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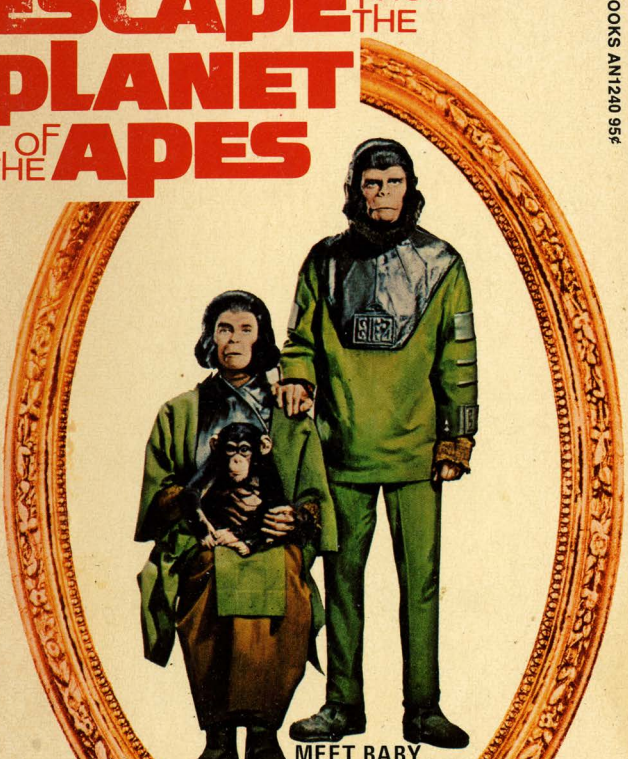

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Jerry Pournelle is currently president of the Science Fiction Writers of America. He is the recipient of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for the best new science fiction writer since 1971. His novella, *The Mercenary*, has been nominated for a 1973 Hugo Award.

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ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

Jerry Pournelle

Based on the screenplay by Paul Dehn

TO: P. Schuyler Miller and L. Sprague de Camp

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ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES

One

It was two o'clock in the afternoon with bright sunshine and cloudless skies over Omaha. A gentle wind flowed out of the northwest, and the temperature was seventy, nearly perfect weather. It would have been a marvelous day for a picnic.

Major General Raymond Hamilton, USAF, knew this because the weather over each of his Strategic Air Command bases was displayed on the command status board above his desk in the hole. Otherwise, Omaha's weather wouldn't interest him for another six hours. It would be night before he went off duty and home to his wife and two boys and the red brick house originally built for the U.S. Cavalry before the turn of the century. Now the cavalry wasn't needed to stand guard over Omaha. Instead, the old fort was Offutt Air Force Base, home of SAC, and SAC stood guard over the world.

General Hamilton's desk was three stories underground. It rested on a glassed-in balcony overlooking the main SAC command post, and two floors further down, directly below and in front of Hamilton's balcony, were the Air Force personnel who could put him in communication with any SAC

base. They could also launch enough nuclear firepower to destroy half the world.

Among the telephones on Hamilton's desk were two in color. The gold phone would instantly reach Executive One—the president. Next to it was the red phone that could launch the force.

Ray Hamilton wasn't thinking about the red phone at two in the afternoon. The president's summit conferences had been successful, and although Ray, like all SAC generals, believed the Russians were planning something and had to be watched at all times, he didn't believe the "Big One" was coming just yet. If SAC stayed alert, it might never come. Ray was relaxed in his easy chair, leafing through a murder mystery. He grimaced as he realized he'd read it before and faced the afternoon with nothing to do.

General Hamilton was bored. If he worried about anything, it was about his son's bicycle. That was the third ten-speed stolen from his family in less than two years, and it irritated him to think that SAC could guard the free world, but SAC's Air Police couldn't catch a bicycle thief. The boy had to ride a mile to high school and would need a new bike, and that would cost money Ray Hamilton didn't have at the moment.

A phone rang. A black one. Hamilton picked it up. "SAC Duty Commander."

"SAC, this is Air Defense. We have a bandit re-entry coming in over the South Pole. I say again we have a bandit on re-entry course over the South Pole. Probable place of impact, vicinity of San Diego, California. Estimated time, plus 26 minutes."

Hamilton tensed. "NORAD, this is SAC. Are you sure you have a bandit?"

"Affirmative, SAC. We have no previous plot. Bandit has no previous orbital flight. Launch point unknown. This is a big one. Estimated excess of 35,000 pounds."

"My God!" Ray Hamilton looked across at the enormous screens on the opposite wall. His staff had already projected a map of the Western Hemisphere and the predicted path of the intruder. The red dotted line led from the bandit's posi-

tion over Chile up to a large circle just north of San Diego. Hamilton scowled. The Soviets had tested a 100 megaton bomb, and a vehicle that size could carry one. That thing would take out most of Southern California, including Oceanside. Hamilton's status board showed Executive One in residence at the Western White House.

Suddenly he felt very calm. His voice was unemotional as he spoke into the black phone. "NORAD, this is SAC. Thank you. Send any additional update information. SAC out." He laid the black phone down and hesitated a second. Then he lifted the red one.

A siren blared through the hole. Red lights flashed. That phone was no joke. Hamilton's throat was dry as he spoke in the unemotional voice of command. "All units, this is SAC. EWO, EWO. Emergency War Orders. This is no drill. Yellow alert. All units, Yellow alert. March Air Base, generate your aircraft wings. I say again, March Air Force Base only, generate the force. SAC out." He nodded, and the duty officers below him began feeding the authentication codes that would confirm his orders.

Across the country men responded. Pilots tumbled from their ready-room bunks and raced across runways to their ships. Within minutes the B-52's and B-58's were cocked and ready, engines idling, as their pilots waited for the orders that would launch them toward the north. Each carried maps to half a dozen targets around the world. They would learn which to head for once they were airborne.

In forty holes across the northern United States, USAF officers took keys from around their necks and inserted them into gray consoles. They did not, as yet, turn the keys. Above them, sergeants locked steel doors three feet thick into place; the missile commanders were sealed in and would be until the alert was over. Around the missile farms the Minuteman missiles came alert, gyros hummed, computers took in last-second data.

At March Air Force Base, Riverside, California, a wing of B-52's rolled down the runway and took off, the last airborne less than fifteen minutes from the time Ray Hamilton gave his orders. Each ship carried four twenty megaton bombs in

its belly, and two more in stand-off missiles hung under the wings. The ships left faint vapor trails in the California sky as they flew northward toward their rendezvous with the tankers. Navigators handed up course data to the pilots, then looked back at their charts. On each chart was a dark black line. When the planes reached that line, they would turn back—unless they had received orders from the president to go on in. The pilots flew grimly, silent, waiting, some praying, hoping for cancellation orders. . . .

General Ray Hamilton lifted the black phone again. "NORAD, do we have any additional bandits?"

"Negative, SAC. It's a single object on a ballistic re-entry, automatic sequencing. Not under command so far as we can tell. Pretty big to be a bomb. Too open. I think it's experimental."

"So do I." Hamilton waited. He could call the president, but there'd be no point. If that was a bomb set to detonate at optimum altitude over Oceanside it would take out the president, March AFB, San Diego Navy Yards, Miramar, Long Beach, and a lot of Los Angeles. There would be no way to get the president out in time. And if it blew, there'd be no question about a hostile move against the United States.

It probably wasn't. It was too big and too open. Probably the force would be recalled, and SAC would have had another drill. They had them every week anyway.

"All right, NORAD," Hamilton ordered. "Give me what you get as it comes in. Have you got an intercept launched yet?"

"Affirmative, SAC."

"Patch me in."

"Roger, SAC."

There was a lot of static and several squeals; then Hamilton could hear the pilot of the interceptor flying above the probable area of the bandit's impact. Ray glanced at his status board. The March AFB wing of 52's was on its way and out of the danger area. At other bases the ships waited still. His SAC force was poised like a cocked crossbow, and

the red phone could launch the greatest concentration of firepower in the history of the world.

Not without permission from Executive One, of course. Ray waited; in a few minutes, he'd know. There would be no point in launching, or Executive One wouldn't care. SAC would own its own planes and missiles again, and SAC would take a terrible vengeance for the president.

"NORAD, this is Red Baron Leader. I have visual on the bandit," came the interceptor pilot's voice, cold and unemotional.

"Roger, Red Baron Leader. Describe."

"Bandit is lifting body spacecraft with NASA markings. Spacecraft is descending with air speed approximately mach 2.6 slowing rapidly. Spacecraft appears oriented properly for splashdown with low g-stress."

"Red Baron Leader, say again ID of spacecraft."

"Spacecraft appears to be United States NASA lifting-body ship. I can see the NASA insignia. I say again, spacecraft has US NASA markings. It's going to splash. It looks to be under control."

"Red Baron Leader, follow that spacecraft down to splash and stand by to direct Navy recovery team to your location. MIRAMAR, this is NORAD. We have an unscheduled NASA spacecraft splashing in your air defense area. Can you get a recovery team out there pronto, interrogative?"

"Roger NORAD, this is Miramar. Helicopter recovery team will be on the way in five minutes. We will notify Fleet to send out a recovery ship."

"SAC, this is NORAD. Get all that?"

"Roger, NORAD." Hamilton shook his head slowly, then watched his status boards. The timers clicked off to zero; bandit was down. He heard the chatter of Red Baron Leader. The spacecraft had made a perfect landing and was afloat. Hamilton waited another minute, then lifted the red phone.

Again the sirens wailed. "All units, this is SAC. Cancel EWO. I say again, cancel Emergency War Orders. Return to alert status. March wing, return to base. SAC out." He laid the red phone down and breathed deeply.

An unscheduled spacecraft screaming in for splashdown off

San Diego from re-entry over the South Pole. Somebody in NASA was going to get his hide roasted for this. Hamilton hoped he'd be around to see it. In fact, he'd like to do the roasting. The incident had scared him, he would admit now that it was over.

In all his years in the Air Force, he'd been through plenty of alerts, but this was the first real one he'd commanded. Ray Hamilton said a short prayer that it would be the last. There wouldn't be many survivors of a nuclear war.

Two

The gold telephone rang, and the president hesitated a moment before answering. There were several of those gold phones throughout the U.S., and they didn't all mean war, but he was scared every time it rang. He wondered what other presidents had thought when they heard it, and if they ever got used to it. Certainly he hadn't, and he'd been in office over a year now. The phone rang again, and he lifted it.

"Yes."

"Mister President, this is General Brody." The president nodded. Brody was White House Chief of Staff. He wouldn't be calling with a war message. "Sir, we've got a small problem out your way. One of NASA's manned space capsules came in over the Pole and splashed just offshore from you, and SAC went to Yellow Alert."

"What's their status now?" he asked quickly.

"Back to normal alert status, Mister President."

"A NASA spacecraft—I don't recall that we've launched any manned capsules recently, General."

"I don't either, Mister President. Nor does NASA. But there's sure as hell one up there—well, down now. Anyway,

the Navy's helicopter boys think this could be one of the ships lost a year ago. Colonel Taylor's, for instance."

"Eh?" The president pulled his lower lip. It was a famous gesture and he'd used it so often that it was genuine enough now, even if he had been advised to adopt it by his managers back when he was still in Congress. "What are the chances of its really being one of our ships? With the crew alive?"

"None, Mister President. That ship maneuvered into the water. It came in on automatic, but there was a pilot working the controls just before it splashed. Colonel Taylor's been missing over a year. There weren't enough supplies to keep the crew alive that long. No, sir, it can't be our people coming back."

"I see." The President pulled his lip again. "Have you thought of this possibility, General—that the Russians retrieved one of our missing spacecraft and have now manned it with their own cosmonauts. Could there be Russians aboard that ship?"

The line hummed a moment as General Brody listened to a background voice the President couldn't quite hear. Then his Chief of Staff came back on. "Sir, there could be anybody aboard that thing. The Navy's bringing the capsule onto their recovery ship right now. Have you any instructions?"

"Yes. If there's anyone alive on that thing, welcome them to the United States. Or to Earth, if they're—uh, there's always that possibility, isn't there? That they're little green men? Have Admiral Jardin use his judgment, General. Meanwhile, you get those NASA scientists to go over that ship with whatever's the scientific equivalent of a fine-toothed comb. When they know anything, tell me. And General, I want full security on this operation."

"Yes, sir."

"You do understand me, don't you, General? This is not for the networks."

"Yes, sir." General Brody cradled the phone and swore. He couldn't blame the president. There'd been a lot of leaks to the press. The heavy sarcasm was probably deserved. Still, there were a lot of people who were easier to work for.

He lifted another telephone and dialed; then, as it was ringing, shouted, "Sergeant, where's that TV monitor?"

"Coming up, General." Three uniformed men rolled a color TV set into General Brody's office. They fussed with the dials, and a picture formed. The camera was atop the island on the aircraft carrier, looking down onto the flight deck. Brody could just see waves over the side of the ship—a calm sea.

A crane lifted the space capsule out of the water and over the deck. There was no mistaking the NASA markings on the sides and the vertical stabilizer. Ugly ship, Brody thought. No wings. Just the body of the craft, bent, so that it would provide lift at high speeds. Pilots told him it had all the glide characteristics of a rock, but they were all willing to fly in it. With the cutbacks in the space program, there were five astronauts for every mission anyway.

The capsule was lowered to the deck with a thump. Sailors clustered around it. Brody's phone rang and he answered absently.

"Admiral Jardin, sir," the voice on the phone said.

"Put him on." Brody continued to watch the spacecraft on the TV set. No one wanted to open it. Two Navy surgeons stood outside the hatch, watching, saying nothing. Admiral Jardin, with a phone, stood with them. Brody spoke into his phone. "You going to open that thing, Admiral? I've got a TV monitor here, I'm watching. The president says you're to use your own judgment, but keep the reporters away."

"We were wondering about quarantine, General," Admiral Jardin said. The voice was gruff and hard, rasping. "Both ways. What might we catch from them, of course, but if they've been a long time in space they have been in a sterile environment. What might they catch from us? Whoops!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Excuse me, General, the problem's not ours anymore. Whoever's inside is opening the hatch. See it?"

"Yes."

The hatch cover opened very slowly. Brody watched as it swung all the way, and a ladder was rolled up. Three figures climbed out. A bit clumsy, Brody thought. Why not? They

were a long time in space. Only how had they managed that? *Could* that be Colonel Taylor and his crew?

The astronauts wore complete space gear: full pressure suits, coveralls over that, helmets with mirrored visors dogged into place. They'd be roasting in there, Brody thought. A man sealed into a full pressure suit and disconnected from cooling air can quickly generate enough heat to cook himself to death, and there is no place for the heat to go.

A Navy flight surgeon came forward and gestured at the helmets. The astronauts nodded and reached up to the latches, began undogging the faceplates.

"Welcome aboard, gentlemen," Admiral Jardin said.

The helmets opened. Brody's TV screen gave a perfect view into each faceplate. His sergeant was watching intently too. He looked at the astronauts and roared with laughter. "Monkeys!" he shouted. "Holy clout, General, they caught themselves three monkeys in space suits!"

"Admiral Jardin," Brody said quietly into the phone. His voice was the same deadly calm that Ray Hamilton had used when he alerted SAC. "Admiral—"

"Yes, General. You are seeing it. That is what you wanted to ask, isn't it? I'm seeing it too," the Admiral said. "No question about it, our astronauts are chimpanzees."

"And just where the devil did they come from?" Brody demanded.

"I'll just ask them, shall I?"

"Admiral, I have to report to the president. I do not need your jokes."

"Sorry, Len. Well, have you any suggestions? This is a bit stranger than I'd expected. I'm at a loss."

"Yeah. So am I. Well, the president wants an examination of that capsule made. Immediate and thorough. Meanwhile, take the—uh, the passengers somewhere secure. Someplace that knows how to take care of them. You got any labs around there? A university maybe?"

"Not secure." Admiral Jardin was quiet for a moment. "I have a friend in the LA Zoo Commission. I expect we could get them lodged there without anybody's knowing it. We

can't keep this secret very long, General. The whole crew of this ship knows . . ."

"Yeah. But the president decides when to break this, and to whom. Right? OK, take 'em to the zoo. That seems an appropriate place for chimps. Get somebody to examine them. Somebody with clearances."

"You save the easy jobs for the Navy, don't you?" Jardin said sourly.

Brody made a face at the phone. "You think you have troubles? I've got to report to the president. He's going to just love this."

Three

Admiral George "Snapper" Jardin was not a happy man. What made things worse was that none of these problems were his own fault. His Navy people had performed flawlessly. Within minutes of the signal that an unscheduled spacecraft was going to splash down, he had a Navy interceptor fighter in the air over the predicted splash area, a rescue helicopter airborne and on the way, and a recovery carrier speeding to the scene at twenty-eight knots. The chopper crew put inflation collars around the spacecraft and kept it upright and afloat. His carrier came alongside and hoisted it aboard. Everything went fine—until the astronauts turned out to be chimpanzees. Snapper Jardin shuddered again. How did they get in the ship? "Where have we got them now?" he asked his aide.

"In the wardroom, Admiral," Lt. Commander Hartley said. "We had them in sick bay, but there are too many things they might get hold of down there. They could hurt themselves."

"I bet the ship's officers like having monkeys in their wardroom. Did anybody object?"

"No, sir." How could anyone object? Hartley wondered.

They hadn't been asked. In his experience, nobody *ever* asked in the Navy; the brass sent down The Word, and that was that.

"Did you get the LA Zoo?"

"Yes, sir," Hartley said. "They're ready. Tight security. The apes can go into the sick bay. Nothing in there right now, except a mauled fox cub, a deer with pneumonia, and a depressed gorilla who's lost his mate. The apes will be out of sight, quarantined, and there'll be plenty of facilities for medical and psych examinations."

"Sounds good." Jardin lifted the phone by the chart table. "Bridge? My compliments to the Skipper, and please take this ship into Long Beach Navy Station, standard cruising speed." He turned back to his aide. "You found the experts yet?"

