dad had been called to the Christ Church in Chicago. But the earth did not wait. God knows why it was sore at me and my Will.

There is not much I can remember. A sulky day of frightening colors. The kitten vomited and mewed, and the sheep dog had his tail between his legs. Yoshi was off to the village. Rice wine, too much rice wine, I remember they said. Has anybody ever seen a sunset like this, they said. A cloud with a golden rim was hovering over the horizon like a monster. Then I felt dizzy, trying to hold myself on all fours, and sick to my stomach. When it was over, the house had crumbled and the yard was gaping and smoking and the sheep dog was howling at the ruins and Dad took me in his arms and kissed me and carried me away. Mother had gone to Heaven, he said, and Will had gone with her so she wouldn't be lonely, but Philly and Daddy would go to Chicago. The stars had long tails and swirled over the sky through the ship's bull's eye.

Poor father. Had he listened to me, we might have found Will, for he was not in Heaven. I heard his voice calling in the night and wept to the nurse who came to soothe me. "My Will is crying, my Will wants me." I heard him often and knew him to be sick and looking for us. Phil is missing Will so, they said.

There was a mirror in the dressing room at the Nursery School in Chicago. I looked at it, while the teacher buttoned up my snowsuit, and called, overjoyed, "There is my Will." The other children too began to point at their selves in the

mirror and shouted names and jumped and laughed. There is another Dick. Where is the other Helen? My Tommy! Many a one fancied a twin. It was a game like another. Thus my Will faded to fantasy and then was forgotten. He was put away with the old toys for new ones

That was thirty years ago.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE, December 4, 1952. AUTHOR SLAIN IN APARTMENT BY DRUNKEN WIFE. Rome, December 3. William Sailor, thirty-four-year-old Anglo-Indian, was murdered this afternoon in his apartment in Via Sistina. Apparently he was attacked by his wife, the former Martha Egan, a television starlet, with a hunting knife. The woman, who was found to be doped and drunk, stabbed his left cheek and wounded his left arm. While Sailor was staggering and trying to regain his senses, the woman fired two shots from a pistol. Sailor was killed instantly. Neighbors and police were brought to the scene by the shots. Mrs. Sailor suffered a nervous breakdown. The Sailors had been heard quarrelling several times before.

Sailor lost all his family during the earthquake of Vanyambadi, India, in 1921. At sixteen he joined the British Merchant Navy and led an adventurous life that took him over most of the Asian and African coasts. After the war he settled in Rome where he married Martha Egan in 1949. William Sailor is the author of numerous books on travel and adventure. His best known work is a novel, *No Home for Strangers.*

"Did you see that, Phil?" Robby McNutting said over the luncheon table. "It's this morning *Trib*. He looked just exactly like you. My word, I've never seen such a likeness in all my life. Look at the forehead, generous like yours; the short cropped hair, the questioning eyes. Must be dark, like yours. The long straight nose, and the folds down the mouth, deeper on one side. Look, he even draws one shoulder up like you. Your mirror image." And he handed the page to Phil.

The paper trembled in Phil's hand so he put it down before him on the table and wiped over it with the back of his spoon as though to flatten it, or to see whether it was really there. Jim Wilder pushed his chair round the corner of the table, to look at the picture too, and Ted

Connally, on the opposite side, got up, walked round, leaned his arms on the back of Phil's chair, and looked over his shoulder.

"Boy," Jim Wilder said, "it's almost uncanny."

"Phil, old fellow," Ted Connally guffaved, slapping him on the shoulder, "how does it feel to have been murdered?"

"Oh, come on," Robby McNutting said helpfully, "you can't tell from a telephoto. Maybe the man looked altogether different."

Phil kept staring at the picture and the story. "And I knew it, I knew it, I knew it all the time," he mumbled. Then he poured down his Martini, and McNutting's and Wilder's and what was left of Ted Connally's second, and staggered out of the Club.

CHICAGO TRIBUNE, December 8, 1952. MURDERESS DEFENDED BY VICTIM'S DOUBLE. Rome, December 7. Theophil Thorndike, a Chicago banker, arrived here today by plane from New York. He claimed to be the twin brother of William Sailor who was murdered by his wife on December 3. Thorndike said he had documents to prove the relationship. People who knew William Sailor said the similarity to Thorndike was astounding. Thorndike hired a lawyer to defend Mrs. Sailor and obtained her transfer, pending trial, to a private room at the sanatorium Villa Igea.

They certainly had explained my coming. But probably she had not listened. She was easily distracted. When I opened the door she seemed utterly unprepared.

She stared at me, buried her face in her hands, then stared again, forlorn. She jerked up from the red upholstered armchair in which she had been resting and retreated towards the red-framed window, groping blindly backwards with her arms, always staring at me, through me, at the red rousing wall. She leaned against the window, her palms cooling on the glass pane. Her black open hair fell over her black shoulders. Her face was pale and contorted. A witch condemned to the stake, a poor sick suffering girl. "Go away," she hissed, "please go away and leave me alone."

"How do you do, Martha." The calm swing of a trained business voice sounded utterly out of place, even to me.

"I am Will's brother Phil Thorndike. From Chicago. Didn't they tell you." There was not another sound to be gotten out of her. She stood there black and twisted, her arms spread out, a barren tree against the darkling sky. A quarter of an hour, perhaps half an hour, and night fell. I stole towards the door and slipped out.

The next morning he brought her roses and candies.

"Hello, Martha, you look fine today. Had a good rest? It was cold in Chicago when I left, you know; the wings of the plane were heavy with ice. We had a hard time taking off. Didn't he ever tell you he had a brother? He probably didn't remember. I couldn't either, but then I knew it even though he ceased to be real long ago, in a certain way. Dad kept talking about him and mother, and there were pictures and the baby book. I'll show them to you. Look, I bought a copy of *No Home for Strangers.* Started reading it. He must have been a tough guy. You know, I wanted to be a writer, too. Took a couple of courses in creative writing at college. But then, I met—Martha—my wife's name was Martha too—and then I got a job at the Morris Trust Company and went to Law School. I guess that didn't leave much time for anything else. Why don't you try these candies? You smoke? You know, I don't know a soul here in Rome. It's funny. But there are American bars all over the place. Hot dogs de luxe—the Romans take them so seriously and they're terribly fashionable. But I don't like it here. People staring at me. 'That must be William Sailor's brother'—do I really look so much like Will?"

"Why don't you shut up?"

"Hello Martha. Feeling better today?"

"Say, how long are you going to hang around here?"

"Oh, Martha, I want to stay as long as necessary. I want to help you. . . . I've finished Will's book. Do you like it, Martha?"

"I hate it. And I hate Will. I hate both of you. Oh, don't go! Please don't go away."

Martha wept, fitfully and fearfully. Her face on her arm on the red polished hospital table. Her back shaking. Tears clogging her nose and choking her throat. The world, coming to an end with each long pressed sob,

vanished trembling behind the wall of tears. The void closed in, tightening on her deluged temples, her squeezed lungs. She wept on Phil's hand stretched to stroke soothingly her jerking shoulders. "Poor girl," he said. "I know it. I know it all. Cry it out. Cry it all out of your system."

She stroked his face, blindly, gratefully.

"The scar," she said, and had suddenly stopped weeping. "The scar on your cheek, on your right cheek." She looked at him in new horror.

"Nothing. An accident. A crash. Three months ago. It's all healed now."

Martha: Good morning Phil. How nice of you to come so early.
Phil: Had a good rest?
Martha: Just fine. Thanks. And you?
Phil: I got up early and took a walk in the city.
Martha: It's a wonderful city.
Phil: People sitting outdoors in the cafés.
Martha: In Via Veneto.
Phil: In December. In Chicago it's blizzards.
Martha: And here the light is lambent on the red stones.
Phil: You just walk for hours, just walk and get lost.
Martha: One discovery opening into another.
Phil: Don't you love it?
Martha: I loved it.
Phil: How long have you been living here, Martha?
Martha: Seven, almost eight years. It's almost eight years.
Phil: Met Will in Rome?
Martha: At Dermott McDermott's.
Phil: You know Dermott?
Martha: Of course I do. I was staying with him, and you know Freddy.
Phil: Freddy? It's years and years.
Martha: He pays him ninety dollars a month.
Phil: Just for the fun of sleeping with him.
Martha: Freddy is a terrible mess.
Phil: I don't see what Dermott finds in him.
Martha: Sometimes he won't speak to Dermott all day.
Phil: I think he hates Dermott. I think he will kill Dermott some day.
Martha: When Dermott wants to dress up and go to the show, Freddy won't shave and he'll hang around

in dirty jeans, and he'll go out into the street and talk to the whores.

Phil: Like and like keep good company.

Martha: He won't do a thing at home. The bathroom, always messy. He'd use up the last piece of soap.

Phil: The last piece of toilet paper.

Martha: But he'd never dream of replacing it.

Phil: Never. You had to do it all.

Martha: What are you smiling at? Am I boring you? I guess I am boring you.

Phil: Not in the least, Martha.

Martha: Will smiled, just before that gun went off.

Phil: Smiled, just like that.

Martha: I sometimes think: You. Simply you. You almost did it. You died. You scared me. Don't do it again. I must be more careful. That must never happen again. Phil, I am so scared.

Phil: How did Will and Dermott get along?

Martha: At first, famously. That is, Will adored Dermott.

Phil: And Dermott just loves being adored.

Martha: For Will, Dermott was a real writer, and artist. Dermott had to check every comma Will wrote.

Phil: Poor Will. And he himself wasn't a real writer?

Martha: Just thrillers, you know. And he said he did not know any language at all.

Phil: He must have known Hindi, as a child.

Martha: He forgot it, and English he never learned. Just picked it up from the boys in the Navy.

Phil: And read a lot, I guess.

Martha: But it was not *his* language. And lately he started getting mixed up with Italian.

Phil: He had no language.

Martha: It does something to your mind, he said.

Phil: *Huprooted.* Kicked around in world and creeds and systems. So huprooted. All of us.

Martha: And did he show off in front of Dermott, spending silly amounts of money, you know, and telling him how many copies of his latest book had been sold and in how many languages it had been translated.

Phil: Dermott couldn't care less.

Martha: And he said it read best in Persian, although there were a few minor mistakes in the translation.

Phil: That's sheer snobbism.

Martha: I don't know why he picked up with me in the first place; whether it was because he cared for me or whether he thought it would hurt Dermott. You know, he was jealous of Dermott, at the same time.

Phil: And you?

Martha: I don't know. I really don't know. He said he was going to get me a part in his new television play. A part written just for me. He was wonderfully like you. Don't die any more, please don't.

Phil: It is late, Martha, and I must go. They are getting your lunch ready. Halfway decent? What shall I bring you tomorrow? Okay, Martha, it will be marrons glacés. So long, Martha.

She is not a bad girl after all. Simple, forthright, cordial, rather generous by nature, underneath. Out of place in this career. Slithered into it God knows why. What made her act so horridly with Will?

My Martha was different. Wicked right from the outset. A go-getter. At first she seemed nice enough, though, and active. Pretty tall blond she was.

Dead. Destroyed. Kaputt. Won't work no more. Slipped out of my impotent hands. And left a hard hole, hard white hole, superimposing its Martha shape, planing into its contours whoever wants to float up through.

The other girls at the office didn't like her, though. Fawning on the boss and bossy on the fawns. (That's a good one. Must tell Martha. Which Martha?) She certainly knew what she wanted. Spun her web round me in no time. And then the allergies. Never seemed to bother her till she had me. But then! Endless trouble and troubled end.

Phil: Listen, Martha, what I made up yesterday on my way home: "Fawning on the boss and bossy on the fawns." Isn't that a good one?

Martha: Who? What?

Phil: Any one. I mean, I was thinking of my wife, when she was still working at the office. Can you imagine. She wasn't a bit like you: all cold and calculating.

Martha: Just the name.

Phil: That does not create any bond.
Martha: Maybe it does.
Phil: There are many Marthas.
Martha: And one proto-Martha.
Phil: What difference does it make?
Martha: There's something damned about all Marthas.
Phil: Perhaps.
Martha: Parents ought to be more careful.
Phil: It's their way, their luck, they impress with their chosen name.
Martha: I wish my name was ——. I can't think of a suitable name for myself; but imagine if my name was ——, everything would have been different. There's something damned about all Marthas.
Phil: About mine there was, by Jove. Hell of a life.
Martha: What did she do to you?
Phil: The allergies. The air-conditioned rooms and the oxygen tents. The fumes and the moves and the fired nurses.
Martha: if she was sick?
Phil: I couldn't accept any invitations for dinner
Martha: or bring home any guests.
Phil: She'd be sick, infallibly. She called me at the office and she called me at board meetings
Martha: and woe, if you didn't get home on time.
Phil: She made my life utterly impossible.
Martha: Why didn't you get rid of her?
Phil: (I did.) Divorce, you know, has an ugly ring in the ear of a missionary's son
Martha: and I think you just wanted it like that. Some people just have to have hell at home. You know, Will. . . .
Phil: Did you run Will like that?
Martha: I don't know. I guess I was worried about him because he took to drinking so heavily.
Phil: You cancelled his dinner engagements?
Martha: Because I didn't want people to see him so drunk.
Phil: There's always some because
Martha: because he put both hands into the salad bowl at the Marchesa Marchesani's
Phil: if he didn't do worse than that
Martha: and he would argue. Did he argue, with Dermott,

when they both were drunk! He was quite unbearable.

Phil: What did they argue about?

Martha: Politics, lots of it. Imperialism. Socialism, and all the rest.

Phil: Well. I know where Dermott stands on all those things

Martha: and you can imagine what happened when Will said the Indians were inferior.

Phil: Did he say that?

Martha: And the children there get blind because they are too lazy to drive the flies off their eyes. He said they just sit there and let the flies eat their eyes.

Phil: Maybe it's true. I heard it too.

Martha: You know, he lived with them, street urchins, for years, after he got lost during the earthquake—a girl named Maharata picked him up and mothered him as best she could—and he said, if he didn't turn out to be a mess like them it was because he had the stuff it takes to be a man

Phil: it's the same stuff I am made of. I can assure you.

Martha: It hasn't got anything to do with the "social order" he said. And the British officers in India did a wonderful job

Phil: they tried to bring the natives up to their standards: didn't he say that?

Martha: Why, they even left their personal silver to the Indian Officers Mess, when they quit, just to show them

Phil: that was undoubtedly generous on their part.

Martha: But the Labour Government was terrible

Phil: that wasn't exactly what Dermott thought.

Martha: But Will, he turned literally green when you as much as mentioned one of them. Which, after all, is rather strange because he knew nothing about politics in the first place.

Phil: What did he think was wrong?

Martha: The way they betrayed the Empire, he said, was terrible and they killed initiative at home and produced soft characters, whereas, what you need to get along is to be tough, he said

Phil: come to think about it, that's just the way I used to feel

Martha: you've got to be tough
Phil: it was because I was so tough that I became president of the Morris Trust Co. at thirty years of age
Martha: you thought, the real way to start a business was to sell apples from an apple cart
Phil: I even tried to write a book about these things, you know, how tough and self-made you've got to be
Martha: and that the New Deal was terrible
Phil: and that the government should keep off my affairs and yours
Martha: and stuff like that.
Phil: It was to be called: *Keep Going West, Young Man,* but I guess it was so badly written no one wanted to publish it, thank goodness.
Martha: Why did you change your mind about these things?
Phil: It's all stuff and nonsense: I and I and I. Did you ever hear about a fellow named Plato?
Martha: Vaguely.
Phil: My favored author at the Great Books class.
Martha: Your mind is wandering, Phil.
Phil: At the beginning, he said, there were neither men nor women
Martha: but some kind of funny beings
Phil: male and female at once.
Martha: I guess they must have had four arms
Phil: and four legs and so on
Martha: I wonder whether they were happy that way
Phil: until, one day, a certain rude deity split them asunder
Martha: severing boy from girl
Phil: and they have been looking for one another ever since.
Martha: What are you driving at, Phil?
Phil: It's the story of Will and me.
Martha: Split asunder, one day, by a certain rude deity?
Phil: A quirk of fate.
Martha: You should have been one, are one. Don't die any more, please don't die again.
Phil: One case of 86 works out like that: Twins. One out of every 86^2, makes triplets; one of every 86^3,

quadruplets. The dickens knows why. But that's the way it is

Martha: and it had to be you

Phil: or else it might have been one of 87

Martha: the law upset

Phil: a false interval, a dissonant chord: it hurts my ear to think of it

Martha: it could not happen

Phil: the name of the new Platonic God is Statistics.

Martha: You are mad, Phil,

Phil: and all that he-man stuff just to hide the half-man, you know

Martha: and you were lonely and little and scared underneath.

It had gotten dark in the room.

"Martha, dear, Doctor Rosselli says the trial has been set for a month from now. He is very confident it will go all right. He says he can drop the plea for temporary insanity—your nervous breakdown came after the fact—and base your case on self-defense. Accidental killing in self-defense. He says the only trouble is that there are no witnesses, and the fact that you were doped, but he hopes to get around that. But now you should tell me everything. The whole story. That may be very, very helpful. Are you strong enough to tell me everything?"

"I'll try. But it's a long story. I'll try to piece it together. Well, Will was getting worse all the time. He drank terribly. For a certain time, he grew a beard, and he was wearing dark glasses. The light hurt his eyes, he said. What are you fumbling with your pocket. Now look there, for God's sake, dark glasses! You too! He looked terribly sick. I wanted to take him to a doctor, but he said he knew I wanted to murder him. He said that all the time. He whispered it into my ear at night. He developed the strangest notions."

"What notions?"

"For a while he always thought that he . . . stank. That was before he grew the beard. Later he didn't care any more. At that time, he would constantly change his underwear, order that it be boiled, sniff at his shirts and jackets and pillow cases. He would constantly get new mouth waters and tooth pastes. When there was some

bad smell somewhere—for instance, at the post office—he would say with a very loud voice, *che puzzo,* what a stink! And everybody would look at him—which is just what he wanted—for he wanted them all to know that it wasn't *he*. At the restaurant he would order the waiter to open the windows—I smell the smell of sour feet, he would announce—and when the lady at the next table protested against the draught, he said, Lady, if I were in your shoes—and I mean what I say, he added—I would not protest against a little fresh air. But some people don't seem to notice when they . . . because the smell goes away: it doesn't go up into your own nose. He had often noticed that, he said. It was quite embarrassing."

"What's there to giggle about, Martha? Poor Will."

"And when I opened the door to his room, he said, why don't you come in, does it stink here? But, as I said, it got worse and worse. He stayed up all night, trying to work. And then he would sleep for days on end. He hollered at me, even when there were other people, and he threw things at me. The telephone. He kept it unplugged most of the time. And if I forgot to unplug it and it rang, he picked it up and cooed 'googlegooglegoo' into it, and then he hit me over the head with it."

"He would go to any length to get you to be what you were not."

"Well, I guess, I got mean too. It's contagious, you know. I smashed his bottles, and then I watched him lapping the whiskey off the ground."

"How ghastly, Martha."

"And then came the affair with Freddy. And that was the end."

"What do you mean, affair?"

"I mean I had an affair with Freddy."

"Didn't you say you couldn't stand him?"

"I'll tell you in a minute. But first I must tell you about Licky. Poor Licky. She was so cute."

"Who was Licky?"

"A little Dalmatian. The cutest dog you ever saw. Dermott's wedding present. Well, Licky was in heat. And we kept her locked up in my bedroom. She could open all the doors, if you didn't lock them with the key. She was so smart. And I would take her down, three, four times a day, on the leash, of course, and never letting go of

her for a minute. When she was in her third week—which is, of course, the worst possible moment—I came home one evening and saw Licky, loose, racing around like crazy, panting, her tongue out, and Will, going his way as if there was nothing to it. I said, for Christ's sake, Will, are you out of your mind? He said—he was so drunk—now don't start fussing. The mutt got her too, I saw it, he said, but so what. To hell with it all. I'll fix her up, he said. Don't start fussing. Then he got a shot from the vet—Ergotinina—I guess he gave it the wrong way, or, at any rate, much too much of it—he should have given her 3 cc and he gave her about 10—and poor Licky, her heart was not strong ever since she had had distemper. What we went through with that dog, sitting up days and nights, and I won't tell you what we spent on medicines and vet bills—that distemper had left her with a weak heart. And, what with that wrong shot, she beastly died."

"That's terrible."

"I am telling you all that, because he did exactly the same thing to me. He practically arranged it. He always managed to get the two of us together."

"But why?"

"I guess it wasn't enough for him to have taken *me* away from Dermott. He wanted to take away Freddy too."

"Sheer wickedness."

"And jealousy. Anyway. One evening Dermott and Freddy came over, and Will said, and he was all dressed up, even with a hat, he said, Dermott and he had to go to a PEN Club meeting which was terribly important. He said he was arranging for some sumptuous prize to be awarded to Dermott—but Freddy and I couldn't come along, he said, because we were not members, and we should wait at home, and there was a new bottle of Scotch, and we should play some records. After we were half through with the Scotch, I assure you I felt so bored and so drunk, and there was nothing we had to say to each other, and I guess so I started making love to Freddy. Freddy was puzzled; he'd never done it with a girl before. But before we knew it"

"Goodness gracious."

"When we found out that I was pregnant, Will got so disgusting it's hard to describe. You know, he didn't get

angry or passionate about it, just cold and cynical. Quite disgusting. He said, either you pull out of here or I'll see to it that you get fixed up all right. He said he didn't want a child of Freddy's in his house. As a matter of fact he didn't want any child at all. I felt so sick and nauseated I told him it was all the same to me, just so long as he took care of everything. And he did. But I kept having pains afterwards, and then he would get me dope but I felt just terrible, terrible. And that Sicilian woman who came in to clean up, she knew all about it. She was tiny and black and her eyes stung. I still hear the click of her clogs and she kept hissing at me *ammàzzalo,* you should kill him."

"Sicilians are quick at that."

"Between Will's own obsessions and that Sicilian's constant whispers I gradually got quite used to the idea."