"Sir, there are a couple of animal psychologists on the UCLA staff. There's some Army grant or other funding their work, so they've got clearances. They'll start in on the apes tomorrow morning."

"Good." Jardin stood. "Let's go see those apes, anyway. Has anybody fed them? There ought to be steaks aboard this ship—would they want them raw or cooked?"

"Sir, I'm told that chimpanzees are pretty much vegetarians."

"Oh. Well, we can't let them starve."

"No, sir. I've got a sack full of oranges. One of the pilots had a supply. I thought I'd take those below."

"Good thinking." They walked through the ship and down two levels to the wardroom. A Marine sentry stood outside the door.

"You have them alone in there, Corporal?" Admiral Jardin demanded.

"No, sir. The surgeon's inside with them, sir. But—"

"But what, Corporal?"

"You better look for yourself, Admiral. Them apes ain't normal, sir. Not like any apes I ever saw." He opened the wardroom door.

Surgeon Lt. Commander Gordon Ashmead, USNR, stood in one corner of the wardroom staring at the chimpanzees.

The three apes were seated at the wardroom table. On the floor between them was a large valise.

Three full pressure suits lay stretched out on the wardroom floor. Coveralls were hung across chairs. As the admiral entered, two of the chimps stood, exactly as a junior officer might stand when an admiral enters; the third chimpanzee struggled to close a zippered housecoat.

"Excuse me," Admiral Jardin said. "I didn't mean—good Lord. What am I saying?" He looked at the apes, then at Ashmead. "Good afternoon, Lieutenant Commander," Jardin said. "I see you've undressed them."

"No, sir. They took off the suits themselves."

"Uh?" Jardin frowned. There was nothing easy about getting out of a full pressure suit. They fit like gloves, and had dozens of snaps and laces that had to be loosened. "With no help?"

"They helped each other, sir."

"And now they're pretending to dress," Jardin's aide said.

"Pretending hell," Admiral Jardin snapped. "They *are* dressing. Doctor, where did they get those clothes?"

"They brought them with them, sir. In that valise."

"Now just a bloody minute," Jardin protested. "You're telling me that three chimpanzees got out of a space capsule carrying a suitcase. They brought that suitcase down here, took off their pressure suits, and out of their suitcase they took clothes that fit. Then they put on the clothes."

"Yes, sir," Ashmead said emphatically. "That is precisely what I am telling you, Admiral."

"I see." Jardin looked at the three chimps. They had all resumed their seats at the wardroom table. "Do you think they understand what we're saying, Doctor?"

Ashmead shrugged. "I doubt it, sir. They are very well trained, and chimps *are* the most intelligent of the animals. Except, perhaps, for dolphins. But all attempts to teach them languages have failed. They can learn signals but not syntax."

"I don't understand."

"Well, sir, a dog, for instance, can understand commands. The command is a signal. When he hears it, he does something. But you can't tell the dog to go around the block and

up the stairs, *then* execute the command. You could train him to do it that way, of course, but you couldn't tell him to do it. He wouldn't understand. *That* would take language."

"They sure look like they're listening to us," Admiral Jardin said. He turned to his aide. "Greg, give them their oranges. Maybe they're hungry."

"Yes, sir." Hartley laid the bag on the wardroom table. One of the chimpanzees took it and carefully lifted out each orange. Another reached into the valise and took out a small pocket knife.

"Here now! Wait a second," the Marine shouted. He advanced toward the chimpanzee.

"Hold it," Dr. Ashmead said. "It's all right, Corporal. The knife's very short and not sharp at all. It's the second tool they've employed—they used a small pick to untie a knot in one of their suit laces."

"Um." Admiral Jardin nodded to the Marine. "It's all right if the Lt. Commander says it is, son. Look, you go out and arrange for an MP van to meet us at the docks, uh? We'll want to take these critters to the zoo."

The chimpanzee carefully peeled the first orange and passed it to another ape. She began peeling a second.

"That's an interesting behavior pattern too, Admiral," Ashmead said. "Usually apes won't share. Occasionally a male will offer something to a female, and of course the big alpha males demand and get whatever they want from the smaller males, but I don't think I've ever heard of a female offering a male a peeled orange."

"She's giving the next one away, too. Very nice manners, eh Greg?"

"Yes, sir," Jardin's aide said automatically. He couldn't care less about the manners of a chimpanzee. He wanted to get back to San Diego where a blonde go-go dancer was waiting. She wouldn't wait long. She didn't have nice manners at all, but she had other compensations.

"Now what's she doing?" Jardin asked. The chimpanzee had eaten the third orange, and was beginning to peel more for the others. She kept the peelings in a neat pile. "Greg,

shove that wastebasket over there and see what she does, will you?"

"Yes, sir." The chimp pushed the peelings off into the basket. One fell to the deck and she carefully leaned over to pick it up and drop it in with the rest.

"They sure are well trained, Admiral," Dr. Ashmead said. "I'd almost think they were somebody's house pets."

One of the chimpanzees snorted loudly.

Admiral Jardin frowned. "Well, it's not my problem. For all I care they could stay in the Long Beach Station Hospital—only haven't I heard you can't toilet train an ape? Is that right, Doctor?"

"I don't think anybody has yet," Ashmead answered. "Bit out of my line, though."

"I suppose the nurses wouldn't care for apes in their hospital," the Admiral said.

"No, sir."

Jardin looked at the chimpanzees and shook his head. He'd had sailors with worse manners—there were sailors on this ship with worse manners, he told himself. "Well, they'll be happier in the zoo, anyway. They'll even have company. I'm told there's a gorilla in the next cage."

The female chimpanzee slammed the pocket knife to the wardroom table.

Admiral Jardin laughed. "You'd almost think she understood me and doesn't like gorillas, wouldn't you?"

Four

It was dark at the Los Angeles Zoo. Jim Haskins whistled as he made his final rounds of the hospital section. There'd been a lot of excitement earlier, but it was all quiet now, and things were almost normal. He still resented the two Marines with guns outside the hospital section, and the other Marines and their officers camped in trailers not far away, but they weren't interfering with Jim's routine now, and he'd finally caught up on his chores. It was time to go home.

First, though, he looked in on his fox cub. Somehow the poor thing had gotten loose and ended up in the run with the Dingo's, and those Aussie wild dogs had made a mess of her. Luckily there had been a keeper near enough to rescue her. The fox looked all right now. She had taken sedation nicely, and the IV was dripping properly. Jim nodded in satisfaction. He wasn't quite a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine yet; he had another year of night school to go. But all the vets agreed that Jim Haskins had a touch about him that was worth more than book learning.

There was a deer in the next cage, with ultraviolet lights to keep it warm. Jim didn't think it was going to make it. Pneumonia was always bad with animals, and the deer family

hardly ever recovered from it. Too bad, really, but at least it wasn't one of the rare species. The gorilla was in the next cage, and it seemed to be asleep. That was a bad one, thought Jim. His official name was Bobo, but somebody had dubbed him "Monstro" and that stuck. He had been all right until his mate died, then he'd taken to brooding, and he was getting meaner all the time. Jim hoped the curator would trade Monstro to another zoo, someplace that needed a gorilla. It would be nice if they had an unattached female Monstro could woo, but the chances were pretty slim at his age.

Then there were the three new chimps. Nice healthy ones. They must have been sombody's house pets, because they insisted on wearing clothes. They wanted to keep knives, too. Jim had been firm about that. The zoo rules had to be kept, even by chimpanzees brought in by the Navy and a lot of doctors and armed Marines. The lights were still on in the new chimps' cage. Jim made sure there was plenty of bed straw and that the floors were clean, and they had oranges and bananas to eat. They were acting a bit scared. They hadn't eaten anything, and they wouldn't climb on the jungle gym or swing on the tires, but maybe they'd get over that in a day or so. Chimps were always fun. Jim had never had any trouble with chimps. He liked them.

The female seemed lonesome, sitting there at the edge of the cage. Jim found an especially nice banana and peeled it for her. He reached through the bars. The regulations said he wasn't supposed to get that close to the cages when he was alone. Apes could grab a man and hurt him. They wouldn't mean to, usually, but they could play rough, and it might be necessary to hurt one of the animals if it got loose.

But he'd never had trouble with chimps, and she looked so lonesome sitting there.

She slapped the banana away. Then she slapped him.

Jim stepped back from the cage and shrugged. "Have it your way, mate. Good night." He flipped out the lights, and swung his flashlight around for a final inspection. Everything was in order, and he left the hospital ward, carefully closing the door.

The chimpanzees stared at the closed door.

"I'm not his mate," the female said carefully. "I'm yours."

"Zira, please. Control yourself, my dear. I think they're trying to be kind."

"This cage stinks of gorilla," Zira insisted. She sat on the straw. One of the males joined her and took her hand. "But—Cornelius, where are we?" she asked. "And why are we pretending to be dumb animals?"

Cornelius looked up at the other male. "It was your idea, Dr. Milo. You haven't had a chance to explain before. I think now would be a good time."

"I did not think it wise to let them know we can speak, before," Milo said carefully. He peeled an orange and ate it, grimacing as the juice ran across his fingers. "Now I'm sure of it. Consider. As we achieved orbit in Colonel Taylor's spacecraft, we saw an explosion below. At least one entire hemisphere was destroyed. I do not doubt that the entire earth was made uninhabitable. Are we agreed?"

The seated chimpanzees nodded. "But if Earth is destroyed, where are we?" Zira asked again.

"I'll tell you in a moment. Consider the situation, then. We are possibly the only survivors of our civilization. The last of the apes have killed each other in a war that no one could win. The fools have accomplished what they've been trying to achieve for centuries, and we can never go home. Now. As to where we are. I believe that in some fashion—and I lack the intellect to know precisely how, although I have theories—we have traveled from our own time into the past. Our civilization, the time of the apes, is in the distant future of *this* time. We are in our dim past, at a time when men are the dominant species on Earth, and apes cannot as yet speak."

"But—we saw the earth destroyed!" Cornelius insisted.

"And Earth *will be* destroyed," Milo said evenly. "Just as we saw it. But it destroyed itself in such a manner that we were sent into the past."

"How?" Cornelius insisted.

"I told you, I am not precisely certain," Milo said. "The philosophers have shown there is a definite relationship between time and velocity. Somehow, we had, through the

combined orbital velocity of our spacecraft and that imparted to us by the greatest explosion in Earth's history, just the right velocity to send us into the past. If you do not like that explanation, call it magic; I have no better one. The important thing is, we are here."

Cornelius nodded. "All right. We're in our own past. What an opportunity!"

"For an historian like yourself, yes," Milo agreed. He looked around the cage and up at the electric lights, and waved his arms expansively. "Marvelous equipment! Think, Cornelius, all the old legends are true. Humans *did* have a machine civilization, with power to do almost anything they wished!"

"And destroyed it," Cornelius reminded him.

"And destroyed it," Milo repeated. He lowered his voice in wonder. "But why, Cornelius? With all this, with so many amazing things, so much we have not seen but must exist for all this to exist, could they not have been happy with it? We would have been dazzled by a tenth of this."

"For how long?" Zira asked.

Milo nodded. "True. Humans and apes alike, never satisfied with what they have." He sighed and paused a moment. "Your first question," he said. "Consider. If we speak, the humans will ask us about our origin." He had turned very serious. "Will we be able to conceal enough from them? I do not think they would be edified to learn that one day their world will crack like an egg and fry to a cinder because of an ape war of aggression."

"I see," Cornelius said. "I think you are right. Zira? Do you agree?"

"No." She looked around the semidarkened cage. "If we don't talk to them, they'll keep us in cages. They won't give us any clothes. We don't even have sanitary facilities! Cornelius, I can't live like a barbarian! We are civilized intellectuals."

"Shh," Milo said. "You're disturbing the gorilla." He pointed to the inhabitant of the next cage.

"Oh. Sorry," Zira called. There was no answer and she looked up, not too surprised. Gorillas were never polite.

"He doesn't understand you," Milo reminded her. "Apes, at this instant in time, cannot yet talk. And I believe that for the moment, we would do well to follow their example. We can reveal nothing if we will not communicate with them."

"All right," Cornelius said. "I'll go along. Zira?"

"Good night," she told him. She stretched out on the straw and grimaced. "I think we will need the sleep. Good night."

Zira woke early. The zoo was filled with unfamiliar noises: birds whistling, the growls of large carnivores, mechanical sounds of the zoo machinery. She could identify almost none of it. The whole concept of a mechanically dominated world was alien to her, although her husband's historical research had at least made her intellectually familiar with the idea. She knew about this world, but she couldn't feel it.

Cornelius and Milo were still asleep as Zira got up from the straw and washed herself in the shallow pool in one corner of the cage. The big male gorilla still slept in his own cage; Zira curled her lip at him. She had never liked gorillas, although she knew it was an indefensible prejudice.

Zira spent the next few minutes exploring the cage. It was certainly secure, fastened with padlocks that required keys. She didn't wonder that the humans had used that kind of lock. In her own world and time, men in cages would play with the locking system so that if there were any way it could be opened without a key, they'd get it open. She supposed that apes must do the same here and now.

Wherever and whenever that was. The thought frightened her. They *had* seen the world destroyed. All agreed they'd seen it. But it was beginning to fade, a memory harder and harder to call up, like a dream from a long time ago. It had happened so fast. They had barely launched Colonel Taylor's ship and made orbit when the world flamed white and red and orange, the shock wave hit them, and their ship had begun an automatic re-entry sequence.

Her reverie was interrupted when the main door opened and the man who had tried to give her the banana last night

came in. He smiled, his lips pressed carefully together so that his teeth didn't show, and said "Feel better this morning?"

Zira almost answered. If the human hadn't been so ugly, so manlike, she would have; but it always surprised her to hear humans talk. She had known only three who could. She felt ashamed of herself for slapping the keeper last night. How could he know she didn't like bananas? He was only trying to be nice.

The man looked into all the cages, then went into the enclosure with the deer and did something Zira couldn't see. It was obvious that the human liked animals. He seemed as civilized as any chimpanzee. As she watched him, Cornelius and Dr. Milo woke up.

Zira turned to her husband and said "Good morning."

The keeper turned quickly from the sick deer. "Who's there?" he said When no one answered, he wandered through the zoo hospital building, looking everywhere, and muttering.

"Quiet," Cornelius whispered.

"I still think it's the wrong idea," Zira said. "We ought to talk to them." She kept her voice low. The keeper finally went back to his sick deer. He was still shaking his head and muttering.

A few minutes later the doors opened again. Two humans in white coats came in. The male was about six feet tall, with sandy brown hair and the kind of square-jawed features that Zira associated with the more aggressive humans. The female was much shorter, with dark hair and eyes. The soldiers at the door followed her into the room and gazed at her for a time before they went back outside, and Zira deduced that they found her very attractive. She had never understood human standards of beauty.

"Good morning, Dr. Dixon," the keeper said.

"Morning, Jim. This is my new assistant. Dr. Stephanie Branton. Stevie, meet Jim Haskins. He's a better animal psychiatrist than I am."

The humans chattered together for a long time. Two soldiers brought a desk and some tables into the corridor outside the cages, then brought in crates of apparatus. Zira watched with interest. The equipment was unfamiliar, but ex-

tremely well made, and she felt envy. If she could have had some of her designs built that well. . . .

All three apes watched as the humans set up their apparatus. Dr. Milo was worried; what did these humans intend? Who were their friends and who their enemies?

It was quite possible, he thought, that they would have no friends at all.

Five

Dr. Lewis Dixon watched lazily as the zoo people set up his apparatus. He was by nature a careful man, but not a worrier; there was no point in driving himself crazy about how the chimpanzees got in Colonel Taylor's space capsule. He would find out or he wouldn't, and worrying was not going to help a bit.

He grinned at Stevie, and she smiled back. She had been with his team only about three weeks, and they were already half in love. He even had disturbing thoughts about orange blossoms and weddings. Lewis Dixon had always sworn that he would marry someone outside his profession; somebody with a life of her own, a different kind of career, so that they would have some common interests but different ones too. Stevie was making hash out of all his resolutions. She'd had the same idea, and she wasn't having any more success than he was. He winked at her, and knew she was thinking the same things.

Stevie and Jim carried some of the equipment into the cage. "Female's a little uppity," Jim said. "Slapped me last night. Not hard, though."

"Hey, be careful, Hon," Lewis called.

"I will." Stevie grinned. Lewis thought it a very nice grin. Good teeth. No future dental bills to pay.

The test apparatus was simple. A shade that could be raised and lowered divided a low table. The experimenter sat at one side, and the subject at the other. As Stevie and Jim set it up, Lewis observed the chimps through half-closed eyes.

They'd seen something like this before. He was certain of it. They were almost purposive in their attempts to ignore what Stephanie was doing. Lewis had never seen chimpanzees act that way before. But, he thought, I've never seen chimps wearing full pressure suits either. Or carrying a suitcase full of clothes, if I can believe that Navy flight surgeon. "They had to be trained to work some of the controls of that spacecraft," Lewis said. "May as well make the first tests hard ones. These are probably very intelligent chimps."

"All right," Stephanie called.

"Try the female first," Lewis said. "She keeps watching you. I think she wants to play."

Jim led Zira to the screen. Stephanie lowered the screen to reveal a red cube. She raised the screen and placed a number of other objects with the cube: a red cone, a blue cube, red sphere, etc., then lowered it again. Zira promptly pointed to the red cube.

Stephanie smiled. "Very good." She touched a button in the apparatus, and a compartment on Zira's side opened. It had raisins, and the chimp ate them quickly, smacking her lips.

Lewis entered the cage, whistling softly to himself. "You can forget simple discrimination tests," he said. "Those chimps are trained. Very well trained."

"Sure about the others, Doctor Dixon?" Jim asked.

Lewis nodded. "I was watching them. They reacted when she reached for the cube. These chimps have been exposed to a lot of tests, Jim. We'd better make the next one tough."

"Wonder if they can play games?" Stevie asked. She brushed long soft brown hair away from her eyes and put a hair clip back into place. "Tic-tac-toe? Some chimps can play it."

Lewis shrugged. "That's true. OK."

They set an illuminated game board on the table. Stephanie handed Zira the stylus and nodded as the chimpanzee made a mark in the center square. "She knows the rules all right."

"Try the male," Lewis suggested. Jim took Cornelius by the hand and led him to the table.

Cornelius made a mark in the corner. Zira made another. Then Cornelius. Three moves later, Zira leaped up and held her hands clasped over her head, victorious boxer style. She chattered laughter.

"That settles that," Lewis said. He took raisins from his pocket and gave them to Zira, then a smaller number to Cornelius. "Stevie, I've never heard of chimps who could play Tic-tac-toe by the rules. Not like that, waiting their turn to move—the best I've ever seen is a race to make three in a row. Those are the best trained chimpanzees I've ever *heard* of."

"Is it just training, Lew? Couldn't it be intelligence?"

"It'd be a whole order of magnitude higher than we expect of apes," Lewis Dixon said. "OK. Let's find out. Kroeger's test."

"Sure." Stephanie helped him attach a banana to the ceiling. The ladder was removed from the cage. Then several boxes and a stick were laid on the cage floor.

The three chimps stared at the boxes, up to the banana, and out to Lewis and Stevie.

"Maybe they aren't hungry," Jim said. "Fed 'em a lot last night."

"I think they're too stupid," Lewis said. "They were only trained, not intelligent. As I thought."

Zira snorted. One of the other chimps squalled. Zira looked at the boxes for a moment, then attached two together. She added others until they formed a staircase, and, with the pole, would let her reach the banana. Zira climbed to the top of the box, used the stick to touch the fruit, and climbed back down again.

"But why didn't she get it?" Stevie asked.

Zira turned to the girl. "Because I loathe and detest bananas." Her voice was very clear and carefully controlled.

Cornelius shouted: "Zira!"

Stephanie sat very carefully at the desk outside the cage.

"You all right?" Lewis asked. His own legs felt a little rubbery.

"Sure. It surprised me, that's all. I don't know why. It's only a chimpanzee speaking English. We did hear that, didn't we, Lewis?" She continued to sit at the desk.

"We surely did," Lewis said. He turned to the chimps. "Can *all* of you talk?"

There was no answer at first. Then Zira said, "Of course we can. The others don't want to while you're here. Will you leave us alone for a minute?"

"Ye gods!" Lewis said. He motioned to the keeper who was standing as if carved from stone. They left the cage, locking it carefully behind them. "Come on, Stevie," Lewis said.

"Do you think it is wise to leave them?" she asked. She struggled to her feet, surprised at how hard it was to stand.

"Yes. Now come on." He put his arm around her waist as they went out the door at the end of the hall. The door closed behind them.

There was a long silence. "They may be listening to us," Cornelius said at last.

"Nonsense," Zira snorted. "If they knew how to make it possible to listen to us, they already knew we could talk. It is time we told them everything."

Milo studied Zira's face intently as he said, "Zira, are you mad?"

"Dr. Milo, please do not call my wife mad."

"I did not call her mad, Professor Cornelius. I merely asked her if she had gone mad. And I repeat the question. Zira, are you mad?"

"No. But I hate deceit."

"So do I," Milo replied. "But there is a time for truth and a time, not for lies, but for silence. Until we know who is our friend and who is our enemy—"

"And how in God's name do we find out if we won't communicate?" Zira demanded. "We can speak. So I spoke."

"We can also listen," Milo said.

"No longer," Cornelius reminded them. "Besides, did you not see the interest Dr. Lewis took in us? He already suspected something. He goaded Zira into making that staircase. With words. Already he half expected her to understand him. And Milo, what do we hear when we listen? A lot of psychiatric small talk."

"We can also observe—"

"A display of primitive apparatus."

"Primitive?" Zira gave the table a vicious kick. "It's prehistoric. This junk wouldn't test the intelligence of a newt." She kicked the display again, and a leg fell off the table.

"Zira, for God's sake, be calm," Cornelius protested.

"I *am* calm." She continued to kick the apparatus. "Why should I be upset? Our world is gone. We're trapped here among primitive humans, possibly the only intelligent apes in the universe, and we're locked in a cage that stinks of gorilla! Why shouldn't I be calm? I *am* calm!" She delivered another vicious kick.

"Now you've disturbed Milo," Cornelius said, fighting to remain calm himself.

Milo screwed his clenched fists into his eyes as he paced in frustration. He walked as far from the other two as he could, until he was stopped by the bars separating their cage from the gorilla. Then he faced them angrily. "For God's sake, stop fighting! It's too late anyway. Now they know. We've got to think what we ought to tell them."

"You don't have to shout at me!" Zira snapped.

"I am NOT SHOUTING!" Milo shouted. He shook himself. More quietly, he said "Use your heads and start thinking."

"Milo, look out!" Cornelius shouted. He rushed forward, but not in time. The gorilla in the next cage had reached through the bars and seized Milo. It held him against the bars and laughed.

"MILO-O-O-O!" Zira screamed. "Milo! Cornelius, help him!"

The door opened and Lewis Dixon came in. He saw the situation and shouted to the keeper. "Get your pistol, Jim! Quick!" Dixon rushed forward to the gorilla cage and began

to open the door. He waved to distract the gorilla, shouted, anything to make it release the chimpanzee. It did nothing, but continued to hold Milo, squeezing tighter, not moving.

"He's killing him!" Zira shouted. The two chimpanzees were trying to pull the gorilla's hands away from Milo's throat. "We're not strong enough!"

Jim Haskins came up with a .32 automatic. He looked on in confusion.

"Shoot, Jim!" Dixon commanded.

"That's a valuable animal," Haskins protested. He stood there, paralyzed.

"Damn it, so are the chimps!" Dixon screamed. "Shoot the damned gorilla!"

Jim shuffled about in indecision. The two Marines had rushed into the room and stood outside the cage, uncertain of what to do.

"Shoot the gorilla!" Dixon commanded.

One of the Marines raised his rifle. He fired, slowly, three times. Bright splotches appeared on the gorilla's chest. It looked up, surprised, but it did not release Milo.

"Again!" Dixon ordered.

Jim Haskins came into the cage. With a sad look he placed his pistol against the gorilla's head and fired. The shot was not very loud after the blast of the Marine's rifle.

The gorilla convulsed and staggered backward, his grip about Milo's neck relaxed at last.

Milo fell in a shapeless heap. He did not move.

Six

Dr. Lewis Dixon walked along with the white-coated attendants carrying away the body of the chimpanzee the others called "Milo." Lewis grimaced involuntarily as he looked at the strangled body, and glanced up at Stevie. She was ashen, and still shaking.

"We'll need a full dissection," Lewis said. He kept his voice deliberately low so that the other chimps wouldn't hear.

"Yes," Stephanie said. "With a great deal of attention to the temporal lobes and speech centers."

"But don't start just yet," Lewis continued. "Don't disturb anything until we can get the gross anatomy. Keep him in cold storage until I can get there."

"Yes, sir." The attendants went out of the hospital wing of the zoo, and Lewis took Stephanie's hand. He led her back to the chimpanzee cage. The door stood open, and they went inside.

Zira sat huddled against Cornelius. She sobbed against his shoulder, as Cornelius gently stroked her back.

"We mean you no harm," Lewis said. There was no response from the apes. "Do you understand? We mean you no harm."

Zira looked up in rage. She pointed to the dead gorilla in the next cage.

"But he isn't us," Lewis protested. "He's your own kind."

"He's a gorilla," Zira snapped. She leaped to her feet. "They're all alike, killers. We are not gorillas!"

"I'm sorry," Lewis said. "I meant he's of your own *genus*. He's an ape. Anyway, you needn't be afraid of him any longer. The army men shot him."

"Poetic justice," Cornelius said.

"I beg your pardon?" Lewis said automatically. He winced slightly at the thought of begging an ape's pardon. "I don't think I understood."

"In—uh, our world," Cornelius said, "gorillas *are* the army."

"And humans are their usual enemies," Zira finished.

"Zira!" Cornelius warned.

Lewis and Stephanie looked at the apes in astonishment. "Perhaps you had better explain that," Lewis said.

"They called you both 'Doctor'," Zira said. "Are you medical people?"

"We specialize in animal behavior," Stevie said. "I'm a psychologist. Lewis is a psychiatrist."

"So am I," Zira said.

The two humans stepped back as if struck. Finally Lewis said, "All right. If you say so."

"The question is," Zira asked, "do you have the same professional customs as we? Are doctor-patient conversations always confidential?"

"Yes," Lewis said. Stevie nodded.

"And are we your patients?" Zira continued.

Lewis looked thoughtful. "I've never thought of professional ethics as involving animal patients," he said carefully. "But yes. Of course. Stevie?"

She nodded, the skin around her blue eyes creased with tiny lines. She looked puzzled, but said nothing.

"Certainly," Lewis repeated. "And we still mean you no harm."

"We realize that," Cornelius said.

"But—" Zira protested.

"Nonsense, my dear. What have we to lose? We must trust someone. Why not our physicians?"

"That's better," Lewis said. Jim Haskins came back into the hospital wing, but Lewis waved him out. He waited until they were alone again. "Do you have a name?" he asked.

"My name is Cornelius. This is Zira, my wife." The chimpanzee extended his hand. Automatically Lewis took it, as Stephanie shook hands with Zira.

"I'm Lewis. Lewis Dixon. And this is Stephanie Branton. Tell me, uh, Cornelius, where *do* you come from?"

Cornelius looked helplessly at Zira. She shrugged. He looked back to Lewis and shrugged also. "Dr. Milo knew—"

"Doctor?"

"Yes. And you killed him," Zira said bitterly.

"Nonsense, dear. The gorilla killed him. Irrational accusations aren't going to help." Cornelius's voice was stern.

Lewis felt sweat break out across his brow. Despite his guaranteed *Stay-DriEST* deodorant, he did not feel secure at all. He loosened his collar and fanned himself with the lapels of the white lab coat. He was too warm in the coat, but it was his symbol of authority here, and he didn't want to take it off. Even as he fanned himself he knew he was using the coat as a security blanket and wanted to laugh at himself. "Didn't Dr. Milo tell you where he thought you came from?" Lewis asked.

The apes looked at each other and said nothing.

"You can trust us," Stevie said. "Please."

Cornelius smiled, but it wasn't a smile of amusement. "From *our* present—backwards into *yours*."

Lewis growled deep in his throat, startling the chimps. His brow wrinkled. "You mean *time travel*?"

"Yes."

"Nobody's going to believe it. I don't even want to report it."

"I'd prefer you didn't anyway," Cornelius said.

"Nobody's going to believe any of this," Stephanie reminded them.

"Any of what?" Zira demanded.

"That primitive apes can talk," Stephanie said.

"Primitive?" Zira stalked across the cage, stamping her feet. "Primitive!"

"But . . ." Stevie protested.

"What Dr. Branton means," Lewis said, "is that in our 'primitive' civilization, apes just don't talk. None of them. And I think perhaps it will be best if we arrange it so that when you do talk for public benefit, you do it for the, uh, 'right people'."

"I see." Cornelius laughed softly. "We had something of the same problem in our, uh, time."

Zira leaned against her husband and looked searchingly at the humans. Finally she smiled. "Can I say something else in confidence?"

Lewis returned the smile. "Certainly. Please do."

"I like you."

"Why, thank you."

"I did from the beginning," Cornelius said. "Both of you. I hope all humans are as pleasant as you are."

Stevie looked worriedly from one chimpanzee to the other. "Don't count on it," she said. Her pretty mouth was drawn tightly, and her face was a mask. "Don't count on it at all."

"What do you mean?" Cornelius asked.

She grimaced. "Wait until you meet the 'right people'."

"Stevie," Lewis protested. "That's hardly fair. I would prefer you didn't let your political beliefs intrude in this."

"Aren't you letting yours get in the way of your professional judgment?" Stevie asked. "Let's not fight, Lewis. But I'm scared. I really am."

Seven

Long curling waves rolled onto the white sandy beach outside the Western White House. The blue green of the Pacific and the brilliant white of the sand blended together as the curlers came ashore with crashing foam. Sailboats scudded past far offshore.

The president stood at his window and looked out at the bright sunshine and sea. This view always made him sigh because he couldn't go out in a small sailboat. The Secret Service men had nearly fainted at the thought, and by the time they had outlined their security provisions, with trailing motor boats, life jackets, a trained Navy diver on the sailboat as crew, and all the rest, he knew it wouldn't be any fun. The president sighed again and turned from the window to his aide. "You can show them in," he said.

They filed in: General Brody, White House Chief of Staff; three Deputy Chiefs to represent the Services; his press secretary; the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, who was also his principal political advisor, as the Postmaster General had once been. The president wrinkled his nose in wry amusement and distaste. Everyone was horrified at the idea that the head of the Post Office might be a political

hack with no knowledge of the mail, only skill at winning elections, and they had handed the Post Office over to the professionals. Strangely, though, the mails were faster and more efficient, and certainly cheaper, back when the Postmaster General was a politician.

The last man to come in was Dr. Victor Hasslein, Science Advisor. The president didn't like Dr. Hasslein very much. He was one of those tall, thin, tweedy types, the kind who had intimidated the president when he was at college, and although most professors had changed their image since those years, Hasslein never did. He remained a typical scientist, with little understanding of politics, which, to the president, meant people. That was all there was to politics, so far as he was concerned. A good politician keeps people happy. A bad one has troubles.

"Please be seated," the president said, but he had to sit before the military people would. He grinned to himself as he thought about that.

"Well," the president said. "We've quite a problem here. General Brody is probably most familiar with the latest details; perhaps, General, you'll summarize for the others?"

"Yes, sir." Brody cleared his throat. "As most of you know, we had a Yellow Alert in SAC yesterday. An unidentified object re-entered without previous orbital trace, and impacted about ten miles from here. Naturally SAC didn't like it and sent out the EWO. However, the object proved to be a United States NASA manned spacecraft, one of the two presumed lost in deep space over a year ago. To be exact, this was the one commanded by Colonel Taylor."

The press secretary looked up sharply. "Sir?"

"Please wait," the president said. "General, if you'll continue."

"Yes, sir. Well, the spacecraft seemed to be under command. Piloted. The Navy very creditably recovered it after it splashed—good work, Admiral." There was a pause as everyone nodded at the admiral. "And we recovered the astronauts

on board a Navy carrier. They were in good health when we got them."

"Amazing," the Army representative said. He looked over at the Air Force deputy. "Zeke, was Taylor alive after all that time?"

"It wasn't Colonel Taylor," the president said.

"But, sir, General Brody said all three astronauts were alive—and it was Taylor's spacecraft— Good Lord! Who *are* they?"

Brody spoke. "We have only two now. One was unfortunately killed this morning in an accident at the Los Angeles Zoo."

"Zoo?" Dr. Victor Hasslein had listened patiently, although it was obvious that someone was playing games. Now, however, his patience was exhausted. "Would it be too much to ask what astronauts were doing at a zoo?"

"They were not astronauts," the President said slowly. "They were apes."

"Apes?" Hasslein leaned forward, his eyes narrowing. He looked around the table. The press secretary was shocked. So was the Army man, but not the other service reps. They had been briefed by their subordinates, which meant that this wasn't all that secret, and couldn't be kept secret forever. "Apes," Hasslein said again. I will not, he thought, let them see they've intrigued me. I will give them no points in this silly game.

"Chimpanzees, to be precise," the president said.

"Ah. Chimpanzees," Hasslein said, as if that explained everything. Now the others looked curiously at him, but he said nothing else. Inwardly, he smiled.

"General," the president prompted.

"Yes, sir," Brody answered. "So. They are, by our preliminary reports, harmless, friendly, and highly intelligent, as one might expect of animals enployed in an astronautical experiment. Their clothing and gear is either simply equipment from the Taylor inventory adapted for use by apes, or is of a design and construction we cannot identify. Certainly not standard."

Brody glanced at his notes. "There have been no major

modifications of the capsule. We have no clue as to what launched it a second time, but there are definite indications that it was previously landed. The few traces of soil and other materials contaminating the capsule are confusing and their source has not been identified. Meanwhile, we have no notion of the source of these apes, nor of the fate of Colonel Taylor and his crew."

"Someone interfered with the mission," Victor Hasslein said thoughtfully.

"You state that as a scientific conclusion, Victor?" the president asked.

"I state it as an obvious conclusion, Mister President. We lost track of the Taylor capsule, but it was certainly not headed for re-entry at the time it vanished from the screens. Now it reappears, dramatically, and with no previous trace, so that SAC is alerted. And inside are—chimpanzees. Inhabitants of earth, with untraceable clothing. Even the mud stains make no scientific sense. It is fairly obvious that these chimpanzees did not force Colonel Taylor to land, nor did they remove him from his ship, adapt his clothing to themselves, and re-launch. Of course someone has interfered with our mission. The only question is who."

"Russians," the Air Force deputy said. He said it firmly. Navy nodded.

"You don't know that, gentlemen," the president said carefully. "What if the Soviets are as curious as we? And as mystified?"

"You've asked them?" the Army demanded. He gulped. "Sir?"

The president smiled. "General, if they were involved, they'd know, wouldn't they?"

"Huh? Yes, sir—"

"And if they weren't, why not ask them?" the president continued. "I'm in favor of security when it can help us, but it can be carried too far. In fact, I see no threat to our national security from releasing this story to the whole world. Can any of you give me a good reason why I shouldn't?"

"Only that the press can often interfere with a scientific in-

vestigation," Hasslein said carefully. "And surely, Mister President, such an investigation is required? I assume we do want to know what happened to our astronauts?"

The service representatives nodded vigorously. "Damn right," the Air Force man said. He slammed his fist against the table. "Taylor was a good man, and he was *our* man. By God we'll find out what happened to him!" The others murmured approval.

It is obvious what they are thinking, the president said to himself. They are good men, but not rational when it comes to something like this. Taylor was their man. They were prepared to have him killed in action against an enemy, or lost in a scientific experiment, but not to something mysterious at the hands of an unknown enemy.