"Did you really *want* to kill him?"

"I guess I did not really want anything at all. One evening I said I wished I had died like Licky. And he said: But Licky was a *good* bitch. At that moment I picked up that pistol from his desk—I was sitting near his desk —and pointed it at him. I did not know whether it was loaded, and I don't know how to fire a gun anyway. I just kept pointing it at him. And he grabbed a hunting knife and leapt forward and spat like a cat: So you are going to kill me, no, you aren't. And he smiled. Now I don't understand whether it was because he wasn't as tough as he thought he was, or because he had the knife in his right hand—you know, he was left-handed—at any rate, I dropped the pistol and tried to wrestle the knife from him. He was so awkward and so weak, come to think of it, he practically slashed his cheek—the left one—with his own hand, and then the knife slipped and stuck in his left arm. He yelled and stepped back to pull it out and I picked up the pistol again and pointed it against him, just in case he attacked again. But, I don't know how, the pistol fired. And that was the end."

"Oh, Martha, poor poor girl. Don't cry now. It is all too terrible for words. It is even more terrible than you think it is. But now it's all over. Poor, poor Martha, it is not your fault, and it will be plain for every one to see. Look at the scar on my cheek . . . right cheek . . . my right arm was badly mangled too. You asked me the first

day what it was. Now I'll tell you. It's weird. Martha, my wife, she got pregnant too. But she did not want it at all. If you want to breastfeed him you can have him, she said to me. Her lips were pale, her cheeks drawn, her eyes shot venom."

"Maybe she was really ill."

"With the kind of service you've got to put up with here, she said, I'd lose years playing nurse-maid. Farewell to social life. Farewell to lectures and studies. And as sick and delicate as I am, she said. The allergies. Just shut up at home. That's what you wanted, I know, she said. There was no way of stopping her."

"But if she was really sick . . ."

"She said, and how do you know it is your child? She said it out of sheer meanness. There was absolutely no reason for supposing that it was *not* my child. I guess she was much too selfish to plunge into the sea of trouble, to go through all the fluster and gripes it takes to have a lover."

"Couldn't it be that she was too nice?"

"Why are you trying to defend her?"

"She's dead."

"I remember, I remember: She hustled in her dressing gown and kicked up the kind of smell nasty ladies have on them in the morning. You know. Mixed up perfumes and powders and greases and sleep and some coffee in it . . ."

"You too go in for smells?"

"Are you trying to be funny? It is strange. I never thought of that. Anyway, what would you have told her?"

"I'd let her go to hell. I mean, I suppose, you should have comforted her, encouraged her, told her it would be a fine baby."

"Oh, come on now."

"What did you tell her then?"

"I felt so disgusted by that time—hapless creature, I thought—so I merely said: You're your own boss, darling. It's your problem. You solve it."

"And she?"

"I never saw anybody turning so green. I suppose she expected me to fall on my knees and beg her not to do it. But I simply didn't feel like it."

"And so she got it fixed?"

"I didn't see her until after it was all over. She felt lousy and she hated me for it. I guess it was all my fault."

"What do you mean, your fault, if the same thing happened to Will just about at the same time?"

"Wasn't it his fault? Didn't he act simply beastly?"

"How could it have been his fault, if it happened to you too?"

"Whose fault is it then?"

"I guess fault isn't the right word here."

"Well. Now you are getting nearer to where I want you to get. Because surely it was not *your* fault—"

"Go on with your story."

"I am nearly at the end. We did not see much of each other after that. And we didn't see anybody else. Only once I accepted an invitation for lunch, at the Wilcoxes at Winnetka. Martha said she was glad to go to the Wilcoxes. It was a Sunday, and so foggy you couldn't see your own hand at an arm's length, and we took the Outer Drive."

"You were living on the South Side?"

"Yes. And just after the underpass at 53rd Street . . . a crazy car, passing another one in that fog. He came up against us, at full speed. I saw him coming when he was practically crashing into us. All three cars, smashed. Four people, badly cut up. Only Martha was dead."

"And you felt that you killed her."

"I certainly did. And I still don't understand how. Look, it was she or I. If the car had swerved to the right—as it should—I would have been killed; she wounded. But it swerved to the left. God knows how. I think, when she saw what was going on, she herself grabbed the wheel and pushed it over. Or perhaps I did it, I really don't know."

"Just like the fight between Will and me. And that moment of indecision."

"Indecision on things long since decided."

"It was he or I. And I don't know, still don't know, how it was that it was he . . ."

"And his left side cut up and my right, in the process."

"That is the way it had to be. Wait a moment: Can you explain to me *why?*"

"Karma. It all was there. Nothing to be done about it. And one half and one half made one."

"You know, I think it does something to your mind, the mere fact of having been born in the Orient."

"Sure does. Just look at Harry Luce."

"Thank you, Doctor Rosselli, Martha is getting much much better. And I am so glad that you think the material at our disposal is shaping up so promisingly."

"I think Mr. McDermott's statement will be very useful. After all, he has known Martha for a long long time and seen her practically until the day of the . . . accident."

"And the maid is ready to testify."

"That'll be helpful too."

"I, myself, have prepared a little statement, avvocato. I don't know whether it will be of any use to you. Just some thoughts I had on the whole thing—the way I see it. And so I put them down. Here, at any rate, avvocato, here it is."

TWIN'S WAIL

You are trying Martha Egan Sailor for murder while every one says she is such a good girl, but the more they talk about her and the more she talks about herself, the wronger her case gets, and she's just a plain murderess.

Why didn't any one try me for murder? I killed Martha in a crash and took to the deed all the ingredients my brother used but plus one: the grace of God.

If it is a grace to live. Cain lived, but Abel died. There was Cain in Will, much Cain, but some Abel, for he died. There was Abel in me, much able Abel, but some Cain; for I live.

I was quite a regular fellow, standing on my own two feet, with a regular career and a successful one; I thought that was my merit and a bit of luck. With a marriage that miscarried: I thought that was my fault and a bit of disgrace.

It stopped there and made sense: a closed system of information.

Will too was a typical fellow, standing on his own two feet, with a typical career that made sense absolute, and a marriage that failed and ended in violence, an old and self-sufficient story.

Another closed system of information, and if you stop there, his murderess is a murderess.

But extrapolate the facts and interpolate the systems, and differentiate and integrate, which is not enough: who knows how much to interpolate, to extegrate and communate to get the whole, complex, infiniplex truth to the nth potential. Somehow no value can be assigned to Guilt in these equations. It whittles down, infinitesimal.

A wretched wrecked girl pulling a trigger is such a trivial factor in this factura. Incogent to think you'll bring down the crushing structure of incognita by sawing away at that thin leg of my cognita cognate. Let her alone. Whatever her part of how do you call it, Guilt, in the context of her own closed system, she has certainly expiated. The fact is that what happened here had to happen and did happen because it happened another time far away. Our wills are tied through the ages across spaces, and what I did with, or had done to, my right hand was but a reflex of what he did with, or had done to, his left. It always was like that between us and was all written down. (Exhibit A, attached.)

That knocks out the girl, altogether, her only fault being that her name is Martha. Calling all Marthas, suing all Marthas, if you wish.

Blind chance has once more shown its foresight in permitting us to reason this out at Villa Igea, an insane asylum providing undoubtedly the most suitable setting for suchlike revelations. I am putting them down because, whereas it is of course possible that we are freaks of nature, half-men, conditioned by one another, it is, on the other hand, equally possible that our experience, though extreme, is yet more or less typical, and that men proud of their achievements or crushed by their guilt are equally presumptuous, for thinking they are free—they are not. With kindest regards, very sincerely yours.

"Oh, Phil, dear, the news is a little bit too good."

"It never can be too good, Martha. Why, what did he say, Doctor Comedger?"

"He said I was fine. General condition, excellent. Blood count, satisfactory. Weight, satisfactory. But, Phil, brace yourself for the good news . . ."

"Well, what could it be?"

"Phil, it's twins."

Tom Purdom wishes to teach us a few lessons in phylogenetics: Change is not always for the better. Progress does not always bring joy. These are harsh and iconoclastic rules, but Purdom has the evidence to prove them; he presents it in this story for the strong-stomached——

THE HOLY GRAIL

BY TOM PURDOM

Morgan Valentine had a wife. She lay on the floor with blood running from her mouth.

"You should see a psycher, Morgan."

"You talk too much."

Flesh bruises beautifully, he thought. And, sick with himself, he turned his back on her. All the way home from his coffee house he had watched the women on the street and his hands had sweated and squeezed the handles of his cycle. The sensual delight of revenge.

"Teresa, you tell anybody else I have a second job and I never will get to a psycher. This time you only got what you deserve."

Her skirt rustled. In his mind he saw her curl against the wall. She was dark-eyed and frail.

"I'm sorry," she said. "You're right. I'm sorry."

He kept his back to her, afraid of the little thrill the sight of her blood would give him. He covered his face with his hands.

"I wish I didn't have to do this to you. You know I try not to do it to you."

"I understand. You'd better go to work, Morgan. It's getting late."

"You're so *good.*"

"Please go, Morgan."

He threw his poncho over his head. At the door he stopped. "I'll bring you something home. Is there anything special you'd like?"

"You don't have to bring me anything."

"I want to."

"Then you pick it out yourself."

He always felt calm after beating her. Soon he would feel guilty but now he didn't have any emotions. He twisted two dials on the service panel and the elevator door opened. In the basement of the residential tower a selector picked out his cycle and put it in another elevator. When he got to the main door his cycle was waiting for him.

"Good evening," the door said. "Have a pleasant evening."

He got on his cycle and pedalled slowly through the Philadelphia streets. He hardly noticed the traffic. He wanted to be someplace where he wasn't.

I'm halfway there, he thought. In another two years I'll have enough money saved to bribe a psycher's assistant. If I don't lose this job. If I don't kill somebody first. I'm glad I have Teresa. She's a saint. If it weren't for her I would be attacking strange women. She's kept me out of jail.

He passed Teresa's favorite coffee house, a big, noisy place that catered to the arty crowd. Teresa still thought she would have been a great painter if she hadn't married him. He wouldn't let her spend his money on art lessons. Well, she still wrote poetry and that seemed to satisfy her.

The streets were full of cycles and people in colorful, eccentric clothes. People talking, people running here and there, people driven by deep, powerful forces of which they were aware but which they could not resist.

Would there ever be enough psychers? His case was urgent and yet he couldn't even get it diagnosed. After he killed someone they might get him a psycher, but he would probably spend twenty years in prison first.

Oh, they graduated two hundred psychers every year. Every young man who liked money wanted to be a psycher. But it was a difficult profession, only a small minority had the latent talent and every cure took years. And there were two hundred million people in the country, every one hungry for psychic wholeness.

Every psycher was the center of a ruthless competition. His services went to those who acquired power. To those who had money and influence.

He cycled through the Carnival section and parked

beside the Huxley Heaven. The early evening man looked bored and ready to leave.

"How was your shift?" Morgan asked.

"Dull. A lot of repeaters and casuals. No kills. I wish I had your shift. You've got a good two hours."

"I haven't been doing too well lately, myself."

"It's these Humanists and Aesthetes. And the religious people. Everybody's down on us."

"Except the customers. It's still a good living."

"I can't complain. Enjoy yourself, Morgan."

"Pleasure."

He stood in the pastel booth. *Happiness,* the sign above him flickered. *Happiness.* In the center of the Carnival the giant Pinwheel flamed and soared. Crowds wandered from amusement to amusement while flashing lights and taped voices serenaded their subconscious minds. It was the age of leisure, the era of the four-hour working day. The crowds had come every night for seven years.

He was a plump young man whose glasses made his eyes look metallic. He waited for his victims.

A girl stopped at the booth.

"Pleasure, Morgan."

"Pleasure, Laura."

She was small and full bodied and her skin was a lovely chocolate brown. And she lived only for the huxley. She came here three times a week at least. One of his first kills.

She leaned against the booth and stared at the sky.

"It's a hot night. I'd like the huxley tonight."

"We have an empty room. It's still early."

"I've run through my week's pay."

"That's too bad. When's your next payday?"

"On Thursday. Could you lend me the payment? I'll pay you back on Thursday."

He thought. She had to come back again. She couldn't stay away. And all the salesmen cooperated on debtors, so she couldn't avoid paying by coming back during someone else's shift. Except maybe Wilson's. Wilson had seemed vaguely unfriendly lately.

"I'll lend it to you for a little interest."

She wiggled nervously. "You're married, Morgan."

He whipped her with his eyes. She had once used expensive perfume but now she smelled of plain soap. The

process of destruction had begun. Soon he and the huxley would own her.

"I like variety," he said. "Every healthy man likes variety."

"I've never done it for money or to get favors. That's all wrong. I've only done it for fun."

"Don't you think I'd be fun?"

"Sure. But you understand me. You should do it *just* for fun."

He wouldn't have to hurt her. The act itself would torture her.

"I like you, Laura. I would enjoy you very much."

"I could give you extra money."

"I don't need money. I need a nice healthy girl."

She stared at the sky.

"Happiness," he said. "Huxley happiness."

"Let me use the huxley? It's been two days. This night makes my skin tingle."

"I'll see you by the Pinwheel when I get off work."

"All right."

He led her inside and gave her the tranquilizing pill. She put the headset on herself. He twisted the dials on the wall. Her eyes closed. Electric impulses began to play directly on the pleasure centers of her brain. He watched her face relax into a smile. What was she seeing? Visions? Dreams? Or was she just experiencing the pure happiness the advertising promised?

He had never tried the huxley himself. He didn't dare. If he ever experienced that pure joy, that total release from all conflict, he would probably cease to pursue the vision he had of himself. The temptation had to be resisted. Every night the huxley crouched at his back, a huge, tiger-eating flower baited with the sweetness of joy.

He left the brown plastic room and went back to the booth. A few minutes later a swagger boy leaned on the counter. He was tall and thin and he wore the standard uniform, an old fashioned tweed jacket and baggy slacks.

"Good evening, sir."

"Good evening."

After two years in the booth, he knew the different types. Some were casuals. They could put on the huxley, enjoy it once and never come back. Others, like Laura, betrayed their deep anxieties and he knew from their first

conversation that they would come back until they had no happiness but the huxley. Swagger boys were hard to judge. Sometimes their sleepy, superior manner concealed what he was hunting for; usually they just annoyed him and left.

"Like to try some real living?" Morgan asked.

The swagger boy yawned. "That's what every salesman says. Really now. I don't even own a music tape."

"What do you do with your leisure?"

"Nothing. Nothing is worth doing."

He decided the boy had picked him out as a handy person to pose for.

"The huxley is even better than a woman," Morgan said. "Try it and you'll give up women."

"I've had enough women. I gave them up last year."

"I know how you feel. Nothing is worth the effort. You're right. Why not grab some happiness while you hang around and wait to die?"

"My dear fellow, happiness is the pursuit of the vulgar."

The boy laughed in his face and swaggered off.

Morgan smiled. He had one or two swagger boys on his list of regulars. No matter what you offered them, they declared it inferior. But they were vain. They needed an audience and therefore had to expose themselves to seduction. This one might come back again. Even he might some day grovel at the gates of Huxley's Heaven.

It was a bad shift. Only two or three regulars showed up and two casuals, a couple on a date. He wanted a kill. Every time he added a regular to the huxley's books twenty percent of the future take went to him. There had been no obvious potential addicts for three days.

He spotted the girl when she was many yards away. She was a tall, thin brunette. Her clothes were obviously assertive but only emphasized her tired face and nervous eyes. She walked with a little stoop and maneuvered slowly and awkwardly through the crowd.

His hands tensed on the surface of the counter. He smiled. "A pleasant evening."

"Pleasant evening," she said.

"I'm Morgan Valentine. Would you like to buy some happiness?"

"I just came here out of curiosity. I've never been here before."

"I see." He explained what the huxley did and how it worked. He described colorful beauties, excitement, an awakening and transcendence of the self.

"It sounds exciting but dangerous. Has anyone ever been electrocuted?"

He laughed pleasantly. "No, it's safer than a cycle ride. Did you ever walk through the park on a summer night?"

"Often."

"It's as safe and beautiful as that."

"You talk like a poet. As if you like your job."

"I do. I come here every night and sell happiness to people. I love my work."

"I wish I had a job like yours."

She wanted to talk. His body tensed. Let her run on. A kill! O, Lordy, a kill! Take your time, take your time. She'll run away afraid if you hurry.

"What do you do?" he asked.

"I run a copyer. If I had to work a five hour day I'd go insane."

"I know. I'm very lucky. Most people don't have jobs they like. But I go home at night feeling very good when I think of all the people with monotonous jobs I've helped make happy."

All the time he talked his eyes flattered her. He knew the type. She had probably gone from love to love, always hungry for something permanent, always used and then left by her lovers. How old was she? Twenty-nine? Thirty? Young enough to hope for marriage, certainly, but also old enongh to be desperate.

"How much does it cost to try it once, Mr. Valentine?"

"Call me Morgan, please. Everyone who comes here does. I'm their friend." He told her the price, raising it a little so he would have bargaining room.

"It's pretty expensive. I didn't think it would cost so much."

"It's a complicated device. It's probably the greatest thing ever invented. When you get done you'll think anything would be an undercharge. In all the centuries of human life, nobody ever experienced happiness like this."

"That's my whole entertainment budget for the week."

"The memory will last a month."

He watched her face and her dark, nervous hands.

"Listen, I'll knock ten per cent off the fee. Just for you. Because I want to make you happy."

"I couldn't let you do that."

"It's all right. We can afford it."

She frowned. "I'll come back later."

And let Wilson get her? No thanks.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I want to think about it."

He laughed. "It's not that big a decision, is it? It's not like—getting married, say."

She put her hands underneath her cape. "Is it habit forming?"

"We couldn't have the booth here if it was. Narcotics are illegal."

"My last boy friend used to say it was."

"He probably misunderstood it. Many people misunderstand."

"He said it was wrong. He used to say people shouldn't get happiness from machines. That it isn't *real* happiness."

He studied her face. His expression and his tone were very sympathetic. "It didn't turn out well, did it? Your love, I mean?"

"No. He told me we didn't seem to be made for each other. He was probably right. I'm so young and ignorant. I'm going to love school now. That's one reason why I have to watch my money."

Morgan hated love school. It was for the people with the minor problems, the ills that could be cured without deep psyching. They went there with their mental backaches and when they left they were whole and vital and free to feed and be fed. He hated them because they were lucky.

"I know how you feel. My wife and I just had a big fight."

"You should go to love school."

"I tried it once. It didn't seem to do any good. The only thing that makes my life worthwhile is being able to sell happiness."

"Do you ever use the huxley yourself?"

"Now and then," he lied. "You can't spend all your time giving."

"I've tried being nothing but a giver. It doesn't work. At love school they're trying to teach me how to take."

"Well, you've come to the right place. That's what the

puritans haven't learned yet. They're afraid to take what little happiness there is in the world. They always think you have to earn it. As if we don't all earn it every minute just by being here."

The girl looked at the sign and then at the door that led to the huxley.

"Perhaps that's why I'm hesitating. I'm afraid to take. I feel guilty."

"A lot of people feel that way. Of course, I'm not your psycher so I can't tell you that's what's stopping you."

He felt what he often felt as a kill neared its climax. If this girl, with her anxieties, tried the huxley, she would never be the person she wanted to be. And he understood that pathetic hunger to be whole and pitied her.

It's her or me, he thought. It's her or me. If I didn't do this to her, someone else would. The weak perish and the strong survive.

"Let's try it out," he said. "I'll tell you what, I'll let you use the huxley free."

She stepped back. "No."

"Why not?"

"It doesn't sound right."

He shook his head. "It's all right. I can use it free all I want. I'll let you use it in my place."

"It's not that. I mean I was worried about you, I don't want to take your money, but—" Her voice drained off. She stared at the door. The light flashed *happiness, happiness.*

"Show them you can be a taker," he said. "Overcome your fears and inhibitions. They'll be proud of you at love school."

"All right. That's what it is. I'll show them."

"Good girl. Come with me. Right through the door here."

He led her to an empty room and showed her how to use the huxley. She hesitated when he handed her the tranquilizer and then threw it down her throat. He adjusted the headset.

"Sit back," he said. "Relax."

He turned to the control panel and twisted the dials. Her eyes closed. Her body went limp. She smiled and then chuckled like a sleeping baby. Morgan laughed, too, a bitter, triumphant laugh.

He stopped laughing and held his head in his hands. *Forgive me. Please forgive me.* He didn't know to whom the words were mumbled.

When he got to the booth Wilson was there. It was nearly quitting time.

"I just made a kill," Morgan said.

Wilson was a tall, long chested man with sad eyes. "Congratulations. You were due for one."

"Thanks." He looked at his watch. "Five minutes left. I may as well leave."

"Morgan, I'd like to talk to you."

"Sure. What's on your mind?"

"I'd like to talk to you alone."

"Will it take long?"

"It shouldn't."

"I guess we can leave the booth alone."

They stepped into their private office. Wilson slowly lit a pipe.

"What's on your mind?" Morgan said.

"This is a hard thing to say. I've thought it over for weeks."

Morgan began to feel impatient. "What is it?"

"You're violating the Fair Employment Law. I can prove you have two jobs. If you don't give me twenty-five percent of your take, I'll tell the inspector."

"You snake. How dare you make that accusation!"

"You know it's true, Morgan. Please don't fight me. You work as an electrician in the morning. If I turn you in they'll confiscate your earnings and I'll get a big chunk as a reward."

The tiger snarled in his belly.

"I'll kill you."

"Morgan, please don't fight. I hate doing this. I've put it off for weeks. But I need the money. I know you need it too and so I'd rather not make you lose this job. Don't make me turn you in."

"You mean you'll make more money sucking out twenty-five percent. You bloodsucker! You informer!"

Wilson's brow twisted. "Please try to understand me, Morgan."

"I need every cent I make. I've got to get a psycher."

"You're torturing me. Will you stop? Don't you understand? You're only twenty-five. You've got time. I'm

thirty-two and I've never had a woman. If I don't get a psycher soon, I never will. Please understand me."