I can't even disagree very strongly. Besides, I want to know what happened myself. Possibly not for the same reasons that they do, but I want to know. "We'll make a thorough inquiry," the president assured them. "Dr. Hasslein, I'll ask you to submit to me a list of persons who ought to be on a commission of inquiry. A Presidential Commission. Scientists, and at least two members of Congress—one from the Armed Forces Committee. I think the Joint Chiefs can give you a recommendation there."

"A Presidential Commission," Hasslein said. "Yes, sir."

"You are less than enthusiastic. What better way to handle it?"

"The National Security Agency—"

"No," the president said firmly. "I have great confidence in the NSA people, but this is far beyond their talents. I want some really top scientific talent on this, Dr. Hasslein. The implications of this event are astonishing to begin with. Particularly the last report from that UCLA chap. He implies that these apes can talk!"

Everyone looked up at the president. Hasslein snorted.

"All right, I don't believe it myself," the president assured them. "But I want you to look into this personally, Victor. Have the two surviving apes examined by the Commission. Meanwhile they will remain in the technical custody of the

Navy, and under the supervision of that UCLA chap, uh, Dixon. Victor, Dr. Dixon should be a member of the Commission; see to it, will you? And help Monty write up the White House press release on all this. The news people are going to find this very interesting, I think."

Interesting, Hasslein thought. He sat in his quarters in the Western White House and watched the TV newscasts. There were five TV sets in his room, and among them he could get nearly any nation's broadcasts. He watched BBC now.

A thin, pasty-faced chap with a flower in his buttonhole and orange piping on the lapels of his Seville Row suit was trying not to smile as he read copy.

"One of two Yank spacecraft, both previously thought to have disintegrated in orbit, has mysteriously reappeared. According to American sources, this craft—"

The voice broke off and the man vanished. A shot of Taylor's lifting-body ship appeared on the screen. "—landed in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Southern California yesterday afternoon. It is stated in the American dispatches that the spacecraft was manned—" the young man came back on screen and curled his lip—"by monkeys."

Victor angrily changed channels. It was worse in other countries. The "silly season," too early for baseball news, too hot for anything else; and the newsmen were having a field day. They mocked science itself, and the thought made Hasslein furious. What responsibilities did those chattering magpies ever have? They didn't have to know anything, they could simply blame him and his colleagues for not knowing.

The local Los Angeles station was worst of all. A long-haired newscaster broke up as he read the copy. "U.S. LOST SPACECRAFT HIJACKED BY APE-ONAUTS!"

Hasslein angrily switched off the sets and stared at the blank screens in silence. "We'll soon find out what really happened," he muttered. "And when we do, maybe I can cram it down your laughing throats."

And yet, he thought, what was the president being coy about? He lifted the telephone. "General Brody, please."

The White House operator took only moments to connect him.

"Yes, Dr. Hasslein?" Brody said.

"General, what was the report the president didn't discuss with us? The one he said he didn't believe himself?"

"If the boss wouldn't tell you, do you think I will?" Brody said. "Sorry, Dr. Hasslein, but I've got my responsibility to the president."

"Certainly. However, you realize I will find out shortly. I do not like to be—unprepared. I can make my own inquiries at UCLA, but I prefer that you spare me that effort."

"Hmm." The phone was quiet for a long period. Finally Brody spoke into the silence. "I'll tell you this much, doctor. Those apes may be far more intelligent than we thought. That's all I'll say."

"All right."

"Anything else? Brody out." The phone went dead.

Victor Hasslein stretched his long thin arm across the room to return the phone to its cradle. He smiled faintly; the action of his arm resembled that of a machine, as did all his precise gestures. Newsmen sometimes called him that, the human computer, and Victor didn't despise the title; at least they said human. When he was a boy, he had read story after story about computers taking over earth and making mankind useless. He took them seriously, and he had specialized in science; first in computers, then, when he realized that there was something far more basic, in solid-state physics. He knew what made computers tick. He knew how to program them, and how to destroy them. They would not become man's masters, not so long as men like Victor Hasslein existed.

But it would take work, he knew. Hard work. It would be very simple to allow the machines to design new machines, to let things become so complex that no human understood them; and then? But he understood them now, and he had the most powerful position of any scientist in the world. He guarded the fortress of civilization: for man.

What of the apes? The thought came unwanted, and Vic-

tor Hasslein smiled to himself. Chimpanzees. Apes. Hardly a threat to mankind. No matter how intelligent they were, they remained apes. They could not really think. Like computers, they could only be trained.

Eight

It was hot in the small anteroom. In the main theatre of the Los Angeles Federal Building, the Commissioners and their assistants, the press, the curious, and those who had found enough influence to gatecrash, were cramming themselves into a room designed to hold fewer than half that number.

The smell of hundreds of humans packed closely together was making the chimpanzees nervous, and that disturbed Lewis Dixon. He looked at Stevie but she could only shrug helplessly. "Turn up the air conditioning, will you?" Lewis asked.

"Sure, Hon." Stephanie went to the thermostat by the door. She could hear a low murmur outside: people, a buzz of conversation, no single thought coming through. Just people, in masses. She had always been nervous around masses and crowds, and she thought she knew how the chimpanzees must feel. She turned to put a hand on Zira's. "You'll be all right."

"I hope so." Zira shuddered. "There are a lot of humans out there—"

"And every one of them can talk intelligently," Lewis said.

"Or thinks he can. And most of them, whether they're intelligent or not, are certainly influential. You ready?"

Cornelius nodded. So did Zira. Stephanie smiled. "You'll be great."

"Remember," Lewis said. "When I give the cue, start slowly with simple answers to what will certainly be simple questions. Let them get the idea themselves. Don't just shock them with it."

"All right," Cornelius said. He smiled in amusement, and looked at his wife.

"And if the questions become less simple?" Zira asked innocently.

"Just be yourself," Lewis said.

Cornelius chuckled. He raised his leathery forefinger and shook it at Zira. "Your *better* self, my dear. Please." They all laughed.

"Dr. Dixon," a speaker overhead called. "The Commission is ready, Dr. Dixon."

"Let's go," Lewis said. "Stephanie?"

"Right." They each lifted a chain: Dixon's was attached to Cornelius's collar, and Stevie's to Zira's. "Sorry about these," Stevie said. "They weren't my idea."

"Nor mine," Dixon added. "But necessary."

"Phooh," Zira snorted. "What do they think we are? Gorillas?"

"Shhh," Stevie warned. "OK, let's go."

The stage was large, and they crossed it carefully. The chimpanzees were dressed; business suit for Cornelius, and a lady's equivalent, knitted skirt suit and blouse, for Zira. The outfits did not match those of Lewis and Stevie, and the apes were as well dressed as the commissioners.

Four chairs stood at the center of the stage. Lewis led his charges there, and invited them to be seated. Zira and Stephanie sat, after which Cornelius took his seat, then finally Lewis Dixon. They looked around the large hall with curious eyes.

"My fellow commissioners," Lewis thought. He knew most of them. Victor Hasslein, the president's pet warthog—but a damned brilliant physicist and general systems analyst all the same. Dr. Radak Hartley, zoologist and Chairman of the De-

partment of Zoology, Harvard, titular Chairman of the Commission, although Lewis knew that to be a joke. Hasslein would have more power than old Hartley. All Hartley's work, including his Nobel Prize, was done a long time ago.

Cardinal MacPherson. Strange name for a Catholic prelate, Lewis thought. No fool, either. Jesuit. The Jesuits almost dominate the biological sciences. And the others, scientists, lawyers, senators and congressmen.

Beyond the commissioners were seats for other VIP's. The mayor and city council of Los Angeles. Zoo commissioners. Press people. More congressmen; nearly every local LA state and national legislator had come. Anyone with influence enough to get in was present. There was a murmur of approval from the audience as the chimps sat carefully and watched everything, looked intelligently at everyone. There were also a few nervous glances. These men and women weren't used to being stared at by anyone, certainly not by apes.

"You may begin," Dr. Hartley said. "Are you ready, Dr. Dixon?"

"Yes, sir." Lewis stood and addressed the commissioners, but he kept an eye toward the press people out in the audience. They and the VIP's were together as important as the Commission—perhaps more so—and it was vital that the chimpanzees get sympathetic treatment.

"My fellow commissioners," Lewis began. "And ladies and gentlemen. Most of you know me, but allow me to introduce myself anyway." He saw the cameras above were rolling. The networks hadn't been permitted in, and these films were going to be enormously valuable. They ought to belong to the chimps—if they didn't, perhaps they could be used to get some appropriations for UCLA. If Dixon's department had the money, the chimpanzees would be insured good treatment, even if they legally couldn't own anything themselves.

"My name is Dr. Lewis Dixon, and I'm a psychiatrist specializing in animal research. I have been in charge of these two apes since they arrived at the Los Angeles Zoological Gardens five days ago. You all know the spectacular way they arrived."

There were murmurs of agreement and a few laughs. Lewis continued quickly while he still had audience sympathy and curiosity. "The young lady is Dr. Stephanie Branton, my assistant. Between us we have made some amazing discoveries about these apes, and we want to prepare you for a shock. Dr. Branton and I will answer any questions you may care to address to us, but I doubt you'll have many for us. You see, our chimpanzee friends are perfectly capable of answering for themselves."

"What ... Sam, is he serious? ... You know, I always knew young Dixon was going to flip one day ... Id-iot ... Jesus, suppose it's true?" Lewis heard. There were other murmurs and comments, and a moment of confusion.

"I assure you it is true," Lewis said. "They will not answer with signs, or looks, or symbols, or anything of that sort. They can talk. As well as you or I."

That got dead silence. Finally, old Dr. Hartley rose from his seat and stared at Lewis. "Young man, I've admired your publications—but that does not give you the right to make jokes here. This is a Presidential Commission of Inquiry, and I have no intention of seeing it become a ventriloquist act!"

"Nor I, sir," Lewis said quickly. "These apes can speak. Test it for yourself. Ask them something."

There was nervous laughter, picked up by the audience until everyone was laughing, but it had a hollow quality. Lewis noticed that Victor Hasslein did not even smile.

"I take it," Dr. Hartley said, "that the one in skirts is female?"

Zira stood and nodded toward the Commission. Hartley frowned. "Did she rise at some cue from you, Dr. Dixon? Or in response to my question?"

"That is for you to decide," Lewis said.

"I see. You, young, uh, female. Have you a name?" Hartley looked as if he'd been sucking lemons. The thought of addressing questions to a chimpanzee upset him; the thought of having people watch him do it was torture.

"Zira," Zira answered. She stood, waiting, saying nothing else, as the audience tittered.

"I see," Hartley said. "Certainly she can articulate. Better,

perhaps, than any chimp I have ever heard. But, Dr. Dixon, are we to infer that, uh, 'Zira' is her name, or some word or phrase in her own language that indicates affirmative or negative or some such?"

"Again," Lewis said, "I invite you to find out for yourself, Mr. Chairman. And I assure you that she is capable of answering. Perhaps you phrased the question improperly?"

"Very well. Young female. What *is* your name?"

"Zira."

"I see. One might as well speak to a parrot. Except that a parrot would answer something else. Polly, perhaps." Hartley laughed, and the tension broke slightly. Others laughed.

"Polly?" Zira demanded.

There was another outburst of laughter. "Well," Dr. Hartley said. "The mimic power is very well developed, Dr. Dixon. I assume they have a vocabulary of their own, or you wouldn't have called it speech. Very well developed mimicry. Unique in an ape. Does the other one talk as well?"

Cornelius stood. "Only when she lets me," he said carefully.

Zira laughed and reached for Cornelius's hand.

The audience began to applaud. Dr. Hartley sank to his seat, where he sat and stared evilly at Lewis Dixon. I've made no friend in him, Lewis thought. Too bad, but I don't see how it could have been avoided. I tried to warn him. He looked up to see Dr. Hasslein staring at the chimpanzees.

He knows, Lewis thought. Cornelius's answer shows everything in one line. Urbane, witty, responsive to a question not directed to him, humor; whatever intelligence is, if you've got that much moxy, you've got intelligence. Hasslein looks as if he's swallowed a frog and now has to have at a big spider. What's so horrible about ape intelligence to him?

Congressman Boyd stood. "Dr. Dixon, what is the male's name, please."

"Cornelius. Cornelius, this is Congressman Jason Boyd, of the House Science and Astronautics Committee."

"I am pleased to meet you, Congressman Boyd," Cornelius said. "I would offer to shake hands, but the chain is not long enough."

There was laughter in the room. Nervous laughter. "Yes," Boyd said. He rubbed his balding, coal black forehead. "May I say that I apologize for the chains? Dr. Dixon, somehow the sight of chained intelligent creatures disturbs me. It brings memories that perhaps you don't share, nor do I, directly, but—"

"They weren't my idea, Congressman," Lewis said.

"Or mine," Cornelius added. Everyone laughed. "But we understand. Where we come from, apes talk and humans are dumb animals. We shouldn't care to face such creatures unless they were restrained, and we can hardly blame you for having the same prejudices."

"Thank you," Boyd said. "Mister Cornelius, what is your relationship with Zira?"

Zira answered before Cornelius could speak. "He is my lawfully wedded spouse."

"Hmm." Heads turned toward Cardinal MacPherson. The elderly Jesuit started. "Please excuse me."

"Do you find the concept of marriage among apes amusing?" Boyd demanded.

MacPherson chuckled. "Not amusing, Congressman. Startling, perhaps. Intriguing. After all, there are varying degrees of matrimony, at least varying degrees of recognition of the state. I wonder which concept she means—but later, later. Please continue, Mister Boyd."

Boyd obviously would like to start a fight with the Cardinal, Lewis thought. Wonder why? Maybe the Catholics aren't too popular in Boyd's district. Wouldn't be, now that I think of it. They're mostly Baptists there. But that's no call to—

"Mister Cornelius," Boyd was saying. "Do you or your, uh, wife speak any language other than English?"

Cornelius frowned. "What is English?" he asked. The audience murmured comments Lewis didn't hear, and Victor Hasslein frantically scribbled notes. "I speak the language taught me by my father and mother," Cornelius continued. "They were taught it by their fathers and mothers. This has been the language of my ancestors for at least two thousand years. As to its origins—I don't know. I am surprised to find that *you* speak it. Are there other human languages?"

"Several," Boyd said drily.

"Now I am curious," Cardinal MacPherson said. "And surely *you* have curiosity?"

Cornelius nodded. Zira looked at the aged clergyman with interest.

"Did you never wonder where your language came from?" the Cardinal asked. "I, for one, am very curious as to how a single language, English, became universal among your species."

"Not merely our species, sir," Cornelius said. "Gorillas and orangutans also speak our language. In fact, the gorillas and orangutans in my community believe—believed—that God created apes in His own image, and that our language was given us by Him."

The Cardinal is a bit shook by that, Lewis thought. Cagey old bird. Doesn't show much. But that ought to have got to him. Hasslein's still making notes. He seemed awfully interested in that hesitation of Cornelius's. It won't take him long to figure out where/when they're from, I suspect.

"Of course, that's all nonsense, dear," Zira said firmly.

"I'd expect the Cardinal to second *that* thought," Congressman Boyd said. He looked puzzled as he examined the apes.

"*I* expect you to leave the theology of the Church to the Church's theologians," MacPherson snapped. He turned to the apes. "I would keep that opinion on a tight rein, were I you, Cornelius. There are some Fundamentalists who will find it far more upsetting than I will—"

Zira wasn't finished. "Chimpanzees are intellectuals," she said loudly. "And as an intellectual, Cornelius, you know damned well that the gorillas are a bunch of militaristic nincompoops and the orangutans a gaggle of blinkered, pseudoscientific idea-infatuated geese. As to humans, I've dissec . . ." she caught herself abruptly. "Excuse me. I have examined thousands of humans and until now I have discovered only two who could talk in my whole life. God knows who taught them."

"I expect He does," Cardinal MacPherson said. "Who were the two humans you knew who could talk? And precisely where is this place, where apes speak, gorillas make war,

orangutans dream ineffectually, chimpanzees are intellectuals, and humans cannot speak at all?"

"That is a very good question, Your Eminence," Victor Hasslein seconded. "I should like very much to hear the answer."

"We aren't sure," Cornelius said.

"But at that place, it is as His Eminence put it in his excellent summation? Apes speak and humans do not?" Hasslein insisted.

"Yes," Zira said.

"But you do not know where this place is," Hasslein continued. The room was very quiet now. Lewis watched, fascinated, reminded of a serpent stalking a small bird.

"I'm not sure," Cornelius said.

"Dr. Milo was sure," Zira said. A large tear formed in each eye and she wiped them, furtively.

"Dr. Milo was a genius far in advance of his time," Cornelius said. He stood and went to place an arm across Zira's shoulder, then faced the Commission. "We did not enjoy a mechanically dominated civilization such as yours," he said. "We did not have the energy sources, for one difference. Certainly there was nothing resembling space flight. Yet, when that spacecraft first landed intact on our seacoast, Dr. Milo was able to salvage it, and through study, repair it. In the end he half understood it."

"Half," one of the commissioners said. "Was 'half' enough?"

"It was." Cornelius looked up in anger. His voice hardened. "Enough for us to escape when war became inevitable. Enough to repair the spacecraft and adapt the survival equipment. Enough for us to survive to land here, where he was murdered in your zoo, and enough for us to be standing here where we can be insulted by you. Quite enough, I think."

"Please accept our apologies," Cardinal MacPherson said quickly. "We did not intend to insult you. I wonder if you can understand our surprise, though?"

"I think so," Cornelius said. "I'm sorry I lost my temper."

"I add my apologies," Hasslein said softly. "But please,

Cornelius, where did you come from? Did none of you know? Not even Dr. Milo?"

"He knew," Cornelius said. "He believed we came from—from your future."

There was silence. The commissioners stared at each other. Then the audience became restive. There were murmurs and comments, and the chairman pounded for order. Eventually there was quiet again. Dr. Hartley looked at Cornelius and said, "That does not make sense, sir."

"It is the only thing that does!" Hasslein smacked the arm of his chair with his open palm. "The only thing!" He looked up, realized the others were staring at him. "Please excuse me."

"You spoke of war," a new voice said.

"Senator Yancey," Lewis said. "Armed Forces Committee. Senator, Cornelius and Zira."

"Yes. You spoke of war. War between whom?" Yancey insisted.

Cornelius sighed. "Between our army—all gorillas—between the gorillas and whoever lives—uh, lived—will live? I have trouble with the tenses. Between the army and the inhabitants of the tunnels and caves of the territory next to our."

"And you don't know who they were?" Yancey insisted.

"No, sir."

"Who won that war?" Yancey asked.

Zira interrupted before Cornelius could answer. "How the devil would we know? Chimpanzees are pacifists. We stayed at home. May I ask you something? Would you care to be here, chained, thirsty, under these very hot lights, watching us drink water while you had none?"

"Good heavens!" Dr. Hartley exclaimed. He gestured, and two attendants took a pitcher of water and glasses to the chimpanzees. They drank thirstily. Lewis and Stephanie were not offered water, and Lewis winked at Stevie. She winked back.

"So you don't know who won the war," Yancey insisted. "Surely you must have heard reports—"

"No, sir," Cornelius said. "We assisted Dr. Milo in his

work to repair the spacecraft. Then we left. Somehow we ended here. Now."

"Can you explain that?" Hasslein asked eagerly.

"No, sir. Dr. Milo had a theory, perhaps, but he never explained it to us. I know that before he died that night he was scribbling complex mathematics on the floor of our cage—"

"Where are those equations?" Hasslein demanded. "Dr. Dixon, were they preserved?"

"No sir."

Hasslein sank into his seat, dejected. Then, angrily, he said "Why not?"

"Because," Zira answered, "we were never given writing materials. Dr. Milo was using his finger and water to write on the cement floor. Naturally the writing wouldn't last—"

"Oh," Hasslein said. He brooded.

"About the spacecraft," Senator Yancey said. "It landed in your country. By the sea, you said. What happened to the crew? To Colonel Taylor and his men?"

Zira and Cornelius looked at each other, then back to Yancey. "I don't know," Cornelius said. "The spacecraft was empty when we first saw it."

"And did you know Colonel Taylor?" Yancey insisted. "Did you ever meet him?"

The apes exchanged glances again. "No," Cornelius said evenly. "Is he a soldier?"

"He was an officer of the United States Air Force, an astronaut, and a hero," Yancey said. "And one of the purposes of this Commission is to find out what happened to him."

"We don't know," Zira said. She looked up helplessly. "We are peaceful creatures. I am a psychiatrist, and my husband an archeological historian. We are very tired, and we have been cooperative, but can't you now take these chains off and let us rest? Please?"

There was an instant of silence; then the hall burst into applause. Even Hartley's gavel couldn't silence it until Lewis and Stevie, smiling, had unlocked the collars and thrown the chains to the floor.

Nine

"You were marvelous!" Stevie said. She threw her arms around Zira. Both laughed as they danced around the hospital wing of the zoo. Stevie halted suddenly and looked around. "I'm sorry you're still *here* . . ."

"It's as good a place as any," Cornelius said. "Thank you for the furniture." He indicated the chairs and tables which had been placed in the cage. There was even a small stove in one corner. The door to the next cage, where the gorilla had been, was now open, and bedroom furniture had been placed inside. Cornelius strolled to the corner and turned on the television. "Is this the right way to work this?" he asked.

"Yes." Lewis watched, frowning, as the news programs came on. A local announcer was saying, "Doctor Victor Hasslein had no immediate comment for this reporter, but we understand he will be a special guest on the Big News, in just half an hour. Stay tuned for the Big News. Now—late-breaking sports. The Los Angeles Rams have—"

"That's how to turn it off, too," Cornelius said. "But I do want to watch this Doctor Hasslein."

"We all do," Lewis said. He stood at the cage door. "Well. Aren't you going to invite me in?"

"Eh?" Cornelius said.

"Come in, come in," Zira insisted. "We don't mean to be impolite—but after all, it's your zoo. We don't really think of this cage as our home, Lewis. I'm sorry . . ."

"Very natural, of course," Lewis said. He took a seat without being asked; he was tired, and they'd probably *never* get around to that.

"Have a seat," Cornelius said. Lewis grinned at him and they both laughed.

"They were just marvelous," Stephanie said again. "Weren't they, Lew?"

"Sure, darling." Dixon's voice took on a worried edge. "Fabulous. But there was a moment there when . . ."

"Yes," Zira said.

"Now, let's not think about our difficulties," Cornelius said. "I've just learned about coffee, and I want some. I watched Stevie make it, and I think I know how." He went to the stove and began rattling the percolator.

"He knows," Zira said. "You're not helping, Cornelius. He knows."

"My dear," Cornelius said. "Are you sure we should go into this now?"

"Quite sure," Zira said. "But only to these humans. To—to our physicians. In confidence. This is in confidence, Dr. Dixon?"

"Yes," Lewis said. He was fairly positive of it; no one would bug the hospital section of the zoo, certainly not without Haskins being aware of it, and Haskins had said nothing. "In confidence."

"Why can't you be honest with everyone?" Stevie asked. "With the Commission?"

Cornelius sighed deeply. "I wish we could. I truly do. But—I'm afraid to talk even to you."

"But we will," Zira said. "Sit down, Stevie. Cornelius, stop messing with that pot and come join us. We have to talk to them while we've got the chance."

"I suppose." Cornelius came over to the group—two chimpanzees on one couch, facing two humans on another. All four wore white laboratory coats now. Lewis had thought it a

good joke on the zoo procedure. Haskins would be scandalized.

"But—why not with the Commission?" Stevie asked again.

"Because," Zira said, "truth can often harm the innocent. And I have a very special reason for wanting to survive. At least for a little while. This does have to be secret, Doctors."

"Go ahead," Lewis said.

"No. You tell them, Cornelius."

"We did know Colonel Taylor," Cornelius began. "It is true that the first time we saw the ship, it was empty, but we had seen the crew before that. We came to love Colonel Taylor very much."

"But," Stevie protested, "what possible harm could come from telling the Commission that? Why—"

"Shh," Lewis said. He gently put a finger over her lips. "Please go on, Professor Cornelius."

"Our feelings, our regard for Colonel Taylor was unusual," Cornelius said. "In our time, apes do not—did not—love human beings. They hunted them for sport, as you might hunt animals. They did not always kill them quickly, either."

"Good Lord!" Lewis exclaimed. "Chimpanzees too?"

Zira nodded. "We don't hunt, but we used humans, alive and dead, for experimental animals. Anatomical studies. Medical reactions, drug tests, anything of that sort. Dissection to train medical students."

"Ugh." Stevie swallowed hard. "That's—that's horrible."

"Yes," Lewis nodded. "But we do the same with animals right now. As a scientist I can understand, if humans in their time are only dumb animals, unable to speak or reason . . ."

"We thought they were all that way," Zira said, "until we met Colonel Taylor. He was the first talking human we'd ever known."

"I think," Lewis said slowly, "I think perhaps you were right not to tell them you'd known him. What happened to Taylor, anyway?"

"That was the other reason we didn't tell about him," Cornelius said."

"Yes," Zira added. "They would have asked what happened to him, whether he's still alive."

"And he's dead," Lewis said with finality. He paused a moment and took in a deep breath. "I knew him, you know. Not well, but I worked with him once—you know he's dead, then? Know for sure?"

"Yes," Cornelius answered. "After we achieved orbit, we could see Earth below. From the ship. And we looked down and saw the earth destroyed."

Stevie gasped. Then she looked up at Zira. "You're full of surprises, aren't you? Just what do you mean, the earth destroyed?"

"Just that," Zira replied. "There was a glare and an explosion."

"And Colonel Taylor was down there?" asked Lewis.

"Yes," Cornelius replied. "He—he wasn't able to come with us in the rocket."

"But what did you mean, the world destroyed?" Stephanie insisted.

Cornelius sighed. "Just that. The gorillas wanted possession of a weapon. Something left from the old days. Milo thought that it would destroy the earth if it were used. Evidently someone used it."

"The whole earth," Lewis said. He didn't even hear himself speaking.

"Yes," Cornelius answered. "The whole earth. And now, I think you understand why we were less than frank with your commissioners."

"I still don't like it," Zira said. "I don't like lies and deceit. But what can we do?"

Lewis shrugged. "It's time for Dr. Hasslein." He went over to turn on the television.

"And now the Big News presents Dr. Victor Hasslein," the announcer said. "Dr. Hasslein is the chief science advisor to the president, and insiders know him to be perhaps the most influential scientist in the nation.

"As our Big News viewers know by now, the whole nation is excited about talking chimpanzees. These two apes impressed this reporter, as I am sure they impressed everyone in the room. They answered questions, made jokes, and quite

literally spoke and thought as well as any human. Dr. Hasslein, was that your impression?"

The camera panned from pictures of Zira and Cornelius over to Hasslein's thin features and steel-rimmed glasses. The contrast was startling. "Yes. Although certain members of the Commission seem to harbor residual doubts, I think there is absolutely no question here. These chimpanzees are intelligent by any definition we could rationally put forward."

"And what do you think about that, Dr. Hasslein?" The interviewer leaned forward and gave his famous look of intelligent concern, a look familiar to millions of six o'clock news viewers. "What does this make you feel?"

"Frightened," Hasslein said firmly.

"Why is that?"

Hasslein shrugged. "Anything that completely upsets what we thought were known scientific facts is a bit frightening," Hasslein said smoothly. He smiled as if to show it really wasn't important.

"Would you say that this shows a potential for intelligence in other apes?"

Hasslein shrugged again. "I would think no," he said. "We have, after all, rather thoroughly studied apes, and I think we have established the limits of their intelligence. Apes have been raised in human households, as children might be raised. In one experiment, you may recall, a chimpanzee and a human child of similar ages were raised by the child's parents together as sisters, with absolutely no differences in treatment. Yet, after a few years, the chimpanzee could not speak and had fallen very far behind her human counterpart. No, I think these apes are from a genetically different strain. Quite different."

"I see." The interviewer smiled again to show the audience who was the star of the show. "Now, Dr. Hasslein, when you asked the male ape, uh, Cornelius, where he came from, he replied 'From *your* future.' Do you believe that?"

"Absolutely. It's the only possible explanation," Hasslein answered. He leaned forward to peer intently into the camera, and to the apes watching him on the screen he seemed almost to come into the room.

"He—frightens me," Zira said.

"Well he might," Lewis told her. "But you've got to get along with him. Oh, the entire Commission could probably overrule him, if we wanted to badly enough; but the president listens to Hasslein. Don't blame the president, you understand. Hasslein's brilliant, and he has a talent for explaining complicated subjects to educated laymen. Just remember, you've *got* to get along with him."

"Shh," Stevie said. She put her hand on his lips and grinned. She had been waiting to do that for a while—since Lewis had shushed her.

"I'm afraid, Dr. Hasslein," the interviewer was saying, "that I don't find it at all obvious what the ape meant. How could they be from our future? Is time travel actually possible?"

Hasslein smiled thinly. "Walter, there will be nothing simple about this explanation. I do not myself actually understand time, although I have written papers about its nature, mathematical papers. Men will probably never understand time. Only God can do that. But perhaps I can give an illustration, of something I call infinite regression—"

The interviewer winced, but Hasslein smiled. "It is not that difficult, Walter," he said. "Remember the Morton's Salt Box? On it there is a little girl carrying a box of Morton's salt. On *her* box there is a little girl, also carrying a box of Morton's salt. And so forth, until, of course, the engraver became tired and did not bother to make the actual detailed picture within a picture within a picture . . ."

"I suppose," the interviewer said. He looked sharply at Hasslein, and the look said quite a lot. It said, "Whoever told me this guy knew what he was talking about?"

"The same was true of the old Quaker Oats boxes," Hasslein said. "On those boxes was a man holding a box of Quaker Oats, and so forth. Now, let us see this in a different direction. Let us imagine a landscape painting. In order for it to be realistic, the painter would have to place himself in the painting, would he not? Otherwise something would be missing?"

"Why—yes."

Hasslein smiled. "Excellent. But of course, now, in order for it to be realistic, the painting within the painting would itself have to contain a picture of the artist painting a picture of the artist painting a picture of the landscape. And, in fact, that is not quite realistic either, is it? One would have to regress again. And again, and again—"

"It would never be accurate," the interviewer exclaimed.

"Perhaps not," Hasslein said. "But in order to understand time, you would have to be like the artist who had done an infinite series of such paintings until he had actually succeeded in portraying the scene realistically."

"That's enough to drive you mad," the interviewer said.

Hasslein shrugged. "Perhaps. But let us imagine, then, that we have this capability. That we have made the, ah, infinite regression, and we are both the observers and the observed. And now let us look at time."

"What would we see?" Walter asked.

"We might well see it as an infinity of parallel events, but not always parallel. Science fiction writers once called this, ah, 'fan-shaped' time; from 'now' there stretches forward a large number of alternative pathways. Some come back to the same path. Others lead very far away indeed. And thus, the choices made here determine different futures. In one of these futures, you will leave this building at eight-fifteen, precisely in time to be killed by an automobile which left the parking garage at eight-twelve."

"I think I do not care for that future," Walter said nervously. He laughed.

"Yes, but in another, you may leave here at eight-sixteen, and be perfectly safe," Hasslein said. "Or the automobile does not leave the parking garage until eight-twenty because the driver received a telephone call. Yet, and this is the important point, each of those futures may be as real as any other."

"But we wouldn't experience more than one of those futures, would we, Dr. Hasslein?" the interviewer asked. He was now thoroughly confused.

"Certainly not," Hasslein said. "Yet, each one would be real to the mythical observer who has achieved infinite re-

gression. Now, I do not find it at all hard to believe that these apes have arrived here from one of the possible futures of this planet. To them, that future was very real. But, and I want to stress this, it need not be real to *us*. We can, perhaps, change that future. And indeed, I think it important that we do."

"We'll come back to Dr. Victor Hasslein as the Big News continues following station identification," Walter said. "Now an important message."

"I wish Milo had been here to explain that," Zira said. She looked sadly around the cage.

"I am Chiquita Banana, and I've come to say, Bananas must be ripened in—"

Cornelius flung himself at the set and turned off the sound.

"That's all we needed," Zira said.

"Inappropriate," Lewis agreed. "I suppose I should have expected it."

Cornelius took a bunch of grapes from the table and passed them around. "Have some, dear," he said. He gave Zira most of them. They ate in silence until the commercials were over, and Cornelius turned the sound back on.

"The Big News continues. This reporter will confess that he was impressed by the Ape-onauts, and I certainly applaud the president's decision to transfer them from the Los Angeles Zoo to a hotel. They are no danger to us, and from what I've seen, they will be our friends.

"In other late breaking stories, criminals struck at a Los Angeles Savings and Loan for the third . . ."

Lewis switched off the set. "Congratulations," he told them.

Zira and Cornelius smiled happily. "We won't be sorry to leave," Cornelius said. He looked around the cage, and at the place where Milo died. "We won't be sorry at all."

Ten

Lewis Dixon found the next week unbelievably hectic. First, there was the escorted ride to the Beverly Hills Hotel. The Navy had locked the chimpanzees into a zoo. Now that they were released, Admiral Taylor had been determined to make amends.

He had persuaded a wealthy retired admiral friend to come for the chimpanzees in a chauffered Mercedes. The City of Los Angeles had provided a motorcycle escort. Navy Intelligence provided a bodyguard. And the general public had provided the crowds.

Not only was attendance at the Los Angeles Zoo twice the previous record crowd on the day the chimpanzees were to move, but the whole Griffith Park road system was crowded with sightseers. Los Feliz Boulevard was nearly impassable, so that the motorcade finally had to go out the back way, past Forest Lawn of Hollywood Hills, down Ventura Boulevard and up over Laurel Canyon. These streets were normal enough until the motorcade passed—then people fell in behind, until Dixon and his charges were leading a parade five miles long, and had created the worst clear weather traffic jam in Los Angeles history.

It was as bad at the hotel. Of course the apes weren't used to automobiles in the first place, or escalators, or elevators, or automatically opening doors. All these things confused them. So did doormen with their elaborate uniforms and their deferential attitude.

At the registration desk the clerk had asked the apes for their permanent address.

Cornelius shrugged. So did Dixon. Finally Stevie had said, "If you have to write something, put down the Los Angeles Zoo."

The registration clerk had looked down his aristocratic nose and said calmly, "Madam, the Beverly Hills does not have guests who reside in a zoo." What he wrote was anybody's guess, but the clerk was the only one there who didn't think it funny.

The apes had one of the best suites in the hotel. And that, Lewis thought, was going to be a problem. Sure it was authorized, but it cost more than Dixon's entire department budget. If Lewis could have thought of a way to transfer any of that money to his research, he would have insisted on the apes taking a less expensive place; but there wasn't any way to do it. There was money to put the apes into the best suite of the Beverly Hills, but none for a new electron microscope.

One of these days, the Navy was going to decide not to pay for that suite. And then who would be responsible? Lewis wondered. At least it wasn't a problem now.

There was also the question of the mail and gifts. Hundreds of thousands of letters poured in, and literally thousands of packages. Most of the packages contained toys, balls, art work, decorative jewelry; but they had to be inspected, because some of the people out there had sick minds. Not only were there bombs, but other ugly and disgusting things.

All that mail had to be sorted, and answered, and the people doing that had to be paid. For a while the University of California had undertaken the task, justifying it as a special experimental project; but Lewis didn't think that would last. He sighed. Well, the apes could afford their own help, of course. They could command their own fees for speaking en-

gagements, and Lewis had arranged a few, along with some appearances on TV programs. The fees went into the UC budget system in a special category, the money reserved for the chimpanzees.

"Is that fair?" Stevie had asked.

Lewis shrugged. He hadn't known how to answer her a week ago when she asked, and, he thought, I still don't know. Can chimps legally own money? Would the courts uphold any rights at all? Certainly the university can be trusted to hold onto some of the money for them, and give it to them when they need it. I guess that'll have to do until we find out what legal status these apes have. It hadn't satisfied Stevie and it didn't satisfy him, but it was all the answer Lewis Dixon had.