"I understand you."

Wilson was a brooding mass of pity. But he had made as many kills as Morgan. To get money for a psycher, even his own pain would not keep Wilson from being ruthless. Morgan understood him all too well.

"You've got me under your thumb," Morgan said.

He took a step forward. Then he charged. Wilson stepped out of the way. Morgan swung and his pudgy fist rammed into stomach muscle. Wilson grunted and hit him in the face. Morgan had rage but Wilson had reach and seemed to have training.

He never got near Wilson. All he saw was a shower of big fists and a face contorted with grief.

When he came to Wilson was gone.

You can't kill him, his nauseated brain said. Kill him and they'll send you to prison. Think of Teresa's soft flesh and Laura's humiliation. Take it out on them.

He rose to his knees and dragged himself erect. When he opened the door Wilson was alone in the booth.

"I'll get back at you," he whispered. "I'll fix you so you'll never know the smell of a woman."

"I'm sorry," Wilson said. "You can give me my first cut tomorrow. I'm sorry."

He staggered through the crowds to the Pinwheel. How many years would this set him back? The murder lust only needed time. Give it enough time and it would conquer him.

He looked at the clean stars and saw his vision. The bright dream. The Holy Grail. Himself renewed. From sickness and corruption would arise a whole and splendid man. Morgan Valentine, aglow with the diamond brilliance of the cured.

More than a decade ago, in the smallest of all science-fiction magazines, appeared a story called "Scanners Live in Vain." It was a gruesome little glimpse of what space-travel might be like, from the point of view of the unhappy space-traveler, and it was the first public appearance of the byline "Cordwainer Smith." In the intervening years Smith has lost none of his originality and none of his gruesomeness; we know this, for if he had, he could not possibly have written——

ANGERHELM

BY CORDWAINER SMITH

Funny funny funny. It's sort of funny funny funny to think without a brain—it is really something like a trick but not a trick to think without a brain. Talking is even harder but it can be done.

I still remember the way that phrase came ringing through when we finally got hold of old Nelson Angerhelm and sat him down with the buzzing tape.

The story began a long time before that. I never knew the beginnings.

My job is an assistant to Mr. Spatz, and Spatz has been shooting holes in budgets now for eighteen years. He is the man who approves, on behalf of the Director of the Budget, all requests for special liaison between the Department of the Army and the intelligence community.

He is very good at his job. More people have shown up asking for money and have ended up with about one-tenth of what they asked than you could line up in any one corridor of the Pentagon. That is saying a lot.

The case began to break some months ago after the Russians started to get back those odd little recording capsules. The capsules came out of their Sputniks. We didn't know what was in the capsules as they returned from upper space. All we knew was that there was something in them.

The capsules descended in such a way that we could

track them by radar. Unfortunately they all fell into Russian territory except for a single capsule which landed in the Atlantic. At the seven-million-dollar point we gave up trying to find it.

The Commander of the Atlantic fleet had been told by his intelligence officer that they might have a chance of finding it if they kept on looking. The Commander referred the matter to Washington, and the budget people saw the request. That stopped it, for a while.

The case began to break from about four separate directions at once. Khrushchev himself said something very funny to the Secretary of State. They had met in London after all.

Khrushchev said at the end of a meeting, "You play jokes sometimes, Mr. Secretary?"

The Secretary looked very surprised when he heard the translation.

"Jokes, Mr. Prime Minister?"

"Yes."

"What kind of jokes?"

"Jokes about apparatus."

"Jokes about machinery don't sit very well," said the American.

They went on talking back and forth as to whether it was a good idea to play practical jokes when each one had a serious job of espionage to do.

The Russian leader insisted that he had no espionage, never heard of espionage and that his espionage worked well enough so that he knew damn well that he didn't have any espionage.

To this display of heat, the Sceretary replied that he didn't have any espionage either and that we knew nothing whatever that occurred in Russia. Furthermore not only did we not know anything about Russia but we knew we didn't know it and we made sure of that. After this exchange both leaders parted, each one wondering what the other had been talking about.

The whole matter was referred back to Washington. I was somewhere down on the list to see it.

At that time I had "Galactic" clearance. Galactic clearance came a little bit after universal clearance. It wasn't very strong but it amounted to something. I was supposed to see those special papers in connection with

my job of assisting Mr. Spatz in liaison. Actually it didn't do any good except fill in the time when I wasn't working out budgets for him.

The second lead came from some of the boys over in the Valley. We never called the place by any other name and we don't even like to see it in the federal budget. We know as much as we need to about it and then we stop thinking.

It is much safer to stop thinking. It is not our business to think about what other people are doing, particularly if they are spending several million dollars of Uncle Sam's money every day, trying to find out what they think and most of the time ending up with nothing conclusive.

Later we were to find out that the boys in the Valley had practically every security agent in the country rushing off to Minneapolis to look for a man named Angerhelm. Nelson Angerhelm.

The name didn't mean anything then but before we got through it ended up as the largest story of the twentieth century. If they ever turn it loose it is going to be the biggest story in two thousand years.

The third part of the story came along a little later.

Colonel Plugg was over in G-2. He called up Mr. Spatz and he couldn't get Mr. Spatz so he called me.

He said, "What's the matter with your boss? Isn't he ever in his room?"

"Not if I can help it. I don't run him, he runs me. What do you want, Colonel?" I said.

The colonel snarled.

"Look, I am supposed to get money out of you for liaison purposes. I don't know how far I am going to have liaise or if it is any of my business. I asked my old man what I ought to do about it and he doesn't know. Perhaps we ought to get out and just let the Intelligence boys handle it. Or we ought to send it to State. You spend half your life telling me whether I can have liaison or not and then giving me the money for it. Why don't you come on over and take a little responsibility for a change?"

I rushed over to Plugg's office. It was an Army problem.

These are the facts.

The Soviet Assistant Military Attaché, a certain Lieutenant Colonel Potariskov, asked for an interview. When he came over he brought nothing with him. This time he

didn't even bring a translator. He spoke very funny English but it worked.

The essence of Potariskov's story was that he didn't think it was very sporting of the American military to interfere in solemn weather reporting by introducing practical jokes in Soviet radar. If the American army didn't have anything else better to do would they please play jokes on each other but not on the Soviet forces?

This didn't make much sense.

Colonel Plugg tried to find out what the man was talking about. The Russian sounded crazy and kept talking about jokes.

It finally turned out that Potariskov had a piece of paper in his pocket. He took it out and Plugg looked at it.

On it there was an address. Nelson Angerhelm, 2322 Ridge Drive, Hopkins, Minnesota.

It turned out that Hopkins, Minnesota, was a suburb of Minneapolis. That didn't take long to find out.

This meant nothing to Colonel Plugg and he asked if there was anything that Potariskov really wanted.

Potariskov asked if the Colonel would confess to the Angerhelm joke.

Potariskov said that in Intelligence they never tell you about the jokes they play with the Signal Corps. Plugg still insisted that he didn't know. He said he would try to find out and let Potariskov know later on. Potariskov went away.

Plugg called up the Signal Corps, and by the time he got through calling he had a lead back into the Valley. The Valley people heard about it and they immediately sent a man over.

It was about this time that I came in. He couldn't get hold of Mr. Spatz and there was real trouble.

The point is that all three of them led together. The Valley people had picked up the name (and it is not up to me to tell you how they got hold of it). The name Angerhelm had been running all over the Soviet communications system. Practically every Russian official in the world had been asked if he knew anything about Nelson Angerhelm and almost every official, at least as far as the boys in the Valley could tell, had replied that he didn't know what it was all about.

Some reference back to Mr. Khrushchev's conversation

with the Secretary of State suggested that the Angerhelm inquiry might have tied in with this. We pursued it a little further. Angerhelm was apparently the right reference. The Valley people already had something about him. They had checked with the F.B.I.

The F.B.I. had said that Nelson Angerhelm was a 62-year-old retired poultry farmer. He had served in World War I.

His service had been rather brief. He had gotten as far as Plattsburg, New York, broken an ankle, stayed four months in a hospital, and the injury had developed complications. He had been drawing a Veterans Administration allowance ever since. He had never visited outside the United States, never joined a subversive organization, had never married, and never spent a nickel. So far as the F.B.I. could discover, his life was not worth living.

This left the matter up in the air. There was nothing whatever to connect him with the Soviet Union.

It turned out that I wasn't needed after all. Spatz came into the office and said that a conference had been called for the whole Intelligence community, people from State were sitting in, and there was a special representative from OCBM from the White House to watch what they were doing.

The question arose, "Who was Nelson Angerhelm? And what were we to do about him?"

An additional report had been made out by an agent who specialized in pretending to be an Internal Revenue man.

The "Internal Revenue agent" was one of the best people in the F.B.I. for checking on subversive activities. He was a real expert on espionage and he knew all about bad connections. He could smell a conspirator two miles off on a clear day. And by sitting in a room for a little while he could tell whether anybody had had an illegal meeting there for the previous three years. Maybe I am exaggerating a little bit but I am not exaggerating much.

This fellow, who was a real artist at smelling out Commies and anything that even faintly resembles a Commie, came back with a completely blank ticket on Angerhelm.

There was only one connection that Angerhelm had with the larger world. He had a younger brother, whose name was Tice. Funny name and I don't know why he got it.

Somebody told us later on that the full name tied in with Theiss Ankerhjelm, which was the name of a Swedish admiral a couple hundred years ago. Perhaps the family was proud of it.

The younger brother was a West Pointer. He had had a regular career; that came easily enough out of the Adjutant General's office.

What did develop though, was that the younger brother had died only two months previously. He too was a bachelor. One of the psychiatrists who got into the case said, "What a mother!"

Tice Angerhelm had traveled a great deal. He had something to do, as a matter of fact, with two or three of the projects that I was liaising on. There were all sorts of issues arising from this.

However, he was dead. He had never worked directly on Soviet matters. He had no Soviet friends, had never been in the Soviet Union, and had never met Soviet forces. He had never even gone to the Soviet Embassy to an official reception.

The man was no specialist, outside of Ordnance, a little tiny bit of French, and the missile program. He was a card player, an awfully good man with trout and something of a Saturday evening Don Juan.

It was then time for the fourth stage.

Colonel Plugg was told to get hold of Lieutenant Colonel Potariskov and find out what Potariskov had to give him. This time Potariskov called back and said that he would rather have his boss, the Soviet Ambassador himself, call on the Secretary or the Undersecretary of State.

There was some shilly-shallying back and forth. The Secretary was out of town, the Undersecretary said he would be very glad to see the Soviet Ambassador if there were anything to ask about. He said that we had found Angerhelm, and if the Soviet authorities wanted to interview Mr. Angerhelm themselves they jolly well could go to Hopkins, Minnesota, and interview him.

This led to a real flash of embarrassment when it was discovered that the area of Hopkins, Minnesota, was in the "no travel" zone prescribed to Soviet diplomats in retaliation against their "no travel" zones imposed on American diplomats in the Soviet Union.

This was ironed out. The Soviet Ambassador was asked,

would he like to go see a chicken farmer in Minnesota?

When the Soviet Ambassador stated that he was not particularly interested in chicken farmers, but that he would be willing to see Mr. Angerhelm at a later date if the American government didn't mind, the whole thing was let go.

Nothing happened at all. Presumably the Russians were relaying things back to Moscow by courier, letter, or whatever mysterious ways the Russians use when they are acting very deliberately and very solemnly.

I heard nothing and certainly the people around the Soviet Embassy saw no unusual contacts at that time.

Nelson Angerhelm hadn't come into the story yet. All he knew was that several odd characters had asked him about veterans that he scarcely knew, saying that they were looking for security clearances.

And an Internal Revenue man had a long and very exhausting talk with him about his brother's estate. That didn't seem to leave much.

Angerhelm went on feeding his chickens. He had television and Minneapolis has a pretty good range of stations. Now and then he showed up at the church, more frequently he showed up at the general store.

He almost always went away from town to avoid the new shopping centers. He didn't like the way Hopkins had developed and preferred to go to the little country centers where they still have general stores. In its own funny way this seemed to be the only pleasure the old man had.

After nineteen days, and I can now count almost every hour of them, the answer must have gotten back from Moscow. It was probably carried in by the stocky brown-haired courier who made the trip about every fortnight. One of the fellows from the Valley told me about that. I wasn't supposed to know and it didn't matter then.

Apparently the Soviet Ambassador had been told to play the matter lightly. He called on the Undersecretary of State and ended up discussing world butter prices and the effect of American exports of ghee to Pakistan on the attempts of the Soviet Union to trade ghee for hemp.

Apparently this was an extraordinary and confidential thing for the Soviet Ambassador to discuss. The Undersecretary would have been more impressed if he had been able to find out why the Soviet Ambassador just out of

the top of his head announced that the Soviet Union had given about a hundred and twenty million dollars credit to Pakistan for some unnecessary highways and was able to reply, therefore, somewhat tartly to the general effect that if the Soviet Union ever decided to stabilize world markets with the cooperation of the United States we would be very happy to cooperate. But this was no time to discuss money or fair business deals when they were dumping every piece of export rubbish they could in our general direction.

It was characteristic of this Soviet Ambassador that he took the rebuff calmly. Apparently his mission was to have no mission. He left and that was all there was from him.

Potariskov came back to the Pentagon, this time accompanied by a Russian civilian. The new man's English was a little more than perfect. The English was so good that it was desperately irritating.

Potariskov himself looked like a rather horsey, brown-faced schoolboy, with chestnut hair and brown eyes. I got to see him because they had me sitting in the back of Plugg's office pretending just to wait for somebody else.

The conversation was very simple. Potariskov brought out a recording tape. It was standard American tape.

Plugg looked at it and said, "Do you want to play it right now?"

Potariskov agreed.

The stenographer got a tape recorder in. By that time three or four other officers wandered in and none of them happened to leave. As a matter of fact one of them wasn't even an officer but he happened to have a uniform on that very day.

They played the tape and I listened to it. It was *buzz, buzz, buzz.* And there was some hissing, then it went *click-ety, clickety, clickety.* Then it was *buzz, buzz, buzz* again. It was the kind of sound in which you turn on a radio and you don't even get static. You just get funny buzzing sounds which indicates that somebody has some sort of radio transmission somewhere but it is not consistent enough to be the loud *whee, wheeeee* kind of static which one often hears.

All of us stood there rather solemnly. Plugg thoroughly a soldier, listened at rigid attention, moving his eyes back

and forth from the tape recorder to Potariskov's face. Potariskov looked at Plugg and then ran his eyes around the group.

The little Russian civilian, who was as poisonous as a snake, glanced at every single one of us. He was obviously taking our measure and he was anxious to find out if any of us could hear anything he couldn't hear. None of us heard anything.

At the end of the tape Plugg reached out to turn off the machine.

"Don't stop it," Potariskov said.

The other Russian interjected, "Didn't you hear it?"

All of us shook our heads. We had heard nothing.

With that, Potariskov said with singular politeness, "Please play it again."

We played it again. Nothing happened, except for the buzzing and clicking.

After the fifteen-minute point it was beginning to get pretty stale for some of us. One or two of the men actually wandered out. They happened to be the bona fide visitors. The non-bona fide visitors slouched down in the room.

Colonel Plugg offered Potariskov a cigarette which Potariskov took. They both smoked and we played it a third time. Then the third time Uotariskov said, "Turn it off."

"Didn't you hear it?" said Potariskov.

"Hear what?" said Plugg.

"Hear the name and the address."

At that the funniest feeling came over me. I knew that I had heard something and I turned to the Colonel and said, "Funny, I don't know where I heard it or how I heard it but I do know something that I didn't know."

"What is that?" said the little Russian civilian, his face lighting up.

"Nelson," said I, intending to say, "Nelson Angerhelm, 2322 Ridge Drive, Hopkins, Minnesota." Just as I had seen it in the "galactic" secret documents. Of course I didn't go any further. That was in the document and was very secret indeed. How should I know it?

The Russian civilian looked at me. There was a funny, wicked, friendly, crooked sort of smile on his face. He said, "Didn't you hear 'Nelson Angerhelm, 2322 Ridge Drive, Hopkins, Minnesota,' just now, and yet did you not know *where* you heard it?"

The question then arose, "What had happened?"

Potariskov spoke with singular candor. Even the Russian with him concurred.

"We believe that this is a case of marginal perception. We have played this. This is obviously a copy. We have many such copies. We have played it to all our people. Nobody can even specify at what point he has heard it. We have had our best experts on it. Some put it at minute three. Others put it at minute twelve. Some put it at minute thirteen and a half and at different places. But different people under different controls all come out with the idea that they have heard 'Nelson Angerhelm, 2322 Ridge Drive, Hopkins, Minnesota.' We have tried it on Chinese people."

At that the Russian colonel interrupted, "Yes, indeed, they tried it on Chinese persons and even they heard the same thing, Nelson Angerhelm. Even when they do not know the language they hear 'Nelson Angerhelm.' Even when they know nothing else they hear that and they hear the street numbers. The numbers are always in English. They cannot make a recording. The recording is only of this noise and yet it comes out. What do you make of that?"

What they said turned out to be true. We tried it also, after they went away.

We tried it on college students, foreigners, psychiatrists, White House staff members, and passers-by. We even thought of running it on a municipal radio somewhere as a quiz show and offering prizes for anyone that got it. That was a little too heavy, so we accepted a much safer suggestion that we try it out on the public address system of the SAC base. The SAC was guarded night and day.

No one happened to be getting much leave anyhow and it was easy enough to cut off the leave for an extra week. We played that damn thing six times over and almost everybody on that base wanted to write a letter to Nelson Angerhelm, 2322 Ridge Drive, Hopkins, Minnesota. They were even calling each other Angerhelm and wondering what the hell it meant.

Naturally there were a great many puns on the name and even some jokes of a rather smutty order. That didn't help.

The troublesome thing was that on all these different

tests we too were unable to find out at what point the subliminal transmission of the name and address came.

It was subliminal, all right. There's not much trick to that. Any good psychologist can pass along either a noise message or a sight message without the recipient knowing exactly when he got it. It is simply a matter of getting down near the threshold, running a little tiny bit under the threshold and then making the message sharp and clear enough, just under the level of conscious notice, so that it slips on through.

We therefore knew what we were dealing with. What we didn't know was what the Russians were doing with it, how they had gotten it and why they were so upset about it.

Finally it all went to the White House for a conference. The conference, to which my boss Mr. Spatz went along as a sort of rapporteur and monitor to safeguard the interests of the Director of the Budget and of the American taxpayer, was a rather brief affair.

All roads led to Nelson Angerhelm. Nelson Angerhelm was already guarded by about half of the F.B.I. and a large part of the local military district forces. Every room in his house had been wired. The microphones were sensitive enough to hear his heart beat. The safety precautions we were taking on that man would have justified the program we have for taking care of Fort Knox.

Angerhelm knew that some awful funny things had been happening but he didn't know what and he didn't know who was concerned with it.

Months later he was able to tell somebody that he thought his brother had probably done some forgery or counterfeiting and that the neighborhood was being thoroughly combed. He didn't realize his safeguarding was the biggest American national treasure since the discovery of the atomic bomb.

The President himself gave the word. He reviewed the evidence. The Secretary of State said that he didn't think that Khrushchev would have brought up the question of a joke if Khrushchev himself had not missed out on the facts.

We had even tried Russians on it, of course—Russians on our side. And they didn't get any more off the record than the rest of the people. Everybody heard the same

blessed thing, "Nelson Angerhelm, 2322 Ridge Drive, Hopkins, Minnesota."

But that didn't get anybody anywhere.

The only thing left was to try it on the man himself.

When it came to picking inconspicuous people to go along, the Intelligence committee were pretty thin-skinned about letting outsiders into their show. On the other hand they did not have domestic jurisdiction, particularly not when the President had turned it over to J. Edgar Hoover and said, "Ed, you handle this. I don't like the looks of it."

Somebody over in the Pentagon, presumably deviled on by Air Intelligence, got the bright idea that if the Army and the rest of the Intelligence committee couldn't fit into the show the best they could do would be to get their revenge on liaison by letting liaison itself go. This meant Mr. Spatz.

Mr. Spatz has been on the job for many, many years by always avoiding anything interesting or dramatic, always watching for everything that mattered—which was the budget and the authorization for next year—and by ditching controversial personalities long before anyone else had any idea that they were controversial.

Therefore, he didn't go. If this Angerhelm fiasco was going to turn out to be a mess he wanted to be out of it.

It was me who got the assignment.

I was made a sort of honorary member of the F.B.I. and they even let me carry the tape in the end. They must have had about six other copies of the tape so the honor wasn't as marked as it looked. We were simply supposed to go along as people who knew something about the brother.

It was a dry, reddish Sunday afternoon, looking a little bit as though the sunset were coming.

We drove up to this very nice frame house. It had double windows all the way around and looked as tight as the proverbial rug for a bug to be snug in in cold winter. This wasn't winter and the old gentleman obviously couldn't pay for air conditioning. But the house still looked snug.

There was no waste, no show. It just looked like a thoroughly livable house.

The F.B.I. man was big-hearted and let me ring the

doorbell. There was no answer so I rang the doorbell some more. Again, nobody answered the bell.

We decided to wait outside and wandered around the yard. We looked at the car in the yard; it seemed in running order.

We rang the doorbell again, then walked around the house and looked into the kitchen window. We checked his car to see if the radiator felt warm. We looked at our watches. We wondered if he were hiding and peeking out at us. Once more we rang the doorbell.

Just then, the old boy came down the front walk.

We introduced ourselves and the preliminaries were the usual sort of thing. I found my heart beating violently. If something had stumped both the Soviet Union and the rest of the world, something salvaged possibly out of space itself, something which thousands of men had heard and none could identify, something so mysterious that the name of Nelson Angerhelm rang over and over again like a pitiable cry beyond all limits of understanding, what could this be?

We didn't know.

The old man stood there. He was erect, sunburned, red-cheeked, red-nosed, red-eared. Healthy as he could be, Swedish to the bone.