Lewis had observed the chimpanzees closely as they moved into the hotel. They were obviously unused to technology. The flush toilet had startled Cornelius, and Lewis made a note to inquire what kind of sanitary facilities the apes were used to. The refrigerator had been an even bigger surprise. Cornelius explained that apes packed ice in straw for the winter, much as humans had done when the Americas were first settled. It had been amusing to watch Cornelius play with the refrigerator; he liked to open the door quickly to see if he could fool the light that came on.

"Milo would have been impressed," Cornelius said.

"I doubt it," Lewis told him. "Refrigerators are pretty simple compared to spacecraft. If Milo understood the ship, he would have had no problems with this."

Cornelius shrugged. "Still and all, Lewis, it is a bit overwhelming. Much of this machinery is totally unfamiliar to me, yet I was, after all, an archeological historian. I knew that human civilization had possessed many of these marvels. The humans had also used up nearly all the energy sources so that, no matter how much the ape scientists might know, we simply could not develop a machine civilization again. Not that we really wanted to, you understand."

"I see."

"I have not made my point," Cornelius said. "I meant to

say that I am at least not surprised by the existence of all this; but the same is probably not true for my wife. Oh, certainly, we all knew that humans had machines, and I often spoke of my work to her; but I would not be surprised if she found much of this a bit overwhelming."

And he was certainly right, Lewis Dixon thought. Zira was perpetually startled by this civilization—toothbrushes, which she thought a bit small to use as hairbrushes; high-heeled shoes, which she thought ridiculous. Sometimes, watching her, it was difficult for Lewis to remember that the apes weren't primitive at all; not in the way he was tempted to think. Machinery wasn't everything.

Future shock with a vengeance, Lewis thought. Add to it the knowledge that their world is destroyed and they can never go home. Realize that they are all alone here on Earth and always will be, that there will never be any others of their own kind; and the question is inevitable. Are these chimpanzees quite sane?

I certainly wouldn't be, Dixon thought. The culture shock of this machine civilization would be enough to put me off my hinges. Or knowing I was alone and always would be. Any of it would be enough to drive almost any normal human stark staring mad—yet the apes don't seem very upset at all. They've adjusted to tailors, automobiles, TV, telephones, refrigerators, and flush toilets, and they're still at it. This should make a fascinating book when I have finished with the study.

Another press conference was about to begin. It was the tenth, or eleventh, for the chimpanzees; Lewis Dixon couldn't remember which. The big, important publications had been dealt with, or wanted so much time for depth interviews that scheduling was difficult; now came the turn for the specialty magazines and papers. Lewis and Stevie waited in the living room of the suite until Cornelius led Zira out.

"Hey, you look nice," Lewis said. The first time he had seen Zira in a high-necked maxi-skirt cocktail dress he had been unable to restrain himself, and his laughter had been

embarrassing. The embarrassment hadn't lasted long, though; when Zira modeled the clothes for Cornelius, her husband had found the whole thing even funnier than Dixon had.

Only Stephanie sympathized. Apparently women chimpanzees weren't a lot different from human females when it came to clothing. Stevie hadn't seen anything to laugh about at all.

"How many reporters do we have this time?" Zira asked.

"Not many. Two or three," Lewis said. There was a knock at the door, and when he answered it, a room service waiter came in with a tray of glasses and a bottle of champagne.

"I didn't order this," Lewis said.

"Compliments of the house," the waiter said. "I'll put this second bottle in the refrigerator. The manager thought you might like some refreshments between press conferences."

"Yes, we would, thank you." Lewis took the tray and gave the waiter a tip. He poured for each and raised his glass. "Here's to the most popular apes in the world."

They all lifted their glasses and drank. "Hey, not so much. You sip champagne," Lewis told Zira. "Don't gulp it!"

"It's very good," Zira said. "What is it?"

Dixon shrugged. "Sort of—grape juice plus, I guess. Surely you have had wines?"

"Not this good," Zira said. She took another big swallow of the champagne. "Excellent."

Cornelius led Lewis Dixon to the other side of the ornate suite. "All chimpanzees have a tendency to drink too much alcohol. It seems to be inherited—we do not notice it particularly in orangutans and gorillas, although some gorillas are alcoholics."

"Zira too?" Lewis asked.

Cornelius shrugged. "It is not a real problem. She does not actively seek wine. But, if it is around, she will drink it. So will I."

"I'll keep that in mind," Lewis said. "We'll let this glass be the last."

"Certainly until after the press conference," Cornelius answered. "You may bring the reporters in now."

"Right. Stevie—they're ready."

"Right." Stephanie went to open the door as Cornelius took his place on the couch. He sat at the opposite end from Zira. They looked at each other and grinned.

There were four reporters. One, the only girl, wore an enormous floppy-brimmed picture hat which set off her dark features perfectly. She smiled at the chimpanzees and took a seat. The other reporters found their places. Two had cameras and snapped away at the chimpanzees, and all seemed surprised to see Cornelius in a double-breasted suit with necktie and vest. Zira had worn long dresses on television before, but Cornelius had never been so sharply dressed in public.

"Miss Jeanna Robbins," said Stephanie. "You're with—?"

"*Fur and Feather*," the reporter answered.

Zira frowned. "What kind of magazine is that?"

"Well—" the reporter seemed embarrassed. Finally she giggled. "It's a pet magazine, Madame Zira."

"Hm." Zira smiled maliciously. "Do you think I'm a pet?"

"Why yes, I do, rather."

They all laughed. Zira lifted her glass and drained it of the last of the wine.

"Madam Zira," Jeanna Robbins asked, "what is your favorite fruit?"

Zira smacked her lips. "Grape."

"Bill Cummings, *Men's Hunting and Outdoors*," one of the reporters said. "How do you find our women, Mister Cornelius?"

"Very human? Really, sir, we haven't the same standards of beauty. The question makes no sense."

"No, I don't suppose it does. Do you ever hunt, Mister Cornelius?"

"No." The chimpanzee looked rather sadly at them. "Some apes did, but I don't think I want to tell you about it. It was mostly the gorillas, anyway, and we didn't know many of them, at least not socially."

"A caste society, then?" the third reporter asked. "I'm Joe Simpson, *Ebony*. Which was the lower caste, Mister Cornelius?" The black reporter spoke aggressively.

Cornelius shook his head. "None of them. The gorillas

were—well, they were the army and much of the government was by gorillas, but with the advice of chimpanzees. The chimpanzees were the intellectual class. Not entirely. Orangutans were also teachers, but they are not very practical, Mister Simpson. They prefer to think and to dream."

"Seems pretty racist to me," Simpson said.

Cornelius shrugged. "The differences are observable. Quite real, Mister Simpson. Should we ignore them?"

Lewis cleared his throat. "Perhaps—had you finished, Miss Robbins?"

"No—Madame Zira, I understand you'll address the Bay Area Women's Club tomorrow. Do you have any idea of what you're going to say? I know I won't be able to get there, and perhaps these gentlemen won't either."

There was muttered agreement from the men, although Simpson still wasn't happy.

Zira grinned. "My husband isn't going to like it."

"Oh, no," Cornelius groaned. "Not that liberation speech again!"

"I'm sorry, but yes, dear." She turned back to Jeanna Robbins. "In some ways your society is a great deal like ours. Three male reporters and one female—and you're from a pet magazine! Everywhere I look, the best jobs go to the males. It was the same with us."

"Really," Jeanna said.

"Yes. I mean, a marriage bed is made for two, but every morning it's the woman who has to make it."

"That's a good line," Jeanna said. "I'll quote you."

"Not before tomorrow, please," Zira said. "I have to make the speech first—"

"Oh, we won't be out for weeks," Jeanna replied. "You are a physician, aren't you?"

"Sort of," Zira said. "A psychiatrist. I worked mostly with, uh, animals."

"You mean humans, don't you?" Simpson demanded.

"Yes," Zira answered.

"And they couldn't talk. Black or white, they couldn't talk. Just beasts, is that right?"

"Well—yes," Zira said.

"There were no black humans that we ever saw," Cornelius said. "Not where we lived, anyway."

"And where was that?" Simpson demanded.

Cornelius shrugged. "From a study of the maps, I would say somewhere immediately south of the area you call New York."

"Then what happened to all the people who lived there?" Jeanna Robbins asked.

"I'm sorry," Stevie interrupted. "You're getting to questions that are still under study by the Presidential Commission."

"Censorship, huh?" Bill Cummings said. "I suppose that figures."

"Not at all, Mister Cummings," Lewis answered. "But I do think that the President's Commission of Inquiry should have first crack at scientific information of that kind, don't you? Cornelius and Zira are as anxious as you are to find out the truth, but we don't want to prejudice the Commission's findings by publishing a lot of speculations."

"Sounds like a bunch of crap to me," Simpson said.

"For once I agree." Cummings looked expectantly at Lewis and Stevie. "You ought to do better than that. We don't represent the really big papers and magazines, but we ought to get some kind of a story. I don't know about everybody else, but my readers are going to want to know what happened to the *people* on this earth. All the people . . ."

"Black and white," Simpson seconded. "There are a lot of black people around New York. In *their* time there aren't any. What happened to them?"

"If I knew I would tell you," Cornelius said. "How can I answer for what I do not know?"

"You can bet we won't be the only ones to ask," Cummings said.

Eleven

There were no reporters at the next meeting of the Presidential Commission. The sixteen commissioners sat in a much smaller room, with only their secretary for audience.

"It looks like a trial," Stevie said. She spoke quietly to the commission secretary; Lewis Dixon had to sit with the other commissioners on the opposite side of the big walnut conference table. The chimpanzees sat with Stephanie at a small table in front of them, and the secretary was just to Stevie's left. Her stenotype machine ground out yards of folded tape as the conference continued.

"I trust you are sufficiently rested," Chairman Hartley said. "This may be a long session."

"We'll just have to endure it," Cornelius answered. He did not smile. Lewis frowned, and Stevie nudged Cornelius.

"You've got to keep their friendship," she whispered.

"We will be as cooperative as we can be under the circumstances, Dr. Hartley," Cornelius said. "Unfortunately, we may not know enough."

"That remains to be seen," Hartley said. He seemed less unfriendly, but he obviously did not enjoy conversing with chimpanzees. "Senator Yancey, I believe you were asking

about Colonel Taylor when the last session ended at Madame Zira's request. Would you continue, please?"

"Thank you," Yancey said. "I believe you told us you never met Colonel Taylor?"

"That is correct, Senator," Cornelius said.

"But you arrived here in his spacecraft."

"Yes, sir."

"How was that spacecraft launched? I am an old Air Force reservist, Mister Cornelius, and frankly, I don't think anybody, I don't care how smart he is, could have flown that ship without some instruction. Since you couldn't teach yourselves, one of the crewmen must have taught you."

Cornelius shrugged, as Zira looked worried. "Your logic is impeccable, Senator," Cornelius said. "Unfortunately, your conclusion is not correct. We were not taught to operate that spacecraft by Colonel Taylor, or any other human."

"This other ape, this Dr. Milo you called him, he learned all that by himself?" Yancey said. His voice was scornful; he obviously did not believe the apes.

"He found books and papers in the spacecraft," Zira said. "And Dr. Milo was a genius. His theories on the nature of time and matter were causing every physicist to doubt everything that had been taught." Tears formed in her eyes again. "I wish he had lived, so that he could discuss his theories with your physics experts."

"Doubtless we would have learned a great deal," Hartley said. He didn't sound at all sincere, and Zira winced.

"I want to return to that ship," Yancey said. "Is it possible that this Milo knew Colonel Taylor and didn't tell you about it?"

Cornelius shrugged. "I suppose it is possible, but very unlikely. Senator, all we can tell you is that we found the capsule, empty; Dr. Milo studied it and the books and papers aboard it; and eventually he caused it to fly."

"And why did he pick the two of you to go with him?" Yancey demanded.

"We were willing to go," Zira answered quickly. "Not everyone believed in Milo—not enough to risk their lives with him! No ape had ever flown, not within our memory! When

Dr. Milo said the ship would fly, no one else would believe him."

"And why did you?" Lewis Dixon asked.

"Because, as an historian, I knew that humans had once had flying machines," Cornelius answered smoothly. "So I knew such things were possible. Even so, we had our doubts about Dr. Milo's theories." He didn't say anything else, but Lewis knew he was thinking about talks he must have had with Taylor.

"Are you satisfied, Senator?" Hartley asked.

"No, sir, I am *not* satisfied," Yancey answered. "But I reckon I've got all the information I'm going to get on the subject. I don't like it, Dr. Hartley. I don't like it at all. Three officers of the United States Air Force took off in that space capsule. A year later that same capsule comes back, and nobody knows what happened to our troops. Now I'm just old-fashioned enough to think this republic exists to defend its citizens, Dr. Hartley, and if there's any chance those men are alive somewhere we ought to go get them!"

"Colonel Taylor's ship was not the only one that vanished," Victor Hasslein said. "Tell us, Cornelius, did the other ship arrive in your, uh, time, as well?"

"Not so far as I know," Cornelius said quickly. "We found only the one ship."

He's getting nervous, Lewis Dixon thought. So is Zira. Old Senator Yancey talks with a mouth full of corn pone, but he's no fool, and Hasslein is like a snake after a bird. They're not going to let go of this.

"And yet," Hasslein said, "your Dr. Milo, genius that he was, was able to deduce what Taylor's ship was for and how it worked, convince himself that it would still work, and persuade you to risk your lives on it. All this on the basis of one ship and no crewmen. Tell me, Mister Cornelius, does this sound reasonable to you? If I told you that one of your friends had done something like that, would you believe it?"

"I would," Zira snapped. "My husband has told you that he was an historian. He knew that humans had flying machines. He had told Dr. Milo about them. And once Milo

had examined the ship, he said it was obvious what it was for."

"Obvious," Hasslein said. He shifted papers and pointed to several passages.

"Interesting," Dr. Hartley muttered. He looked up. "Tell me, sir, were you actually startled by the light in the refrigerator?"

"What?" Cornelius half stood at his seat in indignation. "I suppose you were spying on us?" He looked at Stephanie and Lewis.

"We only reported what we saw," Stevie said. "You knew we would—"

Cornelius's lips were tightly drawn against his teeth. "I had not known you would report such trivia. Yes, sir, I was startled by the light in the re-frig-er-a-tor." He pronounced the new word carefully.

"And why was that? Because you had no electricity at all?" Hartley said.

Cornelius shook his head. "We were not *that* primitive, sir. We were familiar with the concept of electricity. It was not widely used, and most generators were hand or animal driven. Certainly we did not use it for the little light in the refrigerator. We did not have energy to waste on such things."

"And why not?" Cardinal MacPherson asked. "Not why didn't you waste energy on refrigerator lights; I tend to agree with your assessment of that. I mean why was there so little energy?"

Cornelius shrugged. "Our histories are not that complete, Your Eminence. All I can say is that there were very few sources of energy, and very little technology; and things had, we thought, been that way for a long time. At least a thousand years."

"Would you say that men had destroyed their great civilizations with war, then?" the Cardinal asked.

"I don't know, sir," Cornelius replied. "It is possible."

"Is it possible *you* destroyed the human civilizations?" The questioner was a new man. Lewis thought for a moment be-

fore he realized who he was—Dr. Raymond Wilson, a naturalist specializing in great apes.

"Well, I suppose so," Cornelius said. "Except—" He looked to Zira.

"Our records showed only that humans *had* civilization," Zira told them. "Such things weren't even legends to most apes. I doubt if one ape in a hundred would have believed my husband if he told them that humans once built cities and had flying machines."

"Did you have legends of apes once having great civilizations?" Wilson asked. "I am asking you directly—is it not possible that wars among apes destroyed the cities and power plants and everything?"

"Apes don't have wars," Zira protested. "Apes don't kill apes."

"Don't be silly," Wilson said.

"Yeah, you had an army, you said so," Senator Yancey pointed out. "If there wasn't anybody to fight, why'd you have an army?"

"All right," Cornelius said. "There were other ape settlements. Sometimes the gorillas would go fight them. But they didn't have any weapons except rifles, that sort of thing. Nothing like the bombs we had legends about—all human weapons. Atom bomb. Does that word mean anything to you? It was a word we used to frighten children, but we weren't sure it meant anything."

"It means something," Yancey said.

"Who did your army fight?" Wilson asked. "Another tribe of apes?"

"Sometimes," Cornelius said. "But chimpanzees are pacifists. We never had any part in that."

"You're convinced all chimpanzees are pacifists," Wilson said. "And that you're total vegetarians too?"

"Well—"

"What are you trying to pull?" Wilson demanded. "Would you like to see the films? I have plenty. Chimpanzees hunting down baboons and eating them. Young baboons play with baby chimpanzees, and sometimes, for no reason, the big

chimps will beat the little baboons to death, and the little chimps will eat their playmates—"

"No!" Zira screamed. She looked faint.

"Stop that!" Stevie said. She stood in anger, her fists hard against her hips. "Dr. Wilson, your remote ancestors used the thighbone of an antelope to beat other men to death so they could eat their brains! Not five hundred years ago, humans ate meat so rotten they had to put pepper on it to disguise the taste! And a thousand years ago your British ancestors were running around wearing nothing but blue paint. Now—"

"Atta-girl!" Lewis shouted.

"Young lady!" Chairman Hartley pounded his gavel. "Young lady! You will restrain yourself. Dr. Wilson, you will grant she has a point—"

"Maybe," Wilson said. "And maybe not. I've seen enough damn-fool articles trying to prove that apes ought to inherit the earth and we ought to get out of their way—"

"I have never said that," Cornelius pointed out. "Dr. Wilson, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission, we *must* get along with you. We are trapped here, permanently, hopelessly. There is no way we can ever return to our own time. We must live in a human-dominated society, and we must learn to like it. We have no choice in the matter. And we must do whatever we can to help you. It isn't our fault if we don't know enough."

"Absolutely correct," Victor Hasslein said. "Professor Cornelius, some of my colleagues are, ah, perhaps overzealous. It is difficult for them to accept the simple fact that they are speaking to another intelligent being, not merely to an animal who talks. It was difficult for me, at first, and so I understand their problem. Perhaps, perhaps it would be better if we adjourn this session while my colleagues think about their position and examine their consciences. Give them and you some time to adjust. I so move."

"Second," Cardinal MacPherson said. "Splendid thought, Victor."

"All in favor," Hartley said. "I see we have a majority. Very well, this Commission stands adjourned."

Twelve

"That could have been sticky," Lewis said. He sipped his coffee and relaxed in the apes' hotel suite. "You can be certain they aren't through, either."

"It was nice of Dr. Hasslein to adjourn the meeting," Zira said. "I didn't like him at first, but he seems to be a nice man."

"Maybe," Lewis said. "Nice or not, he's important. Nobody seems to know him well. I don't think he has any personal life at all."

"Certainly he does," Stevie said. "I've met his wife and children. He's no monster, Lewis. A little cold, perhaps, but he's very pleasant when he wants to be."

"When did you meet his family?" Lewis asked.

"At school. It must have been, oh, a year or two ago. There was an advisory group coming through to review grant applications, and Dr. Hasslein was one of the reviewers. He brought his wife, and the dean asked me to entertain her. Turned out he'd brought two kids, too. He has three, but only the older two came."

"What's Mrs. Hasslein like?" Lewis asked curiously. The chimps listened with interest.

"Well, she's not very big, really, but she gives the impression that she is," Stevie said. "You know, she acts like an old mother hen. It seems a little out of place in such a small girl. But she keeps the children in line very nicely. Especially the—you know."

Lewis frowned. "I know what?"

"Oh—you didn't know," Stevie said. "Well, one of the children is mongoloid. He's about fourteen years old, with the intelligence of a six- or seven-year-old child."

"Poor Mrs. Hasslein," Zira said.

"She doesn't let it bother her," Stevie told them. "And they've done wonders with the boy. You wouldn't think he could have learned so much. Dr. Hasslein is very patient with him. I watched them together."

"He's showing me around the Museum of Natural History tomorrow," Zira said. "I understand they have some marvelous specimens there. In our time there were so many species known only through records, thousands of extinct species. It should be interesting to see them displayed in their natural habitats."

"I suppose so, my dear," Cornelius said. "I think, though, I should go with you."

"Nonsense," Zira said. "You have an appointment with that British historian chap tomorrow and it's the only chance you'll have to see him. I'd be bored stiff sitting through that. It was nice of Dr. Hasslein to offer to show me around."

"Watch what you say to him," Lewis warned. "I don't know what his game is, but I don't trust him."

"That's silly," Zira said. "If we're going to be suspicious, then he'll have a right to be suspicious of us. Pretty soon, nobody will trust anybody, and then where'll we be?"

"You can't trust him now," Cornelius reminded her. "You weren't thinking of telling him the entire story, were you, my dear?"

"No. I won't without your permission. But I don't like this deceit, I really don't. It's not natural."

Cornelius laughed. After a few moments the others did also. "Interspecies trust," Cornelius said. "A new first."

"And I hope it lasts," Stephanie added.

A highly colorful display of the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly; a collection of birds, stuffed or skinned; rhino models; models of the Indian civilizations of the southwest, including a large model of the Aztec City of the Sun; all these and more. Zira rushed from one display to another, laughing joyfully, and driving her escorts half crazy as they tried to keep up with her.

There was a large mockup of a hurricane, baleful eye of the storm calm in the midst of whirling winds. The artist had drawn it perfectly, and it was framed by satellite pictures of real hurricanes. Next to it was a display of photographs: the destruction of Bangladesh by the great typhoon of 1970.

"How many were killed?" Zira asked.

Hasslein looked pained. "Hundreds of thousands. No one knows for sure. Possibly as many as half a million people."

"I don't think there were that many apes, or humans, on earth in my time," Zira said. They went on through the meteorology section to a display of dinosaur bones and models.

"Do you know what happened to all those people?" Hasslein asked. "There are nearly three billion on earth now. Perhaps more."

Zira pointed to the dinosaurs. "What happened to them?"

"We are not sure," Hasslein said. "It was apparently time for them to go. They went. Perhaps small mammals developed and ate the eggs of the big lizards. Perhaps the climate changed and they could no longer get enough to eat. No one is certain. But do you think it is time for the human race to leave the earth?"

"It hadn't in my time," Zira said.

"But apes were dominant," Hasslein prompted. "Humans did not talk and had no civilization . . ."

"Not in my part of the world," Zira said. "I suppose I'm getting tired. Perhaps we should go now. It's been a very nice day."

"And it can still be," Hasslein said smoothly. "I will not press you again. You do understand, it's a question that is very important to me. To all of us. What can have happened to the human race? Perhaps we are about to make some mistake—a mistake we can do something about."

"But—" Zira stopped and looked at him. Her eyes widened. "Do you think you can change the future? We came from the future! What we saw had already happened!"

"But it has not happened yet," Hasslein said. He was very serious. "And thus need not happen."

"But—what of us?" Zira demanded. "If you do something to prevent our world from ever existing, won't Cornelius and I just—vanish?"

Hasslein shook his head. "I doubt it. You are here. You are part of the present, not the future, even though you came from the future."

Zira shrugged and turned away. She began to walk down the corridor again, her heels clicking against the tiled floor. "I don't think I understand all this, and it gives me a headache."

Hasslein laughed. "It does me, too." They turned the corner and entered the primate room.

The display was dominated by the centerpiece: an 800 pound male gorilla, magnificently erect, with clenched fists. His dead, glassy eyes stared at the door and seemed to bore through Hasslein and Zira. Around him there were other displays, but he seemed to fill the room, to grow larger and larger, until Zira could see nothing else.

The room seemed to swirl about, and Zira felt dizzy. Slowly she fell against Hasslein. The scientist held her for a moment, then gently lowered her to the floor. The attendants ran up.

"What's wrong?"

"Can we do anything?"

"Send for Dr. Dixon," Hasslein said. "Are you all right, Zira?"

"It must have been the shock of the gorilla," a Marine bodyguard said.

Zira opened her eyes. "Shock, my foot. I'm pregnant."

"Good Heavens," Hasslein said. "And we've worn you out with all this walking and looking. Let's get you home."

"Dr. Dixon will be here soon," Victor Hasslein said. "Are

you sure you are all right? The ride back home didn't tire you too much?"

"I'm fine. You can go now, Dr. Hasslein. Thank you."

"Oh, no, Zira," Hasslein said. "I shan't leave you until Cornelius or Dr. Dixon get here. No, no, I insist. Is there anything I can get you?"

She leaned back on the couch and kicked off her shoes, sighing in relaxation. "Well, I have a strange craving—"

"That's only natural under the circumstances. What can I get you?"

"Grape Juice Plus."

"What? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"It's in the refrigerator," Zira said. "Re-frig-er-a-tor. I said it right, didn't I? We call it an icebox."

"Refrigerator. Certainly. I'll get it." Hasslein went to the suite kitchenette. There were three bottles of California champagne in the refrigerator, and he smiled softly to himself. He looked through the cupboards until he found a large wine goblet, then opened the champagne and filled the glass. He brought the bottle with him into the living room.

"Here you go," he said. "Grape Juice Plus." Hasslein winked at Zira.

She winked back. "But I shouldn't drink this much . . ."

"Oh, come now," Hasslein said. "You're not that far along, are you?"

"Pretty far," Zira said.

"Well, a little champagne never hurt anyone. How long have you known you were—uh, going to have a child?"

"Since well before the war." She took a deep drink of the champagne and smacked her lips. "That's *very* good. Anyway, I knew since before the war, and that was another reason we wanted to escape. We couldn't know what would happen."

Hasslein took out his cigarette case and set it on the table. "Perhaps I shouldn't smoke—"

"Oh, it doesn't bother me," Zira said. "It seems a very silly habit, though."

"It is. One much easier to take up than to quit, it seems. Thank you." He lit a cigarette, and left the case on the coffee

table in front of the couch. "You say you don't know against whom the war was fought?"

"Not really," Zira said. She took another gulp of champagne. Hasslein casually filled her glass again. "Just that there were some—uh, apes, living underground in the next district, and the army decided to fight them."

Hasslein nodded agreement. "Ordinary citizens often are not asked about such things. Who won your war?"

"It wasn't *our* war," Zira protested, her speech slurring. She gulped more wine. "It was the gorillas' war. They're always fighting about something. Chimpanzees are pacifists. We never did see an enemy."

"Oh." Hasslein filled her glass again, then took a seat and stretched his feet out in front of him. "Hard day today, wasn't it?"

"A little," Zira agreed. They chatted about the museum for a while, as Hasslein continued to keep her glass full.

"Surely you know which side won the war," Hasslein said finally.

"Neither side won," Zira said. "The stupid fools. We told them . . ."

Hasslein frowned. "Just what did happen, then?"

"When we were in space . . . we saw the light. A blinding bright white light, it was horrible. The rim of the world seemed to melt! The whole earth must have been destroyed. Dr. Milo thought it had been. Then there was—I don't know. Then we were here." She lifted her glass again and drank more wine, spilling several drops on the table and drooling more down her chin.

"I feel very sleepy," she said. "Magnificently sleepy. I think I shouldn't drink any more."

"Probably you're right," Hasslein agreed. "Tell me, Zira, what was the date in your time?"

"Thirty-nine . . . fifty-five."

Hasslein whistled. "That's a long time from now. Nearly two thousand years. How far back did you have records?"

"I don't know. Cornelius would have better information. We had some records, copies of human records, that go back

into your past, Dr. Hasslein. But we didn't have details of anything much over a thousand years old."

"I see. You are getting sleepy, and here comes Dr. Dixon. He'll see you get to bed." Hasslein retrieved his cigarette case as Lewis came in.

"You're all right?" Lewis demanded. "I was told she had a fainting spell."

"Nothing to be worried about," Hasslein assured him. "But perhaps you don't know. Madame Zira will be a mother shortly. I'll leave you with your patient, Dr. Dixon. Good afternoon."

Lewis watched Hasslein put his cigarette case in his pocket and leave the suite. He watched until the scientist was gone, and then turned to Zira, noting the nearly empty champagne bottle, and Zira's slack smile. Just what had Hasslein learned? And what would he do with the knowledge? Lewis Dixon was suddenly afraid.

Thirteen

It was warm in Washington, far too warm, and the president wished he were back in the Western White House in California. If it were left to him he'd move the whole government out there, except it couldn't really be done. All those bureaus and bureaucrats—of course, he could do without a lot of them, but not without the embassies. He sighed again thinking about California, then buzzed his secretary.

"Who's next, Mary Lynn?"

"Dr. Hasslein, Mister President."

"Oh." He sighed again. What would Victor want this time? He seemed so upset about the chimpanzees. "All right. Send him in."

Hasslein came into the oval office and stood, straight and still, in front of the president's desk. Except for the military people, Hasslein was the only man who stood quite that way, and the president often wondered if the scientist were a frustrated soldier.

"What can I do for you, Victor?"

"I made a tape last week, Mister President. While I interviewed the female chimpanzee. I'd like you to listen to it."

"All right." The president got up from behind the big desk

and came around to the couch on the other side. He motioned Hasslein to a chair. "Can I get you anything, Victor? A beer, perhaps? I'll have one myself."

"No, thank you, sir." He set the small tape recorder/player on the coffee table and waited until the president had opened the beer he took from the refrigerator under the end table.

"Just how did you get that tape?"

"With a clandestine recorder the CIA people gave me. A cigarette case." Hasslein started the tape. It began with his own voice—"How long have you known you were—uh, going to have a child?" Zira answered. Eventually it ended.

The president drank the last of his beer. "So?"

"So?" Hasslein stood and paced angrily. "So Mister President, we have evidence that some day talking apes will dominate the earth. They will live in a civilization, if you can call it that, with very little science and no technology. Humans will be dumb animals, probably mistreated. And in less than two thousand years those apes will destroy the earth, killing themselves and all humans as well."

"I doubt we will be in office then," the president said.

"Really, sir, I am serious."

"So am I, Victor. I have an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution, and to preserve and protect the people and nation. I don't see how these apes are much of a threat to that oath—or, for that matter, what I am supposed to do about a theoretical threat to the earth that doesn't mature for almost two thousand years."

Hasslein continued to pace. He said nothing.

"Come now," the president said. "Victor, what the devil do you expect me to do about it? What *can* we do about it?"

"Mister President, can apes talk now?"

"Eh? Of course not, Victor."

"After thousands—millions—of years of evolution, they can't talk and don't appear to be able to learn," Hasslein said. "Had you asked me before those three appeared in that capsule, I would have said it was absolutely impossible for apes to learn to talk at any time within the foreseeable future. That it would be at least hundreds of thousands of years before they learn."

"Yet we have two who can."

"Precisely!" Hasslein smacked his left fist into his open right hand. "Because these two apes are genetically different! Yet, I expect, they can interbreed with other apes. They can transmit that distinguishing characteristic, the ability to learn speech, to their progeny. If that gene is distributed among apes, then all apes will eventually have the ability to speak."

"Oh, come now, Victor, that's a paradox! You're saying that they come from the future to our present; they interbreed with other apes; and by interbreeding with them, they *create their own future*! That if they didn't come here to be their own great-great grandparents, they couldn't exist at all! You don't really believe that, do you?"

"Yes, sir, I'm afraid that's precisely what I believe."

"Impossible! Rubbish!"

"No, sir." Hasslein's eyes blazed as he glared at the president. "I can prove it. What you think of as a paradox, as a violation of the laws of causality, only appears that way because you have a very distorted view of causality to begin with. Now, let me show you." He took a sheaf of papers from his pocket and laid them on the table. "Look here—"

"Oh, no," the president protested. "Victor, I never got past college algebra! You take those equations and put them back in your pocket."

"But I can't prove it to you without them."

"We'll assume you prove it, all right? But what do you want me to do?" He looked at the pale blazing eyes. "No! You really think we can alter the course of the future?"

"Yes, sir. Their future is not necessarily our future. Even though it is just as real. I can—"

"I heard you on the Big News show. Not that I understood you. So you want me to alter what *you* believe *may* be the future by slaughtering two innocents. Three, now that one of them's pregnant." The president nodded grimly to himself. "It's an old tradition with kings, isn't it? Herod tried it. He wasn't successful, either. Christ survived."

"Herod lacked the facilities we have," Hasslein said grimly. "And we have only two apes to deal with."

"Victor, have you any idea how unpopular such a thing

would be?" the president demanded. "I'd go down in history as another Herod. No, thank you. I've a good record, and I don't need that on it."

"You are putting your sentiments for these apes ahead of your duty to the people."

The president half stood, his mouth a grim, tight line of anger. "I do not need you to remind me of my duties to the people, *Doctor* Hasslein!"

"I beg your pardon," Hasslein said formally.

"You beg it, but you aren't sorry," the president said. He sighed and sat down again. This interview wasn't going well at all. "Victor, I've seen the chimpanzees on television, I've met them briefly—they seem very charming, very harmless, and very popular with the voters. You speak of my duties to the people. One of those duties is to carry out the popular will, and I think being courteous to those chimpanzees is very much what the people want."

"Not all of them," Hasslein said. "The Gallup poll shows a lot of undecided. Especially when they're asked about Colonel Taylor—"

"Yes. But the fact remains, they've done nothing to us, and have made no threats. In God's name, Victor, how would we justify anything like that?"

"It would look like a tragic accident," Hasslein said. "The CIA could arrange it."

"They could, eh? How do you know?"

"Well, sir, I assumed—"

"You can keep your assumptions to yourself, Dr. Hasslein. No. We will have no tragic accidents."

"My God, Mister President, do you *want* them and their progeny to dominate the world?"

The president smiled again. He went to his big chair behind the desk and sat, his eyes not focused but staring idly outside at the White House lawn. One of his children was playing out there. "Not just yet, certainly," he said. "And not at the next election, either. But if their progeny turn out to be as pleasant as they are, maybe they'll make a better job than we have. We haven't done all that well, Victor."

"They destroyed the earth!"

The president shrugged. "Are you sure that was our earth she saw destroyed?"

"Are you sure it wasn't, Mister President?"

"Of course not."

"And it is a reasonable assumption. They believed it was the earth. It certainly sounded like it. These animals are native to Earth. They therefore came from our earth—"

"Oh, spare me the long-winded logical arguments, Victor. You may be right . . ."

"The earth, Mister President. All of it. Leave out the fact that these apes have conquered our earth in their time; that humanity consists of sniveling wretches unable even to pronounce their own names. Perhaps something could have been done about that. But not with the earth destroyed!"

"Victor, if that is the future, nothing we do will change it."

"Insufficient understanding again, Mister President. All futures may be equally real, but only one will *happen*."

"I'm afraid I don't understand how something can be real if it doesn't happen—oh, never mind. I don't want you to explain it again. You truly believe that by deliberate, present-day action we can change the future for the better."

"Yes. I do."

"All right. But do you believe we should? Have we got the *right* to do that, Victor?"

"I don't know."

The president looked up, shocked. It was the first time he had ever seen his science advisor in a state of uncertainty. The man's wild stare was gone, and there were suspicious glints at the corners of his eyes, as if he were about to cry.

Hasslein's voice was unsteady as he continued. "You can't know how I've wrestled with that problem, Mister President. I just don't know what the right thing is. Out of all the futures, all real, which one has God chosen for man's final destiny? And if we destroy those apes, are we defying God's will or carrying it out? Are we His instruments or His enemies?"

The president got up from his desk and went to put a hand on Hasslein's shoulder. "I wouldn't worry too much about thwarting God's will, Victor."

"I can't believe in fatalism—"

"Nor I, Victor. I only meant He's big enough to get His way if He sets His mind to it, without much regard for what you or I want. Maybe you'd better ask Him what to do. I do. Quite often, in this job."

Hasslein shook his head. "I don't know how."