All we had to do was to tell him that we were concerned with his brother, Tice Angerhelm, and he listened to us. We had no trouble, no trouble at all.

As he listened his eyes got wide and he said, "I know there has been a lot of snooping around here and you people had a lot of trouble and I thought somebody was going to come and talk to me about it but I didn't think it would be this soon."

The F. B. I. man muttered something polite and vague, so Angerhelm went on, "I suppose you gentlemen are from the F.B.I. I don't think my brother was cheating. He wasn't that dishonest."

Another pause, and he continued. "But there is always a kind of a funny sleek mind—he looked like the kind of man who would play a joke."

Angerhelm's eyes lit up. "If he played a joke, gentlemen, he might even have committed a crime, I don't know. All I do is raise chickens and try to have my life."

Perhaps it was the wrong kind of Intelligence procedure

but I broke in ahead of the F.B.I. and said, "Are you a happy man, Mr. Angerhelm? Do you live a life that you think is really satisfying?"

The old boy gave me a keen look. It was obvious that he thought there was something wrong and he didn't have very much confidence in my judgment.

And yet underneath the sharpness of his look he shot me a glance of sympathy and I am sure that he suspected I had been under a strain. His eyes widened a little. His shoulders went back, and he looked a little prouder.

He looked like the kind of man who might remember that he had Swedish admirals for ancestors, and that long before the Angerhelm name ran out and ran dry there in this flat country west of Minneapolis there had been something great in it and that perhaps sparks of the great name still flew somewhere in the universe.

I don't know. He got the importance of it, I suppose, because he looked me very sharply and very clearly in the eye.

"No, young man, my life hasn't been much of a life and I haven't liked it. And I hope nobody has to live a life like mine. But that is enough of that. I don't suppose you're guessing and I suppose you've got something pretty bad to show me."

The other fellow then took over.

"Yes, but it doesn't involve any embarrassment for you, Mr. Angerhelm. And even Colonel Angerhelm, your brother, wouldn't mind if he were living."

"Don't be so sure of that," said the old man. "My brother minded almost everything. As a matter of fact, my brother once said to me, 'Listen, Nels, I'd come back from Hell itself rather than let somebody put something over on me.' That's what he said. I think he meant it. There was a funny pride to him and if you've got anything here on my brother, you'd better just show it to me."

With that, we got over the small talk and we did what we were told to do. We got out the tape and put it on the portable machine, the hi-fi one which we brought along with us.

We played it for the old man.

I had heard it so often that I think I could almost have reproduced it with my vocal cords. The *clickety-click,* and the *buzz, buzz.* Therewasn't any *whee, whee,* but there was

some more *clickety-click* and there was some *buzz, buzz,* and long periods of dull silence, the kind of contrived silence which a recording machine makes when it is playing but nothing is coming through on it.

The old gentleman listened to it and it seemed to have no effect on him, no effect at all.

No effect at all? That wasn't true.

There was an effect. When we got through the first time, he said very simply, very directly, almost coldly, "Play it again. Play it again for me. There may be something there."

We played it again.

After that second playing he started to talk.

"It is the funniest thing, I hear my own name and address there and I don't know where I hear it, but I swear to God, gentlemen, that's my brother's voice. It is my brother's voice I hear there somewhere in those clicks and noises. And yet all I can hear is Nelson Angerhelm, 2322 Ridge Drive, Hopkins, Minnesota. But I hear that, gentlemen, and it is not only plain, it is my brother's voice and I don't know where I heard it. I don't know how it came through."

We played it for him a third time.

When the tape was halfway through, he threw up his hands and said, "Turn it off. Turn it off. I can't stand it. Turn it off."

We turned it off.

He sat there in the chair breathing hard. After a while in a very funny cracked tone of voice he said, "I've got some whisky. It's back there on the shelf by the sink. Get me a shot of it, will you, gentlemen?"

The F.B.I. man and I looked at each other. He didn't want to get mixed up in accidental poisoning so he sent me. I went back. It was good enough whisky, one of the regular brands. I poured the old boy a two-ounce slug and took the glass back. I sipped a tiny bit of it myself. It seemed like a silly thing to do on duty but I couldn't risk any poison getting to him. After all my years in Army counter-intelligence I wanted to stay in the Civil Service and I didn't want to take any chances on losing my good job with Mr. Spatz.

He drank the whisky and he said, "Can you record on this thing at the same time that you play?"

We said we couldn't. We hadn't thought of that.

"I think I may be able to tell you what it is saying. But I don't know how many times I can tell you, gentlemen. I am a sick man. I'm not feeling good. I never have felt very good. My brother had the life. I didn't have the life. I never had much of a life and never did anything and never went anywhere. My brother had everything. My brother got the women, he got the girl—he got the only girl I ever wanted, and then he didn't marry her. He got the life and he went away and then he died. He played jokes and he never let anybody get ahead of him. And, gentlemen, my brother's dead. Can you understand that? My brother's dead."

We said we knew his brother was dead. We didn't tell him that he had been exhumed and that the coffin had been opened and the bones had been X-rayed. We didn't tell him that the bones had been weighed, fresh identification had been remade from what was left of the fingers, and they were in pretty good shape.

We didn't tell him that the serial number had been checked and that all the circumstances leading to the death had been checked and that everybody connected with it had been interviewed.

We didn't tell him that. We just told him we knew that his brother was dead. He knew that too.

"You know my brother is dead and then this funny thing has his voice in it. All it's got is his voice . . ."

We agreed. We said that we didn't know how his voice got in there and we didn't even know that there was a voice.

We didn't tell him that we had heard that voice ourselves a thousand times and yet never knew where we heard it.

We didn't tell him that we'd played it at the SAC base and that every man there had heard the name, Nelson Angerhelm, had heard something saying that and yet couldn't tell where.

We didn't tell him that the entire apparatus of Soviet intelligence had been sweating over this for an unstated period of time and that our people had the unpleasant feeling that this came out of a Sputnik somewhere out in the sky.

We didn't tell him all that but we knew it. We knew

that if he heard his brother's voice and if he wanted to record, it was something very serious.

"Can you get me something to dictate on?" the old man said.

"I can take notes," the F.B.I. man replied.

The old man shook his head. "That isn't enough," he said. "I think you probably want to get the whole thing if you ever get it and I begin to get pieces of it."

"Pieces of what?" said the F.B.I. man.

"Pieces of the stuff behind all that noise. It's my brother's voice talking. He's saying things—I don't like what he is saying. It frightens me and it just makes everything bad and dirty. I'm not sure I can take it and I am not going to take it twice. I think I'll go to church instead."

We looked at each other. "Can you wait ten minutes? I think I can get a recording machine by then."

The old man nodded his head. The F.B.I. man went out to the car and cranked up the radio. A great big aerial shot up out of the car which otherwise was a very inconspicuous Chevrolet sedan. He got his office. A recording machine with a police escort was sent out from downtown Minneapolis toward Hopkins. I don't know what time it took ambulances to make it but the fellow at the other end said, "You better allow me twenty to twenty-two minutes."

We waited. The old man wouldn't talk to us and he didn't want us to play the tape. He sat there sipping the whisky.

"This might kill me and I want to have my friends around. My pastor's name is Jensen and if anything happens to me you get a hold of him there but I don't think anything will happen to me. Just get a hold of him. I may die, gentlemen, I can't take too much of this. It is the most shocking thing that ever happened to any man and I'm not going to see you or anybody else get in on it. You understand that it could kill me, gentlemen."

We pretended that we knew what he was talking about, although neither one of us had the faintest idea, beyond the suspicion that the old man might have a heart condition and might actually collapse.

The office had estimated twenty-two minutes. It took eighteen minutes for the F.B.I. assistant to come in. He brought in one of these new, tight, clean little jobs, the

kind of thing that I'd love to take home. You can pack it almost anywhere. And it comes out with concert quality.

The old man brightened when he saw that we meant business.

"Give me a set of headphones and just let me talk and pick it up. I'll try to reproduce it. It won't be my brother's voice. It will be my voice you're hearing. Do you follow me?"

We turned on the tape.

He dictated, with the headset on his head.

That's when the message started. And that's the thing I started with in the very beginning.

Funny funny funny. It's sort of funny funny funny to think without a brain—it is really something like a trick but not a trick to think without a brain. Talking is even harder but it can be done.

Nels, this is Tice. I'm dead.

Nels, I don't know whether I'm in Heaven or Hell, but I think it's Hell, Nels. And I am going to play the biggest joke that anybody's ever played. And it's funny, I am an American Army officer and I am a dead one, and it doesn't matter. Nels, don't you see what it is? It doesn't matter if you're dead whether you're American or Russian or an officer or not. And even laughter doesn't matter.

But there's enough left of me, Nels, enough of the old me so that perhaps for one last time I'll have a laugh with you and the others.

I haven't got a body to laugh with, Nels, and I haven't got a mouth to laugh with and I haven't got cheeks to smile with and there really isn't any me. Tice Angerhelm is something different now, Nels. I'm dead.

I knew I was dead when I felt so different. It was more comfortable being dead, more relaxed. There wasn't anything tight.

That's the trouble, Nels, there isn't anything tight. There isn't anything around you. You can't feel the world, you can't see the world and yet you know all about it. You know all about everything.

It's awfully lonely, Nels. There are some corners that aren't lonely, some funny little corners in which you feel friendship and feel things creeping up.

Nels, it's like kittens or the faces of children or the

smell of the wind on a nice day. It's any time that you turn away from yourself and you don't think about yourself.

It's the times when you don't want something and you do want something.

It's what you're not resenting, what you're not hating, what you're not fearing and what you're not jeering. That's it, Nels, that's the good part inside of death. And I suppose some people could call it Heaven. And I guess you get Heaven if you just get into the habit of having Heaven every day in your ordinary life. That's what it is. Heaven is right there, Nels, in your ordinary life, every day, day by day, right around you.

But that's not what I got. Oh, Nels, I am Tice Angerhelm all right, I am your brother and I'm dead. You can call where I am Hell since it's everything I hated.

Nels, it smells of everything that I ever wanted. It smells the way the hay smelled when I had my old Willys roadster and I made the first girl I ever made that August evening. You can go ask her. She's Mrs. Prai Jesselton now. She lives over on the East side of St. Paul. You never knew I made her and if you don't think this is so, you can listen for yourself.

And you see, I am somewhere and I don't know what kind of a where it is.

Nels, this is me, Tice Angerhelm, and I'm going to scream this out loud with what I've got instead of a mouth. I am going to scream it loud so that any human ear that hears it can put it on this silly, silly Soviet gadget and take it back. TAKE THIS MESSAGE TO NELSON ANGERHELM, 2322 RIDGE DRIVE, HOPKINS, MINNESOTA. And I'm going to repeat that a couple more times so that you'll know that it's your brother talking and I'm somewhere and it isn't Heaven and it isn't Hell and it isn't even really out in space. I am in something different from space, Nels. It is just a somewhere with me in it and there isn't anything but me. In with me there's everything.

In with me there is everything I ever thought and everything I ever did and everything I ever wanted.

All the opposites are the same. Everything I hated and everything I loved, it's all the same. Everything I feared and everything I yearned for—that's the same. I tell you it's all the same now and the punishment is just as bad

if you want something and get it as if you want something and don't get it.

The only thing that matters is those calm, nice moments in life when you don't want anything, Nels. You aren't anything. When you aren't trying for anything and the world is just around you, and you get simple things like water on the skin, when you yourself feel innocent and you are not thinking about anything else.

That's all there is to life, Nels. And I'm Tice and I'm telling you. And you know I'm dead, so I wouldn't be telling you a lie.

And I especially wouldn't be telling you on this Soviet cylinder, this Soviet gismo which will go back to them and bother them.

Nels, I hope it won't bother you too much, if everybody knows about that girl. I hope the girl forgives me but the message has got to go back.

And yet that's the message—everything I ever feared—I feared something in the war and you know what the war smells like. It smells sort of like a cheap slaughter house in July. It smells bad all around. There's bits of things burning, the smell of rubber burning and the funny smell of gun powder. I was never in a big war with atomic stuff. Just the old sort of explosions. I've told you about it before and I was scared of that. And right in with that I can smell the perfume that girl had in the hotel there in Melbourne, the girl that I thought I might have wanted until she said something and then I said something and that was all there was between us. And I'm dead now.

And listen, Nels—

Listen, Nels, I am talking as though it were a trick. I don't know how I know about the rest of us—the other ones that are dead like me. I never met one and I may never talk to one. I just have the feeling that they are here too. They can't talk.

It's not that they can't talk, really.

They don't even want to talk.

They don't feel like talking. Talking is just a trick. It is a trick that somebody can pick up and I guess it takes a cheap, meaningless man, a man who lived his life in spite of Hell and is now in that Hell. That's the kind of silly man it takes to remember the trick of talking. Like a trick with coins or a trick with cigarettes when nothing else matters.

So I am talking to you, Nels. And Nels, I suppose you'll die the way I do. It doesn't matter, Nels. It's too late to change—that's all.

Goodbye, Nels, you're in pretty good shape. You've lived your life. You've had the wind in your hair. You've seen the good sunlight and you haven't hated and feared and loved too much.

When the old man got through dictating it, the F.B.I. man and I asked him to do it again.

He refused.

We all stood up. We brought in the assistant.

The old man still refused to make a second dictation from the sounds out of which only he could hear a voice.

We could have taken him into custody and forced him but there didn't seem to be much sense to it until we took the recording back to Washington and had this text appraised.

He said goodbye to us as we left his house.

"Perhaps I can do it once again maybe a year from now. But the trouble with me, gentlemen, is that I believe it. That was the voice of my brother, Tice Angerhelm, and he is dead. And you brought me something strange. I don't know where you got a medium or spirit reader to record this on a tape and especially in such a way that you can't hear it and I could. But I did hear it, gentlemen, and I think I told you pretty good what it was. And those words I used, they are not mine, they are my brother's. So you go along, gentlemen, and do what you can with it and if you don't want me to tell anybody that the U.S. government is working on mediums, I won't."

That was the farewell he gave us.

We closed the local office and hurried to the airport. We took the tape back with us but a duplicate was already being teletyped to Washington.

That's the end of the story and that is the end of the joke. Potariskov got a copy and the Soviet Ambassador got a copy.

And Khrushchev probably wondered what sort of insane joke the Americans were playing on him. To use a medium or something weird along with subliminal perception in order to attack the U.S.S.R. for not believing in God and not believing in death. Did he figure it that way?

Here's a case where I hope that Soviet espionage is very good. I hope that their spies are so fine that they know we're baffled. I hope that they realize that we have come to a dead end, and whatever Tice Angerhelm did or somebody did in his name way out there in space recording into a Soviet Sputnik, we Americans had no hand in it.

If the Russians didn't do it and we didn't do it, who did do it?

I hope their spies find out.

Gordon R. Dickson lives a cloistered life in the midwest, but he knows some fascinating people. It is our privilege to meet them one by one, in his countless first-rate science-fiction stories; but it will be a long time before we meet one more painstaking, more confident—and more wrong!—than——

THE DREAMSMAN

BY GORDON R. DICKSON

Mr. Willer is shaving. He uses an old-fashioned straight-edged razor and the mirror above his bathroom washbasin reflects a morning face that not even the fluffy icing of the lather can make very palatable. Above the lather his skin is dark and wrinkled. His eyes are somewhat yellow where they ought to show white and his sloping forehead is embarrassingly short of hair. No matter. Mr. Willer poises the razor for its first stroke—and instantly freezes in position. For a second he stands immobile. Then his false teeth clack once and he starts to pivot slowly toward the northwest, razor still in hand, quivering like a directional antenna seeking its exact target. This is as it should be. Mr. Willer, wrinkles, false teeth and all, *is* a directional antenna.

Mr. Willer turns back to the mirror and goes ahead with his shaving. He shaves skillfully and rapidly, beaming up at a sign over the mirror which proclaims that a stitch in time saves nine. Four minutes later, stitchless and in need of none, he moves out of the bathroom, into his bedroom. Here he dresses rapidly and efficiently, at the last adjusting his four-in-hand before a dresser mirror which has inlaid about its frame the message *Handsome is as handsome does*. Fully dressed, Mr. Willer selects a shiny malacca cane from the collection in his hall closet and goes out behind his little house to the garage.

His car, a 1937 model sedan painted a sensible gray, is waiting for him. Mr. Willer gets in, starts the motor

and carefully warms it up for two minutes. He then backs out into the May sunshine. He points the hood ornament of the sedan toward Buena Vista and drives off.

Two hours later he can be seen approaching a small yellow-and-white rambler in Buena Vista's new development section, at a considerate speed two miles under the local limit. It is 10:30 in the morning. He pulls up in front of the house, sets the handbrake, locks his car and goes up to ring the doorbell beside the yellow front door.

The door opens and a face looks out. It is a very pretty face with blue eyes and marigold-yellow hair above a blue apron not quite the same shade as the eyes. The young lady to which it belongs cannot be much more than in her very early twenties.

"Yes?" says the young lady.

"Mr. Willer, Mrs. Conalt," says Mr. Willer, raising his hat and producing a card. "The Liberty Mutual Insurance agent, to see your husband."

"Oh!" says the pretty face, somewhat flustered, opening the door and stepping back. "Please come in." Mr. Willer enters. Still holding the card, Mrs. Conalt turns and calls across the untenanted small living room toward the bedroom section at the rear of the house, "Hank!"

"Coming!" replies a young baritone. Seconds later a tall, quite thin man about the same age as his wife, with a cheerfully unhandsome face, emerges rapidly into the living room.

"The insurance man, honey," says the young lady, who has whisked off her apron while Mr. Willer was turned to face the entrance through which the young man has come. She hands her husband the card.

"Insurance?" says young Mr. Conalt frowning, reading the card. "What insurance? Liberty Mutual? But I don't —we don't have any policies with Liberty Mutual. If you're selling—"

"Not at the moment," says Mr. Willer, beaming at them as well as the looseness of his false teeth will permit. "I actually *am* an insurance agent, but that hasn't anything to do with this. I only wanted to see you first."

"First before what?" demands Mr. Conalt, staring hard at him.

"Before revealing myself," says Mr. Willer. "You are the two young people who have been broadcasting a call

to any other psi-sensitives within range, aren't you?"

"Oh, Hank!" gasps Mrs. Conalt; but Conalt does not unbend.

"What are you talking about?" he demands.

"Come, come," replies Mr. Willer, deprecatingly.

"But, Hank—" begins Mrs. Conalt.

"Hush, Edie. I think this guy—"

"Oh, wad the power the Giftie gie us, to see oorselves as ithers see us—more or less, if you young people will pardon the accent."

"What's that? That's Robert Burns, isn't it," says Hank. "It goes—*it would frae mony an error free us."* He hesitated.

"And foolish notion. Yes," says Mr. Willer. "And now that the sign and counter-sign have been given, let us get down to facts. You were broadcasting, both of you, were you not?"

"Were you receiving?" demands Hank.

"Of course," says Mr. Willer unperturbed. "How else would I know what quotation to use for a password?" He beams at them again. "May I sit down?"

"Oh, of course!" says Edie, hastily. They all sit down. Edie bounces up again. "Would you like some coffee, Mr. —er—" she glances over at the card, still in Hank's hands—"Willer?"

"Thank you, no," replies Mr. Willer, clacking his teeth. "I have one cup of coffee a day, after dinner. I believe in moderation of diet. But to the point. You are the people I heard."

"Say we were," says Hank, finally. "You claim to be psi-sensitive yourself, huh?"

"Claim? No doubt about it, my boy. Ashtray?" He lifts his hand. An ashtray on an end table across the room comes sailing on the air like a miniature ceramic UFO to light gently upon his upturned palm. Mr. Willer sets it down and closes his eyes.

"You have seven dollars in your wallet, Hank. One five-dollar bill and two singles. At this moment you are interrupting your main line of thought to wonder worriedly what happened to the third one-dollar bill, as you had eight dollars in the wallet earlier this morning. Rest easy. You were stopped by the newspaper delivery boy shortly after ten this morning while you were mowing the

lawn and paid him eighty cents. The two dimes change are in your right-hand pants pocket."

He opens his eyes. "Well?"

"All right," says Hank with a heavy sigh. "You sold me. We can't do anything like that, Edie and I. We can just read each other's minds—and other people's if they're thinking straight at us." He stares a little at Mr. Willer. "You're pretty good."

"Tut," says Mr. Willer. "Experience, nothing else. I will be a hundred and eighty-four next July 12th. One learns things."

"A hundred and eighty-four!" gasps Edie.

"And some months, Ma'am," says Mr. Willer, giving her a little half-bow from his chair. "Sensible living, no extravagances and peace of mind—the three keys to longevity. But to return to the subject, what caused you young people to send out a call?"

"Well, we—" began Edie.

"What we thought," says Hank, "is that if there were any more like us, we ought to get together and decide what to do about it. Edie and I talked it all over. Until we met each other we never thought there could be anybody else like ourselves in the world. But if there were two of us, then it stood to reason there must be more. And then Edie pointed out that maybe if a bunch of us could get together we could do a lot for people. It was sort of a duty, to see what we could do for the rest of the world."

"Very commendable," says Mr. Willer.

"I mean, we could read the minds of kids that fall in a well and get trapped—and send emergency messages maybe. All sorts of things. There must be a lot more we haven't thought of."

"No doubt there are," says Mr. Willer.

"Then you're with us?" says Hank. "Together, I'll bet we can darn near start a new era in the world."

"Well, yes," replies Mr. Willer. "And no. A hundred and eighty-four years have taught me caution. Moreover, there is more to the story than you young people think." He clacks his teeth. "Did you think you were the first?"

"The first?" echoes Hank.

"The first to discover you possess unsual abilities. I see by the expression on your faces you have taken just

that for granted. I must, I'm afraid, correct that notion. You are not the first any more than I was. There have been many."

"Many?" asked Edie, faintly.

"A great number within my experience," says Mr. Willer, rubbing his leathery old hands together.

"But what happened to them?" asks Edie.

"Many things," replies Mr. Willer. "Some were burned as witches, some were put in insane asylums. Fifteen years ago one was lynched in a small town called Pashville. Yes, indeed. Many things happen."

The two others stare at him.

"Yeah?" says Hank. "How come you're in such good shape, then?"

"Ah, that's the thing. Look before you leap. I always have. It pays."

"What—what do you mean?" asks Edie.

"I mean it's fortunate I was around to hear you when you broadcast." Mr. Willer turns to her. "Lucky for you I reached you before you went ahead trying to put this help-the-world plan of yours into effect."

"I still think it's a good notion!" says Hank, almost fiercely.

"Because you're young," replies Mr. Willer, with a slight quaver in his voice. "And idealistic. You wouldn't want to expose your wife to the sort of thing I've mentioned, eh?"

"Anything Hank decides!" says Edie, stoutly.

"Well, well," says Mr. Willer, shaking his head. "Well, well, well!"

"Look here!" says Hank. "You can't tell me there's no way of putting what we've got to good use."

"Well . . ." says Mr. Willer.

"Look. If you want out," says Hank, "you just get in your car—"

Mr. Willer shakes his head.

"No," he says. And suddenly his face lights up with a smile. He beams at them. "You'd really let me go?"

"Shove off," says Hank.

"Good!" cried Mr. Willer. He does not move. "Congratulations, both of you. Forgive me for putting you both to the test this way but for the sake of everybody else in

the Colony, I had to make sure you were ready to go through with it before I told you anything."

"Colony?" says Edie.

"Anything?" says Hank.

Nine hours later, just at dusk, a small, gray 1937 sedan in good repair is to be seen approaching the gate of a certain military installation in New Mexico. It stops at the wide gate and two MPs in white helmets approach it. There is a short conversation between them and the driver, and then they march rather stiffly and woodenly back to their small, glassed-in gatehouse. The sedan proceeds on into the interior of the installation.

A little under an hour later, after several more like conversations, the sedan parks. Its three occupants leave it for another gate, another guard, another compound within another area, and finally find themselves standing at the foot of an enormous tall, tapering metallic creation.

There are some half-dozen guards around this creation, but after a short conversation with the oldest of the party they have all stretched out beside their weapons and gone to sleep.

"Here we are," says the oldest of the party, who is, of course, Mr. Willer.

The other two are speechless and stare at the enormous ship beside them. They seem rather impressed.

"Will it—" falters Edie, and then her voice fails her.

"Will it take the two of you to Venus? Absolutely," says Mr. Willer, fondling the smooth head curve of his malacca walking stick. "I had a long talk with one of the chief men who designed it, just a week ago. You just follow these instructions—" He reaches for an inside pocket of his coat and withdraws a typewritten sheet of paper, which he hands to Hank. "Just run down the list on this, doing everything in order, and off you go."

Hank takes the paper rather gingerly. "Seems like stealing," he mumbles.

"Not when you stop to think," says Mr. Willer. "It's for the Colony, for the ultimate good of humanity." He puts a wrinkled hand confidentially on Hank's arm. "My boy, this has come so suddenly to both of you as to be quite a severe shock, but you will adjust to it in time. Fate has selected you two young people to be of that dedicated

band of psychical pioneers who will one day lift humanity from this slough of fear and pain and uncertainty in which it has wallowed ever since the first man lifted his face to the skies in wonder. Have faith in your own destiny."

"Yeah," says Hank, still doubtful. But Edie is gazing with shining eyes at Mr. Willer.

"Oh!" she says. "Isn't it wonderful, Hank?"

"Yeah," says Hank.

"Well, then," says Mr. Willer, patting them both on the arm and pushing them gently to the metal ladder of a framework tower that stretches up alongside the ship. "Up you go. Don't worry about the controls. This is built on a new, secret principle. It's as easy to drive as a car."

"Just a minute!" cries a sudden, ringing voice. They all hesitate and turn away from the ship. Approaching rapidly through the air from the northwest is something that can only be described as a scintillant cloud of glory. It swoops in for a landing before them and thins away to reveal a tall, handsome man in a tight sort of coverall of silver mesh.

"Up to your old tricks, again, Wilo, aren't you?" he barks at Mr. Willer. "Can't keep your hands off? Want everything your own way, don't you?"

"Fools rush in," says Mr. Willer, "where angels fear to tread."

"What?" demands Hank, looking from one to the other. "What's all this about? Who're you?"

"You wouldn't understand if I told you," says the tall man. "The point is, having psi-talents puts you under my protection. Half a dozen people a year I have to come chasing in and rescue. And all on account of him!" He glares at Mr. Willer.

"I still don't—" Hank begins.

"Of course not. How could you? If Wilo here had started leaving things alone as little as a hundred years ago, you humans would have developed into probationary members of Galactic Society by this time. Natural evolution. More psi-talents in every generation. Recognition of such. Alteration of local society. But no, not Wilo. The minute he discovers anyone with psi-talent he points them toward destruction. *I* have to save them. The only safe way to save them with Wilo around is to take them off the planet. Wilo knows this. So—no progress for humanity."

Hank blinks a couple of times.

"But how come?" he cries, staring at Mr. Willer. "He's one himself! I mean, he can do all sorts of things Edie and I can't do—"

"Nonsense!" says the tall man. "He's just sensitive. An antenna, you might say. He can feel when real ones are sending."

"But—the ashtray . . ." falters Edie.

"There, there, I scan you perfectly," soothes the tall man. "Illusion. Nothing more. Even an *ordinary* intelligence can learn something in a hundred and eighty-four years and some months, after all. Wilo, Master Hypnotist. That's the way he used to bill himself back in his days on the stage. He hypnotised you, just as he hypnoed these soldiers."

"With a glance," mutters Mr. Willer, darkly.

"Unfortunately very true," says the tall man. He glares at Mr. Willer again. "If it wasn't for the fact that we truly advanced civilization members can't harm anyone—!"

He turns back to Hank and Edie.

"Well," he sighs heavily, "come along. This world will have to stay stuck in its present stage of development until something happens to Wilo, or he changes his mind."

Edie stares at the old man.

"Oh, Mr. Willer!" she says. "Why can't you let people just go ahead and develop like Hank and I did?"

"Bah!" says Willer. "Humbug!"

"But the world would be a much better place!"

"Young lady!" snaps Mr. Willer. "I like it the way it is!" He turns his back on them.

"Come on," says the tall man.

They take off. Mr. Willer turns back to look at them as they ascend into the new rays of the just-risen moon and the New Mexico night sky, trailing clouds of glory as they go.

The clouds of glory light up the landscape.

"Bah!" says Mr. Willer again. With a snap of his fingers he produces some flash paper which, at the touch of flame from a palmed match, flares brightly for a moment. It's one tiny recalcitrant beacon of stability and permanence in the whole of the madly whirling, wild and evolving universe.

Semanticist, teacher, Intelligence officer and gun collector, John J. McGuire draws on many lores in concocting his few but fine science-fiction pieces. As a member of the loose-knit Monmouth County science-fiction colony (George O. Smith, Lester del Rey and Algis Budrys are a few of the others), he spends his days inventing clever monsters for whom he then devises cleverer traps. Here, for example, are his instructions on how——

TO CATCH AN ALIEN

BY JOHN J. McGUIRE

"Go through the red door. Sit down in the big chair facing the wall," the vice-admiral commanded. Then, the voice so devoid of inflection that the words emerged as mockery, "And make yourself at home, Loytenant."

Croyden waited a moment, unable to believe that this was the extent of his orders. When nothing was added, mentally he shrugged, physically he abased himself in the deep salute, proudly he marched through the red door.

Two strides inside the door he was shocked to a halt. This room couldn't be the one whispered of as the "sweat-box."

Three of its four gray walls were bright with abstractions of space-flight. Below the paintings were low, open-stack bookcases. The big chair facing the blank wall looked luxuriously comfortable, one of the form-fitters designed to promote relaxation. On the low table beside the chair was the transcriber for ordering almost any drink that the Galaxy had ever professed to enjoy.

And even—he rolled one between his fingers to be sure —even fresh tobaccettes.

For a moment Croyden endured the stresses of conflicting drives. To do or not to do, to yield to temptation or merely to sit and sweat. . . .

Then he remembered the final sentence of the admiral's

orders and made himself at home.

Carefully he laid his papers on the table. With even greater care he considered and punched an order for a long, strong drink. Then, as if it were a religious rite, he puffed gently on one of the tobaccettes. When its tip finally burned with an even glow, he inhaled deeply and settled into the comfort of the chair.

He felt his fatigue and inner tension easing. If this were the "sweat-box," he was willing to come here more often.

The blank wall in front of him turned his glance right and left. He whistled appreciatively as he studied the irregular rows of books for familiar titles. These were not transmitted facs, but home-printed originals. Bringing them to the satellite when every centimeter of cargo space was . . . well, he could think of no comparison. Cargo space was an absolute in itself.

But the pleasures!

Psychologists had been long in recognizing that the joy in reading had been delicately blended with all the other senses, touch, smell, balance. . . . Another drink and he would not be able to keep his eyes and fingers from that luxury.

Croyden swore. Fervently he damned himself to eternal duty in the nethermost depths of lightless space. It was no excuse that he had been tired, confused, tense. Nothing could excuse the fact that he had, literally, not thought.

He stood up and saluted the blank wall.

"Reporting as directed." As he concluded the terse formality, the one-way vision shield slid back.

He was face to face with five of the men who made this room the "sweat-box."

The Supreme Co-ordinator was smiling and casual, returning Croyden's formal abasement with the informal heart salute. Gracefully he gestured toward the chair and graciously he said, "Please sit down, Loytenant. Understandably, you are very tired. Sit down and order us companions to your choice of drinks."

The simple activities of ordering and serving should have been calming, Croyden knew. Instead, it gave him time to remember. The gripping pain in his stomach had died away during those first few moments he had been alone. Now it was back, a redoubled, squeezing anguish.

The Co-ordinator's smooth voice cut through the mind-clouding pain.

"In your own words, Loytenant, space-slang and all, introduce yourself and tell your story. Talk with another drink in your hand, light yourself another tobaccette. And above all, regard us merely as brother officers. There is no rank in this room."

Croyden understood. The seeming request was really an order, but an order designed to put him at ease as no direct—or more subtle—expression of need could have done. Outside the "sweat-box," he was merely another in the long lines of abasing officers. Here he was a delicate, living record of a disaster and he had to be handled so.

"You know my name, sirs. I'm a loytenant, temporary commission."

"Permanent now."

Croyden glanced at the speaker. The statement helped him to recognize the vague-familiar face as the Adjutant General's.

"Thank you, Excellency." He made his tone tell his pleasure. "I'm a . . ." He stopped, looked at the Supreme Commander, felt a foolish grin growing across his face. "Natural talk, Sire?"

His Supremacy smiled. "Your gyro-training should answer that. Of course it is best for you to speak naturally." The smile vanished. "You also know why it is best that you speak willingly. You are one of the six living records of what happened to the cruiser *Holoman*. To you, what happened and why it happened is simply a series of personal experiences. It means little to you beyond the blockages that those experiences may create. But to us, you are more. You may have, without knowing it, a clue to help answer the problem of the doppelganger menace, the problem you studied as an undergraduate psychologist.

"Therefore, we must have, and we *will* have, every facet of your knowledge. And, as you know, it is of most value in your natural speech and consciousness.

"Give us yourself, Loytenant Croyden, completely, without reservation . . . and from conscious volition."

"Suggestions, Sire."

The deferent speaker was a small man with an intent stare, seated to His Supremacy's immediate left.

"I listen, Gludo."

Croyden gulped at his drink, hoped he could keep it down. The small man, Gludo, was Chief of the Combined Intelligence Staffs.

"Properly to evaluate Loytenant Croyden's story, we need to know how his philosophy of living colors it. Let him begin with his research project. This will give us the palette to the hues and tints of his mind-approach, a touchstone to use through all of his tale."

His Supremacy's opaque gaze came back to Croyden. "Let it be so. Begin your story, Loytenant, and tell us everything about yourself."

Everything, Croyden thought. They seemed to know everything already.

Strangely, the consideration helped to ease his pain and the story came more swiftly.

I always wanted to be a psychologist. Specifically, a gyroscope on a combat ship. So when I qualified for the University, I worked hard.

A gyro must be able to analyze the feelings and morale of his ship without the crew being aware of the fact that they are being studied. So, to graduate, you must make a survey without the University proctors discovering what single item of information you are looking for.

The University being almost literally at the hub of our galaxy, it's an ideal spot for cross section samplings and I chose as mine, what single item is the most vital factor in winning the war.

The answer I got, mathematically, for 90 per cent of all personnel, combat and rear echelon, was this: give us a combat technique for identifying the aliens infiltrating us. Do this and we can quickly win this war.

"That wins the war?"

The interruption came from a thick-set man who looked as responsive to a new idea as the service regulations were.

"That wins the war," Croyden said, flatly.

Something in the atmosphere of the room changed. His Supremacy withdrew all emotion from his face. The Adjutant General scribbled a note. Gludo crushed his tobaccette and the general beside him ordered another drink.

Only the thick-set man did not move, beyond a tightening around his lips.

"Ninety per cent." Gludo stressed the number thoughtfully.

"Yes, sir, with even distribution from the edge of the Galaxy to its center. And as a corollary, 80 per cent of rear echelon personnel regard themselves as qualified for combat pay. They maintain that the aliens are so widely infiltrated that every area is now a battle area."

His Supremacy's smooth voice closed the short pause. "Continue, Loytenant, with more about your work-philosophy."

Well, Sire, the gyroscope-psychologist on a fighting ship is an important man. He's got to bring into balance three sometimes irreconcilable elements.

First, there's the ship. At launch-dock, it's an accumulation of machinery, poised but with no means of releasing its purpose.

Then you have people in their quarters. They're the opposite. They are purposes without the means of releasing what is vital to their well-being, in this case the winning of this war.

Alone, the ship poised in the launch-dock and the people in their quarters, are usually in balance. There are exceptions, of course, with the people.

But when you put the three things together—and I mean *three*—persons plus other persons plus the machine that lets them strive for their purpose, then you've got a new entity. And you need for this new entity, what each one of them had when it was sufficient by itself.

But whatever name you call us—gyros, gyro-psychs, ship-psychologists—the name doesn't matter. You need us.

"It wasn't always so." The Adjutant General's voice was fretful. "Commanders once took care of these things themselves. It's a waste of man-power and we need all we can dredge up."

"Some still do." His Supremacy's tones were soothing. "For example, take Slater."

"Yes, of course, and I wish we had more like him." The AG's face brightened with the dream.

Croyden found that his confidence had grown with this

interruption. They were interested, intently so. As a well-trained gyro, even more sensitive to the responses of his audience than an actor, he knew he was holding their attention. The cramp in his stomach eased.

He looked directly at the AG and continued.

You know what it was like in the days before our profession, sir. Especially in the days when the ships were surface-bound and rode only the surface of the waters or lightly beneath it. They needed us then, too. But they didn't know that they needed us, and so—well, sometimes the commander did it, sometimes one of the lesser officers and sometimes it was even a member of the crew. If there was someone filling the need, it was a happy ship. If no one did . . . look how bad things were for a while when we went out into deep space, how many planets were colonized by mutinous crews.

That's why I said, we're needed. We're the governors, the balance wheels, the gyroscopes. We're not engineers, always trying to build more safety into our machines. We're psychologists, who believe that too much safety is dangerous for people.

And that's why there's only one of us on each ship. That is, there's only one that the crew knows about, only one in charge. Each of us has to work individually, adjusting the people to a friction-free performance in his own way. Sure, another psych-mech could get the same results if he were alone with the same group. And of course we need a substitute ready on ships as big as a cruiser. After all, even gyros die.

But the crew shouldn't know who the substitute is! If they do know and even if the substitute doesn't practice his trade, still they try to adjust two ways and end up adjusted neither way.

Which is one of the things that went wrong on the *Holoman.*

Croyden paused, suddenly aware that he had been spouting words at light-stream speed. "Sire, I crave pardon. I talk too much."

"Continue, Loytenant. You are giving us what we need."

"One question, Sire." Gludo again.

"You may question the Loytenant, General."

"I am interested in your reaction to your On-Duty orders, Loytenant. Isn't it true that you resented your first assignment and so went on board the HOLOMAN *in a very disturbed state of mind?"*

Croyden weighed his answer, chose the truth. "General, I felt personally assaulted when I read my orders. I had stood first in my class. My research project had been highly acclaimed at the University. I expected and wanted an assignment in Research. When I was told that I would report to Satellite Base for deep-space duty, I was bitterly resentful."

"And you boarded the HOLOMAN *with that attitude?"*

"No, General, I did not. Boarding the HOLOMAN, *I was the happiest gyro-in-training anywhere in our fleet."*

"Why?"

Croyden could answer that both quickly and honestly, hoping they would understand. "General, I have kept and intend to keep as long as possible, a copy of my original assignment orders. . . ."

He was surprised when they interrupted him with laughter. Even the face of the thick-set man had creased into the semblance of a grin.

Apparently even these rulers of the Combined Services had also once received assignments that they treasured.

"Gludo, I think you are answered. Continue, Loytenant, speaking as freely as you have so far."

Croyden bowed his head in the seated abasement. . . .

My University Orders were to report immediately to Ocean Take-Off and pick up a group of drafted people. I shepherded them through the routines until I checked them over to Replacement Personnel on Satellite Base. Then I went to Officer Assignment for my own orders.

I couldn't believe them when I read them. Sure, I was assigned to a cruiser. But—my boss was Foster!

I knew as soon as I read his name that this was no ordinary space-trip. Foster would be there and he was everything in Psycho-Research.

My cover for the trip was an assignment as events-recorder. That's good hiding for the sub-gyro, because in that job you naturally know what goes on everywhere else in the ship. I got myself ready for my job by going to my quarters and running a fifteen-minute sleeptape on my

duties. I followed up the tape, went to Supply and checked the requisition and delivery vouchers for the *Holoman* against the scale model of her cruiser type. From there I went to Personnel. I identified myself to the Officer-in-Charge with my green seal key. He gave me the graphs of the drafted personnel and commissioned persons on board. I hypnoed the facts concerning their placement and potential into ready subconscious.

I was ready for duty—and my third shock.

When I had briefed myself, I naturally reported back to Personnel. They followed through, vized the *Holoman* that I was coming, got me transport clearance across the field for alien check and fitting into ship psychology on the *Holoman* itself.

Well, I got one, but I didn't get the other.

Foster shouldn't have been waiting at ship-entrance for me.

His Supremacy's voice was mild but cold. "You had better explain yourself, Loytenant. Do you mean that you did not get an alien check test?"

"No, Sire, I did not mean that. He checked me with a Roehman's. He made me account for every minute since I had left the University while I was under the scop and accelator drug."

Gludo stirred and His Supremacy glanced at his little Intelligence Officer. "You have another question?"

"Yes, Sire, I do. Loytenant, did Foster tell you why he made the back-check only as far as the University?"

"Foster explained his tests to me after he had finished, Sir. He said the time check was a necessity, that it took at least fifteen minutes to substitute an alien for one of us and if there had been any time-gap in my story, he would have killed me."

"And the University?"

"He called that the only uncontaminated spot in the Galaxy, said that no alien could get past their checks. And if they had, it was time for us to quit."

His Supremacy and Gludo exchanged glances.

"Has he answered your question?"

"Completely, Sire."

"Continue, Loytenant."

As I said, he was waiting for me at ship-entrance, which was wrong, completely wrong! He should have met me the way he would meet any other new member of the crew. In the green-sealed room, seated behind his desk. But there he was, at the entrance, nervous, off-balance.

Even before I could salute, he had grabbed me by the arm and pulled me along with him. All the way to the psych-zimmer, he kept babbling, didn't give me a chance to say anything, just kept repeating, "Where have you been? I need you!"

But he didn't tell me why he wanted me until he had green-sealed the room and run through my tests.

That made it a bad start and it got worse. Foster made it obvious who his replacement was, You know how the crew looks for him anyhow. Eventually things reached the point where I had to take over his work, the biggest part of it, and the crew tried to adjust to both of us. Naturally they ended up thoroughly confused.

This sounds silly, but sometimes I think even the ship was affected. I had been in deep-space before, on student training trips while at the University, but even in those old crates I had never ridden a deck that felt so unsteady.

You've got to add this to it, and I think it's important. Foster didn't trust anyone except me and I don't think he trusted me completely either. Well, no, maybe that's not quite right. I guess I was the only one he did trust. At least, every day he gave me a general idea of what he thought he was doing and he'd tell me that the next ship's day would see the end of it.

It started to get too much for me. I was doing my job—and there's only one events-recorder on a cruiser, so I was on constant call—and I was trying to do his. Sire, I wasn't a gyro in training on that trip, I was the gyro himself!

It happened at five rotations out, at 1850 hours. I received an emergency: report to Control at once! I ran. The Captain—wrong again, the whole ship was wrong!—pulled me into his private stand. Without saying anything, he flipped the through-seal switch to the psych-zimmer.

Foster's end of the line was open too.

First, I couldn't see, or rather recognize, anything. Then I began to understand and what I saw: a hand in front of the screen. Foster's hand. Over it I could see the back of his head. The way his head lay on the desk told me that

he had probably tried to call and hadn't made it.

I could tell by the colors on the wall that the room was still green-sealed.

From my secret place I took my own green-seal key. The Captain wasn't in the least surprised—Foster had sure made it clear who I was—and he gave me my To-Duty Command.

I'll tell the truth and admit that I didn't know exactly what to do. There was always the chance that Foster wasn't dead. But whether he was dead or alive, I had to go into that room. And because the room was under the green seal, I was willing to bet that whoever or whatever had killed him was still in there.

But I was just as scared to be outside of the room. I was certain that everyone knew I was Foster's replacement, which meant that outside the psych-zimmer and its protective equipment I was a marked man.

So I asked for five officers to go with me. Junior officers. Aliens take direct, not subordinate command positions.

And aliens can't be everywhere, so I took the officers from each section of ship operation. I was protecting myself by using probability.

We went to the gyro-office.

I walked behind them as we went to the office. As I walked, I slipped nasal filters into place, just on the chance that we might hit gas. When we got to the zimmer, I unsealed the door, kept them back while I reached in and checked the switch on the room-conditioner, then motioned them in first.

I watched them. They lived, so I followed them and resealed the room.

Under the green light—you know how it skips off the walls—they were startled for a moment. But I caught their attention and hypnoed them to make sure that they would remember what they observed.

I focused myself, too. You have, or you will, check the other officers. These are my observations.

The room had been sealed, but Foster was alone when we got in. However, his key was gone. I know now that I should have sent one of the officers into the room before I turned on its individual refresher, because now we can't be sure of gas. But we can be sure that he wasn't hit through the ship's unit. I did have one of the officers handle

each and every item in the room. He's still alive, so that eliminates any touch poison. Foster's body showed no marks, either on his skin or by stereo-screen.

That was all I could do on ship. The rest had to remain for Base inspection.

When I had completed what I could do, I re-opened the screen to report to the Captain. And just then the ship seemed to sort of bounce. Hard. Twice.

"One moment, Loytenant." His Supremacy glanced at his staff. "I believe my officers have some questions."

The thickset man spoke first. "Did Foster tell you why he was on the HOLOMAN*?"*

"It was the first thing I asked him, sir, after the Roehman. From the time I read his name on my orders, it was something I couldn't figure out, what our best research man was doing out on just a cruiser."

"Well, what was he doing?" The AG's voice was querulous. "In view of his reputation, I naturally gave him the assignment when he asked for it. But I didn't ask why, and when you've made as many transfers at the request of Psycho-Research as I have, you just naturally stop asking."

"The HOLOMAN*'s mission was to destroy an alien sneak base ten rotations away from Home Planet." The thickset general paused, continued. "The fact that the base existed showed its importance. Foster analyzed the mission of the* HOLOMAN *with me—"*

"And figured that the importance of the base would automatically mean the presence of at least one alien on board ship," Gludo cut in. "Does that mean what I think it means, Loytenant?"

"Yes, sir. Foster had devised a practical, simple identification test for aliens, one that could be used by any commander anywhere. A true field test, we call it, to distinguish it from the cumbersome, laboratory technique."

"And he was applying it to the crew?" queried the AG, whose prime concern in life was to find reliable personnel.

"Yes, sir, he was working his way through the roster."

"And found what he was looking for," Gludo commented.

"Yes, sir, and in that sense he killed himself."

His Supremacy's voice was puzzled. "I think I understand, Loytenant, but—"

"Foster's psycho-graph, Sire, shows the pattern. He never told anyone anything they didn't absolutely need to know until the work was completed. And usually, he overestimated himself and underestimated everyone else.

"In this case, he made a bad mistake. He happened to meet an alien with a clever, ruthless mind, a sense of values and more courage than I like to think about.

"Clever, with a sense of values. He saw he had two missions and he completed the important one first.

"Ruthless. Aliens usually kill selectively, and this one, knowing his time was short after getting Foster, killed an entire shipload to complete his original mission.

"Courageous. To accomplish his mission, he had to kill himself too."

Silence again and the sweat-box was cold.

"Complete your story, Loytenant."

There isn't much more, Sire, and what there is doesn't belong to me. It belongs to those five junior officers. Single-handed in their own departments, they still managed to bring the *Holoman* back to an orbit about Satellite Base. Thanks to them, the cruiser can be salvaged intact.

But our mission was not completed. The aliens still have their sneak base. And we'll never know what Foster knew.

Croyden stopped and waited. The Supreme Co-ordinator glanced at his staff, then said, "Thank you, Loytenant, a most excellent report. Now, if you will excuse us—."

The vision-shield slid between them.

Croyden stared at it, wishing that he could know what was being decided behind that blankness.

The Supreme Co-ordinator relaxed his official personality enough to allow himself to study his staff openly.

His AG was writing carefully-numbered notes.

Gludo, after staring through the vision-shield, turned to say, "Described himself well, didn't he?"

Fanzn, the thickset Chief of Galactic Operations, nodded agreement while scribing for another drink.

"I find it incredible." Admiral Persal was committed to caution by the very nature of his work, regulating the flow of supplies through an armed Galaxy.

"You can be sure to within two per cent of probability," the AG stated.

Persal continued to stare through the screen. "He's the first live one I've ever seen and I haven't seen too many dead ones, either. Where and when did you find time to run that series of tests that make you so sure?"

"When they orbited about Satellite Base," Fanzn said. "Five are too few to berth a cruiser safely, too few and they were too tired. The relief ship ordered them to put the *Holoman* on drone-control and themselves into the rough-landing hammocks, under drugs.

"They know the dangers of drone-landings better than we can remember and—you should hear the recordings of their conversation with Base—they were all totally exhausted. Especially Croyden. Despite what he told us, he could and did double in brass with the rest of them.

"So they were even more than drug-asleep when our Base Gyro boarded the landed craft."

"Who ordered the inspection?" Gludo asked.

"Who would have to order it?" AG asked. "You know our psych-mech is like the rest of his breed: he lives only to satisfy his curiosity. Naturally he wanted to examine them to see what traces their experiences had left and they were in the ideal condition for it. With equal naturalness, he chose the other gyro for the first examination. Laying his background, he started with the University. Neuronic gaps showed. He gave them all an extra drugging to make sure they would stay asleep and ran the full series on Croyden."

"The University!" Persal, in tones of shocked disbelief.

"Yes." The AG suddenly seemed a much older man. "And remember what Foster said about the University."

"Gentlemen." The one word was sufficient, His Supremacy had their attention.

"I summoned you from your urgent duties because this was an oppportunity not to be missed. By considering what to do with the specific case of the alien in the other half of this room, we can better come to grips with the general problem of the doppelganger menace."

"And may I suggest another problem, Sire?"

His Supremacy nodded.

"The sneak base, Sire. Should we not consider its removal as having a top priority?"

"Fanzn," the Co-ordinator commanded.

"My apologies, General Gludo," Operations Chief Fanzn said. "I had forgoten that you were not here when the plans were made, although perhaps it would not have made any difference. I consulted only with His Supremacy when Foster asked me for a cruiser and a mission that would be good bait in a trap.

"As you see, the trap worked, though perhaps it worked only because our gyros are so inquisitive. And as for the base, it was removed, captured intact, before the *Holoman* had returned to Satellite."

For a reason of his own, His Supremacy said, "The full story, Fanzn."

"The aliens were on Xinian. They had built themselves a fairly large underground base. An old freighter, clearly in trouble, limped and staggered to an emergency landing there. Apparently by pure chance, it settled down directly over the aliens."

Fanzn's face glowed. "It wasn't a freighter, of course, but a drone ship carrying a planet-wrecker. The idea came from one of the age-old romances common to our culture and theirs, of a vessel that looks harmless, but is actually as deadly as a heavy destroyer.

"Offered the choice of death or surrender, they surrendered. But why shouldn't they? The percentage of escapes, thanks to the doppelgangers, is so high that it makes any other choice ridiculous."

"Howtmann Slater, of course," Gludo said.

Fanzn confirmed the guess. "The man is a combat genius. I wish I had more commanders like him."

Now was the time, His Supremacy decided.

"Gentlemen, while we are feeling a little more cheerful, let us return to our problems. The minor one, first. I listen to your suggestions concerning the alien, Croyden."

"Confirm his promotion, award him and the others a minor medal—perhaps a Lesser Sun—in the next General Bulletin, but without details of course. We should not advertise the *Holoman* affair. Send them to a rest camp as a group, make sure that in all their future assignments they remain together as a group. Gludo will keep them under surveillance."

The AG then looked up from his numbered notes, added, "But I would rather kill him."

"Does he know that we know he is an alien?" Gludo asked.

"Psych-Research says, probably no," the AG answered. "They were very careful and all six survivors were kept drugged for the same length of time."

"Then I must concur," Gludo said, "both with the AG's personal wish and his official recommendation."

Fanzn was nodding slowly. "I agree, like Gludo, both personally and officially. This chance to study how they work, the chance that he may lead us to others, is too good to be missed."

"I need a little more data," Persal said, remaining super-cautious. "First, from Intelligence, how dangerous is Croyden?"

Gludo began his estimate with a low whistle. "Let's not make Foster's mistake and underrate our opponent. As I said, he described himself perfectly. Clever, ruthless, courageous, with a keen sense of values. For example, consider this: he rightly decided *not* to attempt the coup of killing us."

Persal's frown deepened. "And on the *Holoman*—"

"I haven't examined the cruiser personally," Gludo said, with a touch of impatience, "but it looks like the usual attack through the refreshers."

"Yes, but how—"

"A matter of timing." Gludo would never understand that some people would never add one and one to get ten. "And done just as he told us. You put nasal filters into place as you walk down the hall. You open the door, you're the only one who can. You reach inside to switch on the conditioner, taking no chance on some gas being left in the office.

"And that was a bad mistake, by the way, telling us that point: *how did he know it was off?*

"But the rest of it, just as easy. You send the others in first and behind their backs drop another gas bomb. You're safe in a room with its own air-supply, because their nerve-gas is usually inert in thirty seconds—"

"You've got with you the five junior officers who can run a cruiser," Fanzn interrupted.

"And when you return, we promote you in the hope of using you as bait," the AG added, bitterly.

"I must weigh two things. I think that he is too

dangerous to live, you think he is too valuable to kill." Fanzn chewed his lip. "However, if there is any chance that your surveillance will cut down the sabotage in my supply depots, then I must also concur with the AG."

"Gentlemen, I would have over-ruled any other decision," His Supremacy said, "though not for the reasons you have given.

"I want every alien among us to live undisturbed. It is the only way we can guarantee our own survival."

Plainly, by their faces, by their postures, they did not understand him. And from a long way back, from his student officer days, His Supremacy recalled an instructor saying, "The primary function of an officer is to be a teacher, by precept and example."

He sighed. This would be a difficult teaching job, because his students knew the facts he would present.

But they didn't know what the facts meant.

"Let me ease this blow by stating that you have been a good staff and I hope that you will continue at your present state of efficiency. I have been especially pleased by the way each staff section has kept the others informed.

"But equally each of you has considered the facts which crossed your work-space only in the light of your day-to-day duties. I wonder if you have considered, for example, the real meaning of what research has told us.

"You may speak, Gludo."

The youngest and probably most intelligent member of the staff tried to keep resentment from his voice. "They told us little of value, Sire. Merely that the aliens and ourselves probably had a common source, one of us colonizing the other. Something separated us. When the time-scales are adjusted, they show a similar gap. To their sciences, the minor variations are easily overcome and almost perfect doppelgangers are the result."

"Almost perfect." Persal sounded hopeful.

His Supremacy allowed irony to edge his voice. "You have missed the vital point: *the replacement is generally more efficient.*"

"Slater is certainly an improvement over his pre-war self," Fanzn said, thoughtfully.

"Would you suggest improved efficiency as the field test of an alien's presence? If so, I must be wary of my entire

staff. All of you are better at your work than when this war began. As I am."

His Supremacy dropped his ironic tone, continued with the meaning of the facts.

"First, even if we knew their technique—" The AG opened his mouth and His Excellency raised a finger. "I know, we are close to perfecting the same processing. I repeat, even if we knew the technique, we could not use it."

"Why not?" from Persal, to whom the statement sounded like treason.

"For the same reason that we won at the beginning of this conflict and are losing now. Ours is a monolithic system, stressing obedience upward and authority downward.

"At the beginning, we held the advantage of unity of action. But we found no central authority to destroy. The enemy had a hundred heads, not one. They are trained in flexibility of thought, in acting on their own initiative. How many men do we have with similar capabilities? Speak from your own experience or ask our AG how many such he has in his files."

No one asked; the AG's face was answer enough.

"Though you have done your best, we cannot, because of this infiltration, prepare an offensive or hold a defense. Which in itself should be more than enough. Unfortunately, there is still more. As this conflict deepened in seriousness for us, we turned from basic research to applied research. The momentary results were very good and we were far ahead of them at one time.

"The aliens did not make that mistake. You will recall our fight against that decision of the Great Council. And our advantage has slowly disappeared. As of now, we are happy to capture his equipment because he is in a minor but marked degree technologically more efficient. We know from our casualty lists that second best is first dead."

There was silence, a silence that no one else could break. Once again His Supremacy realized how utterly alone he was.

"I am requesting an immediate conclave of the Great Council. I shall present to them what I have told you, together with my own conclusion: our only course is immediate surrender."

Gludo asked the obvious question. "What do our psychological predictors say?"

"Their analysis states that this race who also call themselves human beings will give us an easy peace."

He stood and his staff rose with him. He re-considered the advisability, then decided again to give specific assignments.

"Direct your thinking toward the problems of peace. Disguise it for the present as 'Projects After Victory.'

"Gludo, Intelligence will analyze the markets throughout the Galaxy, what is or will be needed when and where.

"Persal, add the information to your files on sources of supplies. We will then know where the products can be obtained. Also, have your engineers begin a study of the quickest way to convert the Galactic Fleet to freighters.

"On that information, Fanzn, re-group our forces to use our men in the fastest and most economical operation as trading fleets. An important consideration will be to return the men to their own parts of the Galaxy.

"Begin adding to your staff," His Excellency said to his AG. "You will need more personnel when Fanzn begins requesting these re-assignments. And add this proposition to your breakdown: which men can be most quickly converted to a peace-time economy?"

He almost dismissed them before he remembered. "Oh, yes, on all these projects, drop your doppelganger safeguards."

Even Gludo reacted to the idea as if it were a bomb.

"Gentlemen, reason it out. Don't you understand why I want the aliens among us to live with us undisturbed? Let them work on these projects and we will convince them, before we make our offer, that we mean what we say."

He raised his glass. "A toast, to our War Colleges, who did not foresee a struggle in which the enemy could not be recognized."

As he raised his glass, over the rim he studied their faces, wishing that he could be certain how many of them, like himself, were human. But that was impossible to learn. The problems of identity inherent in using doppelgangers had almost forbidden the practice until the Department had decided that each agent must operate virtually alone.

Could it be all of them, he wondered. They had become such an efficient staff.

If it was, he would try to get them together after the war. They could write a most interesting combined paper on the particular skills needed to lose a war while pretending to win it.

As a San Francisco co-national, it was inevitable—maybe it was even fair—that Anthony Boucher should be the first to snare the writing talents of Miriam Allen deFord for his publication. But it could not last. The girl was too good to keep pinned to one market. It is a joy for us all that others can find themselves able to publish such splendid examples of her work as——

PRESS CONFERENCE

BY MIRIAM ALLEN DEFORD

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, before I introduce to you the lady known as Miss X, I owe you, as chairman of the Far Space Research Committee of the UN, an explanation and an apology. I hope, however, that you, who are all experienced reporters with credentials from the tridimens chains and newstape syndicates of the Three Planets, have already understood why it has not been possible before this for you to interview the first human being to travel outside our solar system and to return. Security, ladies and gentlemen! That old devil security, as I believe one of the authors of the 20th century once put it. You have covered the tumultuous public welcomes, the enormous receptions, the formal investitures with decorations and honorary degrees. But until today, two months after her arrival at the Melbourne airport—counting in the week it took her for recuperation—we could not clear Miss X for questioning by the press.

But now all of the closed sessions have been held. The information Miss X has given us has been classified. And she has been fully briefed on what she is free to say to you.

One word more before I leave her to your tender mercies, ha ha. (I shall be right here by her side, to assist you and her if the going gets hard.) There is nothing classified about our concealment of our pioneer extra-solarian's name under the clumsy pseudonym of "Miss X." That was done only because her own name is difficult to

spell and pronounce. Also, her knowledge of our international language, English, is not perfect, and she is not used to public speaking. Please be patient, therefore, and after she has made her introductory remarks, question her one at a time and as clearly and simply as you can. I cannot interpret for her because I do not know her language, but I shall do my best to help if you or she should have difficulty in understanding.

And now, it gives me infinite pleasure to present to you Dor-je Lhor-kang, alias "Miss X," the premier explorer of the Galaxy outside our solar system.

Tank you, Mr. Rasmussen. I am wery glad be able to talk to you, and troo you to whole Eart and Moon and Mars and Wenus Colonies.

And first I explain to you how I am chosen to be one to go.

Before even man go to Moon, let alone udder planets, way back hoondred years ago or more, scientists consider what kind of human bein best fitted successfully penetrate space. All physical, psychological, mental attributes which is most likely to succeed. Here, I read to you what one wrote as prescription:

"Should be midget woman from high Andes, used to tin air, wit doctor's degree in physics, and wit even, extroverted disposition."

Sounds like yoke, but was proved true. Some tings self-evident, but I should add midget because space in ship so limited, calm disposition because of terrible monotony and loneliness on long journey. Women more patient as men.

But no, said Aviation Medical School of American Air Force, not woman—never possible, we put women on pedestal, must not risk mudders of race to sacrifice. So dey say, but maybe what dey mean is, women not good as men, eh? So, many still felt, hoondred years ago.

And even more, where sooch women could be found in high Andes—dat would be Peru, Chile, no? Dere women still more limited as in udder parts of Eart. And where find midget wit good brains to become Ph.D. in physics?

Den said delegate from USSR, we can do. Whatever is done, we do first. We find you sooch women. Not in

Andes—in Tibet, which is yoost as high up, air yoost as tin. And if we cannot find, we make.

Was long discoossion in UN. Den, I tink because Western nations tink dis all boast and no performance, UN say, wery well, you bring us five or six sooch women, for not mooch chance first two or tree ever come back. And if by den we have not something better, we give dem opportoonity.

Five years, say Roossians, we show you.

And dey look all over Tibet for women what is midgets, like me. Oonder four feet high, and Tibetans tall people. Den what dey find, dey put troo—oh, such examinations, to see which has good minds, even if cannot read and write. Dat not so hard, because in Tibet women always not on pedestal, but head of household, used to running tings, smart. Out of all dey get tree, and I am one. No compoolsion, all us crazy to go. You from West, you will say, oh yes, after hoondred years under Chinese Communists, Tibetans only too glad to leave Eart—

Please, Miss X! Remember—absolutely no politics.

I understand, Mr. Rasmussen. I yoost make like yoke.

So we forget dat. Dey take us tree. No need examine us for calm disposition, all Tibetans calmest people on Eart. But for five years—oh, such intensive training, physics, physical chemistry, astronomy, astrogation, you never see. All day we study, and when we sleep we switch on machine and study some more. And at end we taken to Moscow University, and to Sorbonne, and to Cambridge, and to Massachusetts Institute Technology, and each place we go troo written, spoken exams, and each place we all tree pass wit honors, and we have now Ph.D. degree from all. We all midgets, we all in perfect healt and feeling happy, we all doctors in physics, we all women wit no husband, no children to distract our mind, and we all filled with yoost one feeling—risk life gladly to be first to reach outer space.

Den USSR delegate presents us before UN committee. We do not find you five or six, delegate says, but here is tree. Have you anything better to offer?

Again is big debate, and wote is close. But we win.

So now we are trained again, as pilots. All dis so high top secret, nobody anywhere knows, only UN to which we are attached. Already unmanned space-ships—dat no

secret, you all know dat—go out beyond Soon. Most are destroyed. But some come back. And same wit animals—dogs, monkeys, once chimpanzee—and out of maybe fifty, two return and are alive. Instruments bring back much knowledge, we know for sure are habitable planets not so far away in Galaxy. But only wit human pilot could ship land and take off again. . . . Yes, yentleman in second row?

Where, precisely, are such habitable planets located?

I am sorry, if I knew I could not tell you, is so high classified I do not know. I do not even know if where I landed was one of planets already recorded. And I tell you now, before I go on, I cannot give you least idea where in Galaxy is planet on which I was first Eart bein to set foot. Is not so, Mr. Rasmussen?

It certainly is.

Well, comes time—now is four years ago—when first of us leaves. Is time of tremendous anxiety, you can tink. We tree have been so long, so close togeder, is like our own sister goes. And dat ship is lost.

So goes de second, and dat ship survives, but it misses any planet and is forever lost in space, coffin of our second sister. Everyting, everyting, now is on me.

And den dey send me. Dat is two and a half years ago. You can calculate light-years if you want to guess, but I will not tell you direction. You know what day I return. Is when I enter solar system again dat for first time UN makes public.

Now before I answer questions about what I find, I tell you what I do not say. I am not allowed give you technical details of flight. Dat is all high classified. I tell you what I do myself—I eat, I sleep, I check instruments, most of time I yoost tink—but I do not talk about spaceship itself, or equipment, or log of flight, same way I do not tell you where I land. Mr. Rasmussen here to stop me, is all high classified. De way nations used to make sure security against each udder, now must planets do, so tinks Eart. I tink udder planet not tink same as Eart, dough—ciwilized peoples, not afraid of backward ones.

Now, Miss X, steady on! Let's not go into controversial matters.

I am sorry. Now you ask me, I tell you what I can.

Miss Lhor-kang—

Tank you. Is nice to hear my own name again.

Was the planet on which you landed inhabited by intelligent beings?

Oh yes, wery. Far more adwanced as us.

Are they human, or humanoid?

You mean, do dey look like us—do dey have two eyes, two ears, two arms, two legs? No, not like dat. I cannot describe wery good, dey are so unlike. Dey are not mammals.

Are they insects, birds, reptiles?

Reptiles is nearest, but whole ewolution is different. I am physicist, not biologist. I say reptiles because dey are long and tin, and covered wit like bark or scale. But I tink maybe dey skip whole animal dewelopment, and are like plants what move. Dey get deir nourishment from air.

But they could communicate with you?

Oh yes. Dey do not talk wit mout, like us. Dey talk wit—we would call hands. In two hours, dey teach me how.

How long were you there?

A mont, it would be.

And you had a chance to see that they really have an advanced civilization? Is it industrial, technical, scientific, like ours?

Plenty chance, dey show me everything. Is far *more* scientific as ours. Is ahead of us also polit—

Please, Miss X!

Den can I say, Mr. Rasmussen, is also wery high psychologically? Can—let me whisper to you a minute. Tank you. Mr. Rasmussen say is all right tell you planet is one of group made up of all planets in its system, like UN is made up of nations on Eart.

But Miss—excuse me, I can't remember your name—

Is all right, Miss X is O.K.

If they're so far advanced as you say, why haven't they discovered space travel? Why haven't they come here, before we went to them?

Dey have space travel. More I cannot say.

You mean we weren't worth their bothering to visit us? I—

Just a minute, please. I'm afraid that's the kind of question we can't go into at present. Let's just stick to the facts, and forget opinions.

Excuse me, sir. Let me word it another way. Are they aggressive people? Do they lead the planetary league of

which you spoke? Have they invaded and conquered other planets, either within or outside their own solar system?

I answer as much as I can, if Mr. Rasmussen do not stop me. Dey are not aggressive, but dey tink is duty, obligation, to bring high ciwilization to more backward planets. So yes, dey have colonized udder planets, and yes, dey lead dat league.

Then, if they're as near to us as, say, Alpha Centauri—

I did not say dat.

All right, if they're within reaching distance of us, why haven't they tried to invade and colonize us?

Is all right, Mr. Rasmussen? . . . Is because dey have not tought us ready to receive and understand. But now we have ourselves space travel, and—

Stop right there, Miss X. Any other questions? Yes, madam—you from the Venus Globe?

Miss Lhor-kang, so far as you have been allowed to speak of these—I suppose we should call them people—everything you have said has been in the highest praise of them. Will you answer a direct personal question?

Certain, Miss, if I can.

Did they brainwash you? Have they sent you back here as a traitor to your own world, to soften us up? Is that why the UN has been keeping you under wraps from the press, and why Mr. Rasmussen here is watching every word you say and stopping you whenever you are about to say too much?

Don't answer that question, Miss X!

Oh, but I will answer. What is dis brain-wash? What you mean, am I traitor? I am human bein, I want best for all human beins, all we can learn, all we can get. I—

Ladies and gentlemen, please, Miss X is not here to be insulted, and neither is my committee. I deny categorically that—

Miss Lhor-kang, I am from the *London-New York Times,* and I want to know if an invasion is imminent and what Earth is doing to—

I am amazed, sir, that a representative of your great newstape should ask such a question. Surely you must know that any such information, if it existed, would be absolutely top—

What preparation? Dey are inwincible!

Miss X, do as I say. Be silent!

The public has a right to know—

When are they coming? How soon?

What kind of weapons have they? Have we any defense against them?

Ladies and gentlemen, this press conference is concluded.

Miss X, are they sending you on another flight, there or elsewhere? When?

No more questions, ladies and gentlemen; the conference is over.

Take your hand off me, Mr. Rasmussen. *Yes,* I am prisoner, because I want best for Eart—because I want our solar system part of great league so mooch farder along as us. If dat make me traitor, I am traitor. I tink no. Let me go, Rasmussen! Is to hide I am prisoner dey show me off, let me talk little bit, like slip off corner of gag—

Let go of her!

Give her a fair chance!

We have a right to know!

Dirty traitor!

Shame—manhandling a midget!

I tell you—you hear me—dey kill me now, maybe—I tell you what I don't tell dem. No, I go no more flights. You know why? Because people better as us, better every way even if dey descended from wegetables, dey come *now!* Dey start soon as I reach Eart. Dey come any minute, and dey are inwincible!

Don't listen to her! If you print one word of this we'll break you! The woman's mad—her experience has driven her insane.

Ha, you tink? When I know how backward is Eart, when dey offer come here—nobody killed, nobody hurt, yoost everybody belong to dem, learn from dem—I *accept* for us all, I accept for Eart, I help. You call traitor, dirty traitor, what I care? No traitor to humanity—me. Dor-je Lhorkang from Tibet. Some day you understand!

Damn you, you bit me! For heaven's sake, somebody help me get this fighting wildcat off me!

Ha, you big man, you can't shut up midget, like me? I tell you—

Let her go, you! Shame!

Grab her, Rasmussen—she's an out-and-out traitor! Wait, I'll help you.

Take your hands off me, Smith!

No you don't—I won't let you—

She's been brainwashed. I was in Korea: I ought to know.

Cut it out, fellows—we're press; we can't take sides. We're human, aren't we? I can't—

I tell you, gentlemen of press, I no traitor! I not brainwashed! Dey good—*good*. Dey make Eart so never again crazy wit fear, crazy wit hate, fighting like—

Shut up, you! I'll shut your mouth for you if it's the last thing I ever—ouch! Look, you reporters, if you print one word of this display of insanity, I'll sue your papers for everything you've got. I'll—hey, what's happened?

Say, who turned the lights off?

Damn it, I'm getting the hell out of here!

Where the devil is that phone? Wow, what a story!

What the—for gosh sakes, now somebody's locked the door!

Wh-what's that—

I can't move, Bill! Can you?

No, I—

Neither can Rasmussen—look!

Oh, my friends, I tink you never— Oh, tank Lord Buddha, you come!

But why you— No, no! No use blasters on us!

Oh, Mr. Rasmussen, my heart break! Dese not our friends, dese tings like crocodiles! Dese somebody from somewhere else, follow deir trail and get here first . . .

Look about you, Reader! Glance at your television set, riffle through your check stubs, study the cigarette you are about to smoke. There is no need to scan the sky for UFOs, for the enemy is already at hand. Howard Koch warns us that the attack has begun, as all about us Earth reels under the——

INVASION FROM INNER SPACE

BY HOWARD KOCH

My present contemporaries regard me as one of the last of the die-hards, which I suppose is a fair description of a man who has put off dying for two hundred and twenty-seven years and still longs for the world he knew when he was a youngster of forty-five.

That was my age when the invasion occurred in the spring of 1976.

It always seemed to me ironic that we lost our independence on the two hundredth anniversary of the year we Americans had won it. But when I mention this to the others, they only smile tolerantly as though indulging an old man's whim. Let them smile. Very few were alive then. I secretly pity them for having missed the golden age which I now propose to record—how it flourished and how it came to an untimely end.

I realize that my prose style may seem a little rusty and old-fashioned compared to the austere simplicity that is fashionable today. Also, this must necessarily be a minority report since my opinions on the subject are shared by only a few duocentenarians like myself. Yet I feel impelled to make the effort to put my twentieth century compatriots in a better light than the one in which history now regards them. No, this is not strictly true. (See how the truth has infected even me when I imagined myself immune from its contagion.) Frankly, I don't really care what anyone thinks of anyone else. Probably this testament amounts to no more than a gesture, a desire to pay a last tribute to a generation, now gone and almost forgotten, with whom I

shared the vivid and adventurous years of my youth.

In those bygone days we had a saying about truth (in fact, we had a saying about almost everything) that one day it would set us free. What a travesty! As events turned out, it was the truth that undid us, that drove literally millions to take their lives rather than submit to its tyranny, that, in short, swept away the last vestiges of our freedom. But I am getting ahead of my story.

April was the month of the great disillusionment. I remember remarking that the weather was more unsettled than usual. One day it was too warm for a light jacket, on the next you needed an overcoat to ward off the chill of a northeast wind. However, I always enjoyed matching my wits against the vagaries of an intemperate climate, trying to outguess its sudden shifts. And the uncertainty of the weather was reflected in everything else. I think I can safely say that no previous generation had been blessed with more stimulating anxieties. And my own country, the United States, as it led the world in every other way, was also far ahead of all in the opportunities it offered for peril and adventure. Danger was in the air—quite literally. You couldn't turn on your radio or television set, or glance at the daily news headlines, or even talk to your next-door neighbor without a vague sense that some crisis was impending and that all you possessed or hoped to possess, including life itself, was hanging by a thread.

None of this, I hasten to add, affected our material welfare. Oversized cars bulged out of our garages; our giant refrigerators were crammed with more food than we could possibly consume. Not only did most of us have all we needed, but the great producing organizations employed experts who figured out new things for us to need. The prefix "super" invaded on our vocabulary, inflating old trade names with a sort of second wind—supermarkets, super-colossal films, super-de luxe this and super-duper that. For example, no motorist worth his salt denied his car the super-extra-tetra ethyl when the gas station attendant cheerily inquired, "Which kind, sir?" Not that there was more mileage in the super but it seemed degrading to a three-toned, dynaflow stratocruiser to make it open its tank to a hose attached to an unadorned pump whose gasoline could boast of nothing better than just being "regular." Besides, it would have been an admission that the four

cents a gallon saving was more important than motoring prestige. Adroit advertisers had needled us into a welcome awareness that our social position depended on our having the best and latest of everything. Not to consume as much as your neighbors was unenterprising, slovenly, even unpatriotic.

I realize that such widespread opulence might be expected, in the long run, to induce a lulling sense of satiety and security. This, I am proud to say, never occurred. The saving grace was the fact that most of what we possessed was not paid for. We were in debt to each other, to the credit companies and banks that financed our purchases and often to the government for taxes on earnings we had already spent. Most of us worked in some department of the dozen super-corporations that had managed to absorb their smaller rivals and, since they were by then the only sources of employment, it is understandable that we clung to these jobs for dear life. If our income stopped for even a month, we would fall hopelessly behind in our installment payments, like a swimmer who suddenly finds himself too far out to make shore. With diligence and luck we were usually able to keep afloat, but there was always the exciting possibility that we might become ill or be laid off. I remember how anxiously we followed the fluctuations in the market price of shares, since we knew that our livelihood depended on the prosperity of the corporation we worked for. When the stock exchange ticker skipped a beat, so did our hearts. Alas, that institution has vanished: that delicious thrill is no longer possible.

To do full justice to the complexity of our financial machinery would go beyond the scope of this history, but I have yet to mention its most ingenious feature—the unbalanced budget. When I was a child and alone at table, I used to erect lofty pyramids with my eating utensils, saucer on cup, glass on saucer, cereal bowl on glass, fork on bowl and two spoons perched on either end of the fork until something added, perhaps as small as a toothpick, upset the precarious balance and brought the whole tower crashing to the table with the inevitable broken china and parental displeasure.

I think this is something of the thrill we had watching what we called our national debt mount as each new billion was delicately poised on the apex of hundreds of billions

already obligated. During the three decades between 1945 and 1975 this public debt grew to such a staggering figure that only bankers and astronomers could comprehend it. And even they couldn't explain its significance. Most of us were vaguely conscious that the U.S. government owed Someone an incredible amount of money and, should that Someone ever refuse to extend further credit, the whole structure of values would come tumbling down like my china tower. Since theoretically we, the people, were the government, we felt some responsibility to see that the debt was eventually paid off. However, in view of the perilous state of our personal finances, it was never apparent how this was to be done. Nor did we even know precisely to whom this vast obligation was owed. Was it to the banks? In that case, the banks being merely repositories for our funds, it seemed to follow that in the final analysis we owed this money to ourselves. Since this was rather a confusing hypothesis, I believe most people preferred to assume that there was some Atlas-like colossus of finance who supported the vast structure on his shoulders and understood all its intricacies. However, I secretly suspected that there was no one there at all and that the debt itself was nothing but a huge bubble which could go on inflating indefinitely so long as no one pricked it. This seemed to me a charming notion—that the value of everything we owned, if indeed we owned anything in the strict sense, rested on nothing more tangible than a myth.

But as I look back, it seems to me that the crowning uncertainty of this adventurous age was the hazardous hold we had on life itself. Even the most sanguine of us had to admit that we could be forcibly removed from the planet, or the planet from us, at a moment's notice. Throughout history, enterprising men had been farsighted enough to work up a war whenever their economy began to wobble and needed a shot in the arm. A big war or a little one as the occasion required. Almost any excuse was satisfactory to the people at large so long as you invented the right slogans and beat enough drums. But not until the middle of the twentieth century did it occur to our leaders that we need not have the wobble at all if we could somehow avoid the uneasy and enervating stretches of peace—or truce may be a more accurate word—that had to be endured between wars. Out of this realization came the brilliant concept of

a war which could be put under thermostatic control and maintained at an even temperature, not too hot and not too cold, keeping our economy at a nice slow boil. To avoid stepping on squeamish toes, this was not officially declared to be a war. The present semantic craze of calling everything by its scientifically accurate name was virtually unknown then. The Madison Avenue public relations offices, who merchandized our politics along with everything else (politicians having become by then more or less nominal figures), came up with the phrase "waging peace," a neat blend of belligerence and piety. This is what we proceeded to do, with great zeal and devotion.

First of all, the world was divided into two teams, East and West. Sides were chosen the way boys do when they are getting ready to play sandlot baseball.

I confess I am over-simplifying a process that was infinitely subtle and ramified but this is what, in essence, it amounted to. Sometimes one side would be clever enough to snatch a player that had originally lined up with the opposing team. This was called "subversion" or "liberation," depending on who was doing it and whose side you were on. In spite of the generous inducements we were in a position to offer, there remained a few spoil-sports, usually small countries that, either out of scruple or plain obstinacy, refused to play the game at all. These benighted peoples insisted on what they called neutrality which we deplored even more than we did our adversary, knowing that an adversary, no matter how wicked, was essential if the whole scheme was to work.

And regardless of what our moralistic critics say today, it did work. It worked magnificently. Up to then, despite all the sales pressures and techniques for going into debt, we had never consistently been able to consume all that our vast industrial machinery produced. The inevitable result had been recurrent stoppages, unemployment and depressions. But now with three-quarters of our economy devoted to waging peace, we had a steady and insatiable customer—obsolescence. A few months after a bomber or a missile came off the assembly-line, it was already obsolescent and a new design was being rushed off the drawing-boards to take its place. The only troublesome problem was where to put all the junk after we had scrapped it.

While both sides played this game with deadly seriousness and built up huge stock-piles of the most devastating explosives, there was a sort of gentleman's agreement not to toss them at each other except as a last resort. If we had let loose on our adversary some of the stuff our chemists conjured up, there would very soon have been no adversary, leaving us in the embarrassing position of bristling with defense and no one left to defend ourselves against. Again the ingenuity of our super-statesmen was equal to the challenge. They compromised by setting off our biggest bombs on islands fringing the Asiatic mainland where the prevailing winds could be counted on to waft some of the radio-active smoke in the enemy's face, giving him something to think about without seriously decimating his population. Inevitably some alarmists came forth—among them, I regret to say, eighteen Nobel Prize winners in physics, chemistry and medicine, men who should have known better—with the hysterical claim that the earth's atmosphere was already over-loaded with radio-active poison. To increase the load, they asserted, would be catastrophic not only to the enemy but to the whole human race. Then they went into gory details about cancers eating away our bones and how our grandchildren might be born with two heads, or even three—typical highbrow scare stuff. The State Department handled this outburst with great dignity. They called in their own physicist who issued a reassuring statement to the effect that the learned gentlemen had grossly exaggerated the danger (delicately implying that they had been taken in by enemy propaganda), that the military had the situation completely under control and that, even if they didn't, wasn't it better to take a calculated risk on a poisoned atmosphere than to lose our freedom? The controversy continued to rage but this answer satisfied me, as it did all sensible-minded citizens.

More than satisfied me. The idea of a calculated risk fascinated me. Throughout the centuries we had had to get along with just the normal risks—like wolves and microbes and earthquakes—but now we could add calculated risks, dreamed up by some of our best friends. I tingled with anticipation at the possibilities that lay ahead.

Re-living this exciting period as I set it down on paper, I recall that one of the high spots was a month's vacation I spent in a place called Las Vegas. I don't remember

the exact date of my trip but it was either in the late nineteen fifties or the early sixties. The heart of Las Vegas was a row of luxurious hotel-casinos that rose arbitrarily out of a naked scorching desert. One of them was called The Last Frontier. This turned out to be prophetic, for Las Vegas was the high-water mark for a way of life whose passing I shall regret to my dying day—if that day ever comes. In my mind's eye I can still see those sprawling, desert cathedrals which enshrined the only god I ever felt was worth a pilgrimage to worship. We still had churches then, and I had nothing against religion except its teachings. They were often difficult to reconcile with our other activities. However, I noticed that our most fervent prayers came not in church but with the roll of dice or the turn of a roulette wheel. Las Vegas had all these and much more. You could gamble on anything. No stake was too high. They even had a sort of divorce-remarriage adjunct where you could take a chance on a new wife for the one you had just shed at the downtown courthouse.

And only a few miles out in the desert was the ultimate gamble—the atomic proving grounds. On one occasion we had been playing roulette all night and the hands of the casino clock were nearing five, the time a new bomb was scheduled to be tested. There was a hush over the room as we waited, pulses racing, for the appointed hour. A guest who had been drinking steadily at the bar since midnight suddenly began to pray out loud. I shall never forget his words for they reflected what was in all our hearts. "Whoever You are that rules all this in here and all that out there, give us a break. We know that the odds favor the house. But just give us a little break, that's all we—" The prayer was buried under the concussion of sound waves that shattered every window in the building. My sweaty hands still clutching the few chips I had left, I watched the false dawn draw blood from the pale sky. This, I truly believe, was my finest hour.

I can imagine my critics saying at this point that I have only been telling one side of the story. Very well, I'm willing to admit that not everyone of my generation could keep step to such a lively tune. Some fell by the wayside, unable to bear the anxieties and uncertainties

which gave zest to the lives of those of us who were healthy. However, a wide range of choice was open to the emotional cripples. Those who wanted to quit the game altogether were free to withdraw into institutions erected for the purpose, although it must be admitted that most of them were rather overcrowded. However, the general run of these disturbed people asked only for a respite to get their breath, repair their damaged psyches and then plunge back into the competitive whirl, often with renewed vigor and aggressiveness. The most popular refuge for these part-timers was the analyst's couch.

By 1970 every twentieth adult was a psychoanalyst or a lay brother. Even then, they were so besieged by patients that they had to treat them in groups. Patients were lined up, couch after couch, in large rooms resembling dormitories. Although I never participated, I paid a visit to one of these seances and found it quite attractive—a vast roomful of people grumbling about their father-images or reciting the most extraordinary pornographic dreams to the obvious delight of everybody else. In spite of the present skeptical attitude toward these exhibitions, I maintain they provided useful therapy, as well as excellent entertainment.

By now people have become so accustomed to leisure it is difficult to conceive that it was once regarded as a problem, and that mass entertainment was then the only known solution. When automatic machinery first began to displace human labor in industry, most of us, I'm sorry to say, were at a loss as to what to do with all the time at our disposal. In fact, the situation became so serious that the announcement of a new reduction in the length of the working day for employes of the Motor Super-Corporation occasioned such a violent reaction that there was even talk of a strike to demand longer hours. Nothing came of it, of course, since by then strikes were recognized as a threat against security and therefore illegal (another boon of the thermostatic war). Personally, I never sympathized with grumbling about leisure. The Entertainment Super-Corporation took ample care of our recreational needs without requiring any effort or participation on our part. If you could just keep up your payments on your radio or television set, they did the rest. It was possible to kill hour after hour seated in a chair in your own

living room, listening to some cheerful voice extol your favorite motor car or watching a beautiful girl inhale the fumes of your chosen brand of cigarettes in courageous defiance of medical science, all with appropriate background music. Every once in a while this parade of delectable products would pause long enough to give you a chance to fill in the order blank on easy credit terms. During these intervals the little shop windows would turn into arenas where you could witness part of a football game or a prizefight or even a political convention (which came into the entertainment category after its original purpose had ceased to exist).

Another way to kill leisure time was to make yourself oblivious to it—or partly oblivious, depending on the durability of your nervous system. When a person's eyesight or nerves buckled under the impact of television and the other hazards of the day, there was always available a generous supply of the so-called escape drugs. The overanxious consumer who was unable to afford psychiatry could satisfy his lust for tranquility merely by dropping into the nearest drug store. The Pharmaceutical-Tobacco-Spirits Super-Distillery, which had cornered the escape market, advised a balanced diet—a benzedrine on rising, a tranquilizer at ten o'clock to level off the push of the benzedrine, caffeine at twelve to lift the depression occasioned by the tranquilizer, a sedative at three to neutralize the caffeine, three dry double martinis at five to get over the last hump and finally, before going to bed, a sleeping pill with two spaced booster doses that, with some luck, would get you through the night.

When modern historians write about this enterprising period, they make a practice of pointing out its resemblances to the Roman Empire, implying that we might have heeded its warnings and escaped a similar fate. But I say this is hindsight and, therefore, an invalid judgment which reflects unfairly on my generation. Except for misfits and chronic non-conformists, those of us who were alive then believed that we had achieved the ultimate society, foolproof and impervious to change. Like a beautifully wrought clock with its weights and counterweights, every element of our corporate life appeared to be in perfect balance. We were convinced that for the first time

in history we had succeeded in reconciling the public good and private initiative, design and accident, freedom and conformity, love and hate, peace and war, creation and destruction. How were we to know that the balance was so precarious that the slightest shift in our thinking would bring it all tumbling down on our heads! In the light of what followed, it is simple enough for critics today to prove that these concepts were actually irreconcilable and that our attempt to equate them led us down a labyrinth of illusions into a schizoid world divided against itself. After Einstein and the new physics it was possible to demonstrate that Euclid's concept of the universe was unrealistic. The point I want to make is that it is always easy to demonstrate the truth after it has happened.

Before going further, I want to make it clear that I have never been one to object to truth—in moderate doses that can be absorbed without producing organic changes. But when it came on us from all sides, giving no quarter to our most cherished illusions, I regarded it—and still do—as a usurper and tyrant. If this seems perverse or heretical in the face of present attitudes, let me pause in this history to give my reasons.

Illusions are like mistresses. You can enjoy any number of them without tying yourself down to responsibility. But truth insists on marriage. Once you embrace her, you're chained for life.

It is no answer to point out that most people today consider the marriage a happy one. They have no basis for comparison. They have never experienced the thrill of being foot-loose and fancy free. On the other hand, I was brought up to value my personal freedom above all other things. And the essence of freedom is choice. Unless you have alternatives to choose from, freedom is a meaningless word since you have no way to exercise it.

You may make the wrong choice—you may turn left when you should have turned right—but this is a necessary risk if you want to be free. Truth, on the other hand, shunts all traffic toward itself. Every road leads to Rome, whether you want to go to Rome or not. Gone are the bypaths and the crossroads, gone is the excitement of the gamble, the enchantment of uncertainty.

For almost a century after the thing happened, I used to go over and over in my mind how we might have

prevented it. If we had done this, or not done that, we might have escaped. But I finally came to the reluctant conclusion that the modern historians are right to this extent: one way or another, our dream had to end. Yet no one could have predicted the innocent manner in which it came about. Who could have guessed that the invader was within our own gates, in a sense within our own minds!

Perhaps our blindness to the real danger was the result of our preoccupation with outside enemies. We were beginning to see them everywhere, in every nook and cranny of the world, even among those we once thought were our friends. On top of all this, we had begun to suspect that the heavens themselves were plotting against us. Hardly a day passed that some of us failed to report unidentified flying objects in the sky. The thermostatic war began to take on interplanetary proportions as the impression grew that these celestial objects were the advance scouts of an invading army from outer space.

I know it is fashionable for modern psychologists to diagnose our suspicions as paranoic symptoms. They have a pat theory that the contradiction between our acts and what we professed to believe made us feel guilty and that we invented enemies to punish us, like children who have misbehaved. I don't believe this at all. I think that we sensed a real danger to our way of life and were holding on to our freedom with such an iron grip that, quite by accident, and to our utter astonishment, she died in our hands. Yet if it had not been for one man, she might possibly, just possibly, have survived.

But there I go again with futile speculations. I must get on with my history.

It was many years before I could speak the name of Martin Smith without bitterness.

But time heals all wounds, or perhaps some of the compassion which saturates the New Age has finally rubbed off on me. At any rate, I am now able to tell his part in our downfall with a reasonable amount of detachment although I still refuse to regard him as a martyr, no matter how many statues they erect in his memory.

I am even willing to concede that Smith was a genius of a sort. When I first met him, he was only thirty-two years old and had just been appointed chief engineer in

Plant Number 16 of the Office Machines Super-Corporation where we both worked. As a reporter on the plant newspaper, I was assigned to interview him about the new model computer machines that he had just designed and that were now going into production. I found him a soft-spoken, unassuming young man with nothing unusual about his features except his eyes. When he turned his gaze on you, he seemed to look right through you and beyond, as though estimating not only your present character but how you might be expected to behave under some future, hypothetical circumstances. Perhaps this impression is somewhat influenced by what happened later, but I remember very clearly that I had an uncomfortable feeling that he wasn't altogether reliable.

Also I had heard certain things about him that were not reassuring. Before he came with us, the Guided Missiles Super-Corporation had offered him a princely salary to work on their designs for intercontinental rockets, but he had refused on the grounds of conscience. It seemed that he belonged to an obscure religious sect called the Quakers who insisted on a literal interpretation of Christ's teachings, maintaining that you could not love your enemy in any proper sense while you were pointing a gun at his head. Since our company made no weapons —at least none that were recognizable as weapons—we were able to utilize his highly talented services. But even after six years in our plant he never quite fitted into the accepted patterns of our corporate behavior. This was noticeable in little things like the car he drove. Although it was five years old, he kept repairing it instead of turning it in on a new model. Evenings, instead of watching television so that he could keep up on what products to buy, he and his wife spent their time reading books. Although he never talked much about himself, it was whispered around the plant that he could speak six languages. In short, he was an intellectual of the most flagrant sort.

Yet he was allowed to continue in one of the most responsible positions in our industry. This will seem even more baffling when I explain that we had the most comprehensive loyalty checks that had ever been devised.

It was called the decimal security system. One man in every ten was an agent of the plant who kept a check on the other nine employes in his group. He was watched,

in turn, by another security officer who checked on the activities of the ten agents in his division. And so on up. The ten top security officers reported to Central Military Intelligence in the Hexagon Building in Washington. (The building originally had five sides but another had to be added to house the files which contained the most minute information on all of us—who our friends were, what we talked about, what periodicals we read, etc.) None of us knew, of course, who was an agent and who wasn't. The expert who devised the system had wisely foreseen that the more insecure each of us felt the more secure we were as a whole. I still ponder how Martin Smith managed to slip through this web, and I can only conclude that his unconventional ways were looked upon as the eccentricities of a mechanical genius.

While the 1976 computer model may seem primitive to us today, at the time Smith designed it, the machine was far in advance of any previous model in its capacity to produce instantaneous answers to the most complicated problems. Furthermore, over the past several years he had succeeded in reducing the size of the computer from the unwieldy giants the company had first put out. As a result, the market for the machines had expanded until there was scarcely an office or a classroom in the country that didn't have one as part of its standard equipment. And as improvements came every year, old models were turned in for new ones as frequently as cars. Our public relations department had begun to concentrate on the family market and had come up with several catchy slogans like, "Why waste your brain? Let an O.M.S. computer think for you" and "Don't let your neighbor out-think you. Buy our new model computer." This promotion campaign was already having its effect, as many of the better homes were buying the machines on easy credit terms.

I remember it was in the autumn of 1975 that I dropped in on Smith's experimental wing of the plant and had my first glimpse of the next year's model. It was streamlined, handsomely lacquered and no larger than a refrigerator The hundreds of levers and dials were like miniatures of the earlier models. When I marveled at the ingenuity of a machine that could do such prodigious things within such a small case, Smith smiled and said, "Look at the

size of our brain. Only a few cubic inches. Think what it does and what it still could do if we gave it half a chance."

I thought this remark a little odd coming from a man whose job it was to produce machines that could be sold on the basis of their superiority over the human brain, but I let it pass. At my request, he showed me some of the improvements over previous models. Then he said something that sounded innocent enough at the time but which, I realize in retrospect, should have struck an ominous note. He remarked that there were two or three features about the new machines he would rather not have publicized because they were highly experimental and he wasn't sure exactly how they were going to work out.

However, I had seen enough to convince me that next year would mark the biggest sale of computers in the company's history, a prediction that turned out to be an underestimate. Operating in day and night shifts, our plant could hardly keep up with the orders that flooded in from all parts of the country and even from overseas.

While the new model was universally praised for its appearance and efficiency, several months passed before there was any indication that the machines we were distributing so widely had certain sinister features unknown to any of us except the man who had designed them. It was late the following March that General Rufus Welford came to Columbia College to receive an honorary doctor of laws degree and to address the student body. He brought along the usual prepared speech out of the Madison Avenue files on how we must be ever-vigilant if we were going to safeguard our liberties. After the speech, which the students listened to with respect if not enthusiasm, there was a question and answer period. The general was not a very bright man except in his field which was biological warfare. (It was rumored he had managed to crossbreed typhus and cholera, but I am not certain of this. The information was classified.) Aware that students have a habit of asking tricky questions, he had one of the new model computers brought into the lecture room with full confidence that the machine would come to his rescue if any of the questions got too tough for him. The first query seemed innocent enough and was the sort of question a general might expect on such an occasion. I think I can remember the exact wording as it was

reported back to the plant. "If both we and the enemy continue the production of nuclear weapons at the present rate, where will each of us be in 1986?"

The general, beaming confidence, had his assistant feed the question, along with certain material he had brought along, into the machine. Dials turned, lights flashed on and off and a piece of paper was disgorged from the computer's lips. The assistant turned pale and his hands trembled a little as he read aloud the answer which consisted of a single word—"dead."

A stunned silence fell over the room. Hardly able to believe his ears, the general snatched the slip of paper from the assistant's hand, but there was no mistake. The word "dead" looked even deadlier when he read it in cold print. However, the general was not a man to panic at the first volley. He tried to pass it off as a joke, remarking that it was a hot day and no doubt the machine was a little out of sorts. The laughter which greeting this sally was not altogether convincing.

They decided to try again. This time three assistants worked with the general, stuffing into the computer's maw sheet after sheet of loaded headlines, carefully doctored statistics, half truths, angled news and mangled facts out of context—practically the entire contents of the general's briefcase. Never before had a machine failed to respond to this sort of persuasion by coming up with the desired answer. But this computer obstinately refused to change its mind. With maddening persistence it kept repeating the laconic "dead . . . dead . . . dead."

The persiring general glared at the offending machine as though he would tear it apart, bolt by bolt. But this would have been extremely rude; the computer belonged to the university and not to him. By this time the students were in full cry, like a pack of hounds closing in on a fox. One question led to another, each more embarrassing than the last. Having lost faith in the loyalty of the machine, the general tried to make up his own answers. The students would have none of them. They wanted the computer to give them the "lowdown" as they put it. And the machine was tireless in its effort to oblige them. With an infuriatingly smug "cluck-cluck" of its moving parts as they responded to the electronic impulses from its center "brain," the computer seemed to take a delight

in exploding every sacred assumption of the general's profession. If the thermostatic war continues, can it be kept under control? No. Then if real war breaks out, is there an effective defense against atomic attack? None. How much strontium 90 is now in the earth's atmosphere? Here the computer gave precise and alarming figures in percentages of radioactive poison to the other components of the atmosphere. By this time the flustered general was yelling "No, No!" at the top of his voice. But the students, angry themselves as well as frightened, paid no attention to his protests. They began spreading the questions into related fields like, "Who is paying for this nuclear arms race?" Again in its laconic mood, the machine answered, "You are." The general could stand no more. Leaving behind his briefcase and his three bewildered assistants (all of them classified), he fled to Washington.

In the meantime, the machine, aided and abetted by the rebellious students, continued its deadly assault on our cherished myths, some of which had come down to us from earliest times. One stabbing answer pierced the bubble of our "prosperity." With irrefutable statistics the computer proved that most of us were deeply in debt and, since we could not possibly repay these debts, obviously our creditors could not collect; hence, in actuality, we were all bankrupt. The next question followed inevitably. If none of us were solvent, what about the national debt? Who would pay this colossal sum and to whom? One of the students later told me—and I have no reason to disbelieve him—that the machine just chuckled. It refused to waste a single electronic impulse tilting with such an unsubstantial windmill.

If only this miasma of truth could have been confined to that one room, quarantined so to speak!

But it was out before anyone could stop it, racing through city streets and villages, down country lanes to remote farmhouses, leaping over mountains, rivers, and even crossing oceans. Thousands of machines were kept up all night and the next day as the anxious population indulged themselves in an orgy of wanting to know the worst. I heard of one machine that worked steadily and uncomplainingly for seventy-two hours without so much as a break for a drop of oil.

You might wonder why the people were ready to accept the computers as oracles when the information that gushed out of them was so much at variance with almost everything they had been patiently taught. I think the main reason was the tendency of twentieth century man to trust machines more than he did human beings. When the most eminent scientists in the world warned of the danger from radioactive toxin in the air, people paid scant attention but, when the computers said the same thing, it never occurred to them to doubt the machines. Also there may be some slight validity in the theory of modern-day sociologists that many who were alive then had more misgivings about the prevailing shibboleths than they thought it prudent to admit. According to this school of thought, the computers merely touched off a vein of repressed awareness that ran like dry powder just under the surface of our conditioned reponses.

I want to say here that the authorities, both corporate and military, acted with commendable energy to put out the conflagration. A law was rushed through Congress making it a crime to ask the machines any more questions. Unfortunately, even our efficient security system broke down under the strain of trying to enforce it. There were not enough agents and informers to watch every machine and, alas, the security officers themselves were beginning to ask questions. The next order, coming directly from the Hexagon, was more drastic. Smash all the machines! But our company records showed that there were over five hundred thousand in the United States alone. How was it possible to force a half million consumers to smash the thing they had just purchased and, in most cases, hadn't even paid for yet?

And in all honesty I must admit our own company, one of the Big Twelve, secretly helped to sabotage the order in a misguided effort to protect their investment in the computers. Anyway, it was all too late. The cat was out of the bag or, more accurately, a million cats were out of a million bags. For soon word-of-mouth took over where the machines left off.

The results were diverse but overwhelming. The majority of our people resigned themselves to the loss of their illusions and faced reality with calm stoicism; some even welcomed it. But the military and the financial

communities were hard hit. In one week the thermostatic war was over and the Hexagon Building looked like a ghost town. What happened on Wall Street was even more awful. No matter at what price stocks were offered, there were simply no bidders. You couldn't even call it a crash. When the words "peace perpetual" flashed over the tape, the ticker machine groaned out a few last quotations and died.

The holocaust that followed has no parallel in human history.

Since the records kept in this panicky period are not reliable, no one will ever know the number of men and women who took their lives rather than face living in a world which each day grew more unrecognizable. Suffice it to say that the number ran into the millions. It was the way I had imagined England during the time of the Black Death. Even in rural areas like ours there was scarcely a household that didn't suffer a loss and sometimes whole families were wiped out. But this was nothing compared to what was happening in the great urban centers. Eyewitnesses who were in New York at that time told macabre tales of the streets so littered with bodies that it was next to impossible to pick your way through them. Lines of people formed in front of the upper windows in all the high office buildings. I heard of many cases where the line was so long that the intended suicide, while waiting his turn to jump, changed his mind and decided to live.

But the uncounted multitudes who resorted to an overdose of the escape drugs rarely got a second chance because there were not enough doctors to give them first-aid even if they wanted it. For that fatal week the sales of the Pharmaceutical Super-Corporation soared to a new height. Officials of the company were momentarily encouraged to believe that they, at least, might weather the storm. But this hope was short-lived. The following week the drug stores had scarcely any customers at all. Most of those who had chosen this means of escape had sunk into a sleep from which no amount of benzedrine could arouse them.

The last official act of the military was the arrest and execution of Martin Smith.

From where I stand now I'm willing to admit that this was purely and simply a gesture of revenge which served no useful purpose. But when you consider the enormity of his deed and the atmosphere of hysteria, it was natural that the frustrated passions of our leaders should have demanded a victim whom they might have spared in calmer times.

They gave him a brief hearing. In the same quiet, dispassionate voice he had used in talking to me about the new model computer, he confessed freely what he had done and gave his reasons. This was our first knowledge of the secret features he had added to the machine which has accomplished our downfall. The most ingenious one was a sort of second "brain"—a control center which carefully checked and sifted all the material which was fed into the machine. If the statistics were loaded, ever so slightly, to prove a desired point, the mechanical censor detected the error and corrected the figures before they were allowed to filter into the computing "brain" which produced the answer. If a news item was angled to bolster up a policy which might otherwise have been unpopular, the control mechanism penetrated the motive and straightened out the angle before admitting it into its calculations. If the question was framed in emotional or unsemantic terms, the computer's censor rejected it altogether.

What Smith had done, in brief, was to build into the machine his own skepticism.

While up to then we had been free to fashion a fact into the image of what we wanted to believe or wanted others to believe, now the truth held us captive. For this betrayal Smith had to die. The last words he uttered, before ascending the hastily rigged scaffold, are engraved over the entrance of Humanities Hall which straddles Lower Manhattan from the East River to the Hudson—"You cannot hang the truth."

Smith's famous computer is now a revered museum-piece, nothing more. Even his genius could not produce a machine that was omniscient. The computer was proof against us but not against time. After twenty years service, it showed definite signs of age; no longer certain of its answers, it began to repeat itself, became querulous and opinionated when questioned too closely. The truth was unfolding too fast for any machine to keep pace with it.

The last Smith computer was tenderly taken apart and now rests in a glass case in the Smithsonian Institute. But as Smith predicted, the human brain proved more adaptable. Once it took up the pursuit of knowledge, there was no stopping it until now there is hardly a mystery left that man isn't threatening to illuminate. Oldsters like me have dragged our feet, but it is no use. We are pulled along in spite of ourselves.

So different is the world today that sometimes when I close my eyes and try to picture it as it was then, the images which come to mind seem more like illustrations for a fairy tale than anything that has actually happened.

Take religion, for instance. In those early days you were free to do pretty much as you pleased so long as you observed certain rules and weren't too obvious. If you were troubled with a conscience and wanted to feel righteous, you could slip into a church and say a few propitiatory words or make a few gestures. This put you back in good standing so that you could begin all over again. What I'm trying to say is that the church was there to comfort you but it never interfered with your normal drives and instincts. And those instincts weren't something we invented in the twentieth century—they had a long tradition behind them. You might say they were the rungs on the evolutionary ladder. Hadn't we climbed out of the primaeval swamp by the long chain of accidents known as natural selection? Any individual existence was purely a matter of luck. Those who happened to be strong enough or cunning enough survived and bred strength and cunning into their descendants.

And now what do we have? Einstein where we once had Darwin, reason lording it over anarchy, compassion melting away man's natural antagonism that has graced the pages of history with heroic adventures. And instead of keeping religion where it belongs—in a beautiful building erected for that purpose and supervised by a professional —now any amateur can practice it—and does. I use "amateur," of course, in its root derivation from the latin word "amo" as meaning "a person who loves." It is as though Christ, securely pinioned on a million crosses for two thousand years, had suddenly got loose and, coming out of the cathedrals, had entered into us.

I often chuckle when I think of the world Orwell

pictured in his book *1984*. In some ways he was prescient but what neither he nor anyone else foresaw was that a world could be organized for benevolent as well as for sinister purposes. From my point of view, it might have been better if we had gotten Orwell's Big Brother. No matter how entrenched a dictator may be or how abject his populace, there is always a chance of overthrowing him and getting back your freedom. But what can you do when you live in a society where everyone's your Big Brother and you're even in danger of becoming one yourself!

Apologists for the New Age ask me why I still moon over the good old days when people lived in fear of almost everything. How am I to explain to those who have never felt it that fear can be a pleasurable emotion? Why do children delight in ghost stories that send chills up their spines? And they still do to this day. My friends reply that fiction is one thing, reality another, implying that this is a distinction my generation failed to observe. There is no getting past this deadlock. They have logic on their side; on mine is the hallowed memory of nearly fifty adventurous years.

I'm willing to concede that we still have pioneering today but mostly in the realm of ideas. Only very rarely is it possible to enjoy a physical experience that involves any appreciable risk—which to me is the essence of adventure. Once it was out of military control, science began to intrude itself into everything we did, leaving almost nothing to accident. Even in space travel we have seen the new science calculate extra-terrestrial conditions with such accuracy that a passenger rocket can now take off for an unexplored planet with scarcely more of a flurry than a plane flying from New York to Paris. In the last fifty years I can recall only one incident of any importance that hadn't been anticipated and prepared for. I can still feel the good, old-fashioned goose-pimples I got when word came back that interplanetary life had finally been encountered in the outer reaches of the solar system in what had been known as the "ring" of Saturn. Call me bellicose or what you will, I confess that I relished the prospect of a little action between us and these creatures who were described in the report as "thought existing in a frame of hydrogen atoms." In the old days strangers

whose appearance was so odd and different from our own would have been treated as inferiors and put in their place. But it goes to show to what extremes religion can take you once you let love get into your system. There was no battle at all. Before anyone could so much as blow a bugle, we and the strangers were amiably exchanging the latest information about the universe.

I think we got the best of the bargain if that's any consolation. In spite of their rather elementary appearance, it seems that they had once been as complex as we and it had taken them several light years to achieve their present degree of simplicity and immateriality. And as we know, they were already experimenting to find ways of shedding the few atoms of matter they had left. Complaining that they found any material substance cumbersome in getting places, they hoped soon to become pure thought which could flash through space in no time at all. In answer to our questions they said that the method they intended to use was to gradually fuse their identity with—as nearly as we could translate it—the creative mind pervading the universe.

I admit this is all beyond me, but I tried to make a rough analogy that it was like separate railways merging into a great trunk line, doing away with obsolete rolling stock and giving more efficient service. Incidentally, the Saturnians remarked that they had tried for many centuries to communicate with us but, aside from intuitive flashes picked up by certain sensitive individuals, they were not very successful. With extreme tact they observed that possibly we were slightly retarded in telepathy because we seemed to be more concerned with matter than with mind.

At least that's no longer the case. We now use our minds on almost everything—with some pretty strange results, to my way of thinking. Take the question of original sin. The modern ethical scientists claim that sin isn't original at all and that, if the Book of Genesis means anything, it means that the serpent in the Garden tipped us off on how to slide away from our primal knowledge of what is right. In other words virtue was original, sin had to be cultivated. Even if that's so, they can't deny it has added spice to our lives. Try to imagine our literature if

sex, for instance, hadn't been regarded as a natural territory for sinning. I remember the fun we had finding out about it in back of the barn. Now there isn't a child in nursery school who hasn't learned scientifically all there is to know about it. Whatever satisfaction he is able to get from sex when he grows up, it can never be the same as when it was seasoned with a delicious sense of sin.

And consider what's happening to death. Every year it's getting harder and harder to die. I know from my own experience. With the molecular injections they've been giving me, my cell tissue refuses to wear out. I think I can truthfully say I don't feel a day older than fifty years ago when I was still in my hundreds. The most virulent germs are coaxed into a genial embrace with mating molecules, a union that produces nothing but health. As for accidents, they hardly ever occur. But when they do, any organ in the body, damaged beyond repair, can easily be replaced.

But this isn't the worst. Science is not only needlessly prolonging individual lives by medical means, it is beginning to attack the whole concept of death on a broad philosophical front. They learned from the Saturnians that space is a sort of mental bridge to the infinite, open to human traffic as soon as it has unloaded its excess weight of matter. Already a few venturesome minds have been out roaming around the universe on exploratory missions. And where they lead, the rest will follow. I can't predict how long it will take but, with all the resources of modern science mustered for the effort, I know the outcome is inevitable. Our body, the last refuge of our sweet mortality, is definitely on the way out. It is no longer the fashion for our poets to pay their melancholy tribute to the brevity and transitoriness of life. They are now more moved by mathematics than by sentiment.

And what about me?

I can confess it to these pages because no one will see them until after my death. Yes, I've made up my mind. While there is still time, I shall "forget" to take my injections for two or three years. No one is going to deprive me of the last great adventure left to my kind.

STAR 6

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