"Then I do feel sorry for you. But you do know that killing two innocent beings is immoral. You can't condone that kind of assassination—"

"You have," Hasslein protested. "We had that Soviet marshal killed—"

"God help us. Yes. He was an evil man, full of plans for war. I had no choice." The President noticed Hasslein's triumphant look, and felt disgust. "Yes. I authorized murder of an evil and dangerous man, Dr. Hasslein. But I wouldn't have approved killing him as a baby because he might *become* an evil man. Or having his remote ancestors killed to prevent his ever being born. That's just what you're proposing to do with those chimpanzees, and I won't have it. *They* haven't done anything to us."

"Nothing proven," Hasslein said. "The fact remains, they have appeared in Colonel Taylor's capsule. The very act of their coming here makes it impossible for Colonel Taylor to return. Don't forget that, Mister President. They may have killed Colonel Taylor for his ship. Did you ever think of that?"

The president sat abruptly. "No. I didn't."

"Suppose that's the way it happened?" Hasslein asked.

"Then we would have to rethink our position," the president said. "Taylor was one of my officers. I sent him. What makes you think these chimpanzees know any more than they've told us?"

"They didn't tell us about the end of the world," Hasslein reminded him. "Not until I got one of them drunk."

"Plying a pregnant girl with champagne," the president said. He almost smiled. "I ought to be ashamed of you."

"It got more information than anything else we've done," Hasslein snapped. "And there have been other discrepancies. I think those chimpanzees are lying to us. About many

things. I think proper interrogation would disclose what they were lying about."

"And you don't think the Commission is competent?" the president asked.

"No, sir. How could it be? And its procedures are those of Anglo Saxon justice. I submit to you, sir, this is a matter of national security, and those apes have no rights under the Constitution of the United States."

"I suppose not," the president said. "I take it, then, you want your own interrogation—?"

"Yes, sir. I want to borrow some people from the National Security Agency, and I want to transfer this matter to the National Security Council instead of that farcical Commission."

The president nodded. He lifted a telephone from his desk and spoke briefly into the instrument, then turned to Hasslein again. "All right. I've asked General Brody to set things up with NSA for you. As to the Commission, you will give all information NSA digs up for you to the commissioners. I will not remove this matter from their jurisdiction until and unless I think there is a real threat to the national security. You keep me informed, and until you find me something really convincing, the Commission stays on the job. Agreed?"

"Yes, sir," Hasslein said. "Thank you."

"You needn't," the President said. "I don't like any of this. But you've effectively reminded me of my duty. Very well, Victor. Keep me informed."

"Yes, sir." Hasslein left, a twisted smile on his face.

The president watched the door close behind his science advisor, and sighed again. There were times when he wondered if all the fight he'd had to get to this office had been worth it; if he wouldn't be happier back in Congress. He'd always liked politics, but the oval office was a pretty big job for an Iowa farm boy.

It would be pretty big for anybody, he thought. And the man who had wanted it, the man I defeated to get it—God, no. "Mary Lynn, who do we have next?"

"Secretary of the Interior, sir."

"Very good. Send him in."

Fourteen

Admiral Jardin looked with disgust at the document. He read it carefully, then again, before looking at Dr. Hasslein. "I don't like it," Snapper Jardin said.

"You are not asked to like it," Hasslein told him. "It is a valid order from the Presidential Commission of Inquiry, and countersigned by General Brody for the president. I take it you are not satisfied, Admiral. Would you prefer to call General Brody yourself?"

"No. All right, I'll deliver the chimpanzees to your National Security Agency interrogation team. I don't seem to have much choice. But I will be damned if I'm going to cook up a press release about the apes needing rest and privacy and seclusion. I won't cover for your damned wrecking crew, Hasslein. Leave the Navy out of your bloody intrigues."

"All we are trying to do is to find what happened to Colonel Taylor, Admiral. Surely you want to cooperate in that?"

Jardin frowned. "Yeah. But I don't think you're going about it the right way. OK, what do you want for facilities?"

"Perhaps an empty hospital wing at Camp Pendleton?" Hasslein suggested. "Somewhere on a guarded post, and since one of the apes is pregnant, medical facilities wouldn't be a

bad idea. After all, Admiral, we don't want to harm these animals. We only want to be sure they've told us everything we need to know."

"I suppose. I still think my people could have handled the job. OK, you'll get your hospital. We have a whole clinic not being used right now. It was part of the reception center for the Viet Nam POW's coming home. Ought to have everything you need. We have tape recording setups and projection screens for debriefings of our troops—"

"Excellent," Hasslein purred. "And you need not bother to arrange transportation. I'll take care of that. You just alert the guards at Camp Pendleton that we'll be there before noon tomorrow." He reached across the desk to take the documents.

Admiral Jardin smoothly held them out of Hasslein's reach. "I'll keep this, if you don't mind."

Hasslein frowned. "Why?"

Jardin slammed his open palm against the desk. "Because I still don't like any part of this, and if I didn't have it in writing from the president I wouldn't do it. I'll keep these orders, Hasslein. I may need them some day."

"Nonsense," Hasslein said. He shrugged. "But if that's the way you feel about it, there's nothing I can do. Just be sure to have that interrogation suite ready for me, Admiral." Hasslein smiled again, but there was no warmth in the look, and Admiral Jardin did not want to meet the scientist's gaze.

"You still have not explained what they will do with us, Lewis," Cornelius said. He watched the rolling brown hills of Orange County flicker past as the big limousine drove south on the San Diego freeway. Many of the hills were covered with imitation adobe houses, all crowded together inside small walled communities, while around them were empty brown hills again. "I gather we have no choice about coming with you."

"I'm afraid you don't," Lewis said. He sat with Stevie; the two were facing the chimpanzees in the rear of the limousine. A glass partition separated the four from a Marine officer

and his driver up front. Two Marine staff cars filled with armed men trailed behind them. "And I don't know what to advise you. A number of the commissioners weren't satisfied with your answers, so it wasn't too difficult to get them to agree to a more, ah, professional, interrogation. I got the impression that if the Commission hadn't agreed, this would happen anyway, so I went along with it . . ."

"Lewis!" Stevie said.

He shrugged. "As I told you, it wouldn't have made any difference, darling. They'd have been subjected to interrogation anyway. At least this way the Presidential Commission has authority in the matter. They can't do anything without consulting us. If we let it get out of the Commission's hands . . ."

"But who's behind all this?" Stephanie asked.

Lewis shook his head. "I don't know. I suspect Hasslein."

"Dr. Hasslein was very kind to me," Zira said. "I wouldn't think he'd do anything to hurt us."

"Don't bet on it," Lewis said. He looked helplessly at the apes. "You understand, as a member of the Presidential Commission, I can't advise you to lie or withhold information. But as your physician and friend—be careful."

"These men are experts," Stevie said. "They can make you say things you don't mean, or—"

"Why would they do that?" Cornelius asked.

"I don't know," Stevie said. "But be careful, please."

" And be polite," Lewis warned.

Cornelius laughed. "You did hear that, did you not, Zira?"

"I heard. Lewis, have they—who *are* these men? How can they do this to us?"

"We did more to Colonel Taylor," Cornelius reminded her. "They have as much right to treat us as animals as we did to treat their pilots . . ."

"But we didn't *know*," Zira protested.

"I wouldn't mention Colonel Taylor at all, unless they ask," Lewis warned. "And then I think you'd best stick to your original story—here we are."

The car turned off the freeway and down a side road. It

drove past the huge dome-shape of the San Onofre nuclear power plant, and Lewis and Stevie had to explain that to the apes.

"Atomic power?" Cornelius said wonderingly. "Would that have anything to do with atom bomb?"

"Not really," Lewis said. "Same principles, but entirely different application. Atom bombs explode. This can't."

"But all these things really are human inventions," Cornelius said. "I had always suspected so."

The camp gates were just ahead. The car stopped and two Marine sentries peered inside, then waved them through with a salute. The car drove past barracks and administrative offices, and through the main part of the Marine camp. Then it climbed into more barren hills, until all the other buildings were lost from sight. The two staff cars followed.

They rounded another low hill and saw a complex of single-story wooden buildings with green roofs. The whole area had an abandoned look despite a number of cars parked in front of the central building. Two Marines stood guard out front, and they saw several others go into another building to their left.

Admiral Jardin came out to greet them. "Welcome to Camp Pendleton," he said. "You should be comfortable here. We've arranged for our guests and the necessary scientific people to stay in the central wing here. Other personnel as needed will stay over there. We have everything you'll need, I think."

Lewis Dixon nodded. "Thank you, Admiral."

Victor Hasslein came out of the central building. Four civilians accompanied him, but Hasslein did not introduce them. They stood around the limousine, and when the apes got out, stayed carefully behind them. "Very good, Admiral," Hasslein said. "We'll take custody of them now."

Jardin nodded. "Yeah. You'll remember this is a Navy facility, Dr. Hasslein."

Certainly. You needn't be concerned, Admiral. We'll take very good care of your guests. And of course, we now assume full responsibility . . ."

"Yeah," Admiral Jardin said. He looked unhappily at Lewis and Stevie, then back at Hasslein. "Yeah. You sure do."

Everyone had been very polite. The chimpanzees had a full day to adjust to their new quarters and move their things into their suite. They had been well fed by white-uniformed hospital attendants, and Lewis and Stevie had been served an excellent meal in the apes' rooms. They were given rooms of their own, and furnished every convenience.

Every convenience but one. No one could leave without Dr. Hasslein's permission. He insisted that it was all a formality, and that he would soon have passes made up for Lewis and Stephanie; but the secretaries were slow, and everything was irregular so that they had to establish some control procedures.

The one thing certain was that the Marines on guard outside weren't letting anyone in or out.

They were introduced to two new staff members. "This is Henry Amalfi," Hasslein said. "And Larry Bates. Of the National Security Agency. Well, Dr. Dixon, I think it is time to begin. Can you bring the chimpanzees down to room 104, please?"

The room had been an operating theater. Surgical equipment was still racked against the walls, and there were white glass-fronted cabinets full of gleaming steel instruments.

Zira looked at the equipment with envy. She hadn't had gear half this good. Her interest in the set-up was not enough to cover her fears, though, and she clung to her husband's hand.

Hasslein, Amalfi, and Bates sat side by side at a long table at one end of the room. The chairs set out for the chimpanzees resembled dentists' chairs, comfortable, but cold and clinical in appearance. There was no place for Lewis or Stevie to sit, and the guards ushered them out.

"Now just a minute," Lewis protested. "I have a right to be here—"

"No, sir," Hasslein told him. "I represent the Commission,

and you have no medical duties to perform at the moment. I'm sorry, Dr. Dixon, but I must insist that you leave."

Lewis shrugged helplessly, and turned away. He was uncomfortably aware of the terrified gaze Zira directed at his back, and he left her looking at him even after the door closed with a hollow sound.

Fifteen

"Relax," Dr. Hasslein said. "We won't hurt you. We only want to find out the truth."

Cornelius and Zira said nothing. Finally Cornelius asked, "If you don't mean us any harm, why did you send Dr. Dixon away? Are you ashamed of what you're going to do?"

"That's no way to talk," Mr. Amalfi said. "Look, the sooner we get started, the sooner we can all go home. I don't like it here any more than you do. We've just got a job to do, that's all."

"What's the point of trying to reason with monkeys?" Bates demanded.

"Aw, Larry, don't be like that," Amalfi said. "He hadn't ought to be like that, had he, Dr. Hasslein? Be nice, Larry."

"I don't have to be nice to monkeys," Bates said. "They won't tell us anything. Probably don't know anything."

"I don't agree," Amalfi said. "They're pretty smart. Aren't you?" He flashed them a smile. "Now, for instance, we need to know about things like this." He touched a button on a small console on the table in front of him.

Zira's voice, somewhat blurred, came from the player: "When we were in space . . . we saw the light. A blinding

bright white light, it was horrible. The rim of the world seemed to melt! The whole earth must have been destroyed. Dr. Milo thought it had been. Then there was—I don't know. Then we were here."

"Now, that was you talking, wasn't it?" Amalfi said. "You saw all that?"

"I don't know if I said that," Zira said.

"Eh? Why don't you know?"

"I don't remember saying it," Zira told them. "I was drunk. Dr. Hasslein can tell you, I had too much champagne to drink."

"Yes," Hasslein said. "That's right, Mr. Amalfi. She probably didn't know what she was saying."

"But we have to check it out," Amalfi said. "Now, Madame Zira, why would you tell Dr. Hasslein something when you were drunk but hide it from the Commission when you were sober? Were you afraid of us?"

"No. We didn't hide anything," Zira insisted. "Nobody ever asked us about that."

"I see," Amalfi said. He smiled gently. "See, Larry, I told you they'd cooperate. So. Now we do have to ask you about that, of course. You had a war, and the earth was destroyed . . ."

"But not by us," Zira insisted. "Chimpanzees had no part in that war or in the destruction. Only the gorillas and the orangutans."

"Oh, what's the difference?" Bates said. "You're all a bunch of monkeys anyway."

"That will *do*," Cornelius said harshly. "I have overlooked your insults before, Mr. Bates, but I will not do so again. Please do not employ the word 'monkey' in referring to us. We find it offensive and impertinent."

"Well, look who's on his high horse," Bates said. "For somebody who blew up the world, you're sure holy and righteous!"

Cornelius sniffed. "As an archeologist and historian, I studied a very great number of ancient records," he said. "I have concluded that the weapon which probably destroyed Earth was man's invention. I am almost certain of it, now

that I have seen your atomic power plants—you do have *real* atom bombs."

"But your kind used them," Bates sneered.

"Perhaps," Cornelius said. "But I also know that one reason for man's decline and fall was your peculiar habit of murdering one another. Man destroys man. Apes do not destroy apes."

"Crap," Bates snapped. "You tried to pull that one before. Run the film," he ordered.

There was a screen on one side of the room. It lit with scenes obviously taken from a blind in an animal game preserve. A group of chimpanzees, both adult and young, played together with young baboons.

Suddenly one of the adult chimpanzees seized an immature baboon and dashed its brains out against a tree. It cracked open the skull and dipped its fingers into the brain case, then licked them off. Other chimpanzees crowded around as the rest of the baboons fled in panic.

They tore the baby baboon apart and ate it. Finally the screen went dark and the lights came on again.

"Well," Bates demanded. "What's this crap about being peaceful and vegetarian? Aren't baboons apes?"

"But we never did anything like that!" Zira protested. "Chimpanzees *are* pacifists! Only the gorillas wanted the war—"

"Bates, I'm shocked," Hasslein said smoothly. "Look how that film has upset Zira. Cornelius, Zira, this is not an interracial hassle. We are trying to find out the facts. For example: we can admit the possibility of the decline and fall of mankind, but we would like to know just *how* it happened—and how apes rose to take man's place."

"I see," Cornelius said.

"As an historian, surely you must have theories," Hasslein said smoothly.

"Yes," Cornelius admitted. He settled back in his chair. "So far as we can tell, it began with a plague that affected dogs."

"And cats," Zira added.

"And cats. Millions of them died, and there was no an-

tidote. A house that had been infected by the plague could never again have a dog or a cat in it. To bring pets anywhere near that house would be to kill them. And despite the quarantines, the plague spread . . ."

"It must have been horrible," Zira said. "And when it was over, man had no pets. None at all."

"An intolerable situation," Cornelius continued. "Men might kill their brothers, but not their dogs. Since they couldn't keep dogs and cats, men took primitive apes into their homes."

"Primitive," Amalfi said. "Would you explain that, please?"

"They couldn't talk," Zira said. "But primitive and dumb as they were, they were still twenty times more intelligent than dogs and cats. And people bred them for intelligence."

"Precisely," Cornelius said. "They lived in houses with people. They shared the same foods, and they copied—'aped,' if you prefer—their owners' habits. And after two centuries of living like this, the apes became more than pets. They became servants. They did far more than tricks, they worked for humans."

"Like sheep dogs?" Amalfi asked.

"Humpf," Zira said. "Could sheep dogs make beds?"

"Or cook?" Cornelius asked. "Clean house? Go marketing for groceries with lists from their mistresses? Apes worked in factories, and waited on tables in restaurants. They performed all the menial tasks humans insist on having done for them but won't do themselves."

"Fascinating," Hasslein said. "But then what happened?"

"They turned the tables on their owners," Zira said. Her voice held satisfaction and pride. "They learned they were slaves, and they did something about it!"

Cornelius gently laid his hand on Zira's. "First, of course, they had to develop personalities of their own. While they were *animals,* unaware of anything, they did not feel exploited; but after two hundred years of this, they became aware of their identity. Then they learned to be alert to the concept of slavery—and to slavery's antidote, which is unity and brotherhood. They learned to act together. They learned to *refuse.*"

"I see," Hasslein said. "Do go on, Professor Cornelius." His pale eyes were alert and interested, and he leaned slightly forward across the table.

"At first, they only barked their refusal," Cornelius said. "But then, one historic day, there came an ape named Aldo who didn't bark. He spoke. He spoke a word which had been spoken to him, time without number, by humans. He said, 'No'."

"You seem proud of Aldo," Hasslein said.

"Of course," Zira told them. "His is the most honored name among apes. We are all proud of him."

"And that's how it all started," Hasslein said to himself. "But—what happened to the humans?"

"We don't know, exactly," Cornelius said.

"Slaughtered by the apes, maybe?" Bates sneered.

"More likely, by each other," Zira snapped.

"Roll that film clip. B-3," Bates ordered.

The screen lit again, to show Cornelius and Zira during the first session with the Presidential Commission of Inquiry. "Where we come from, apes talk and humans are dumb animals," Cornelius's image said.

"Those were your words, were they not?" Bates asked.

"Certainly," Cornelius answered.

"So in your culture, humans are dumb," Bates continued. "Are they happy?" Cornelius looked away from the interrogator's cold staring eyes. "I asked you, are they happy?"

There was no answer. "Just what happened to the human culture, Professor Cornelius?" Hasslein asked gently. "Was there a slaughter of humans by apes? Surely you would have records of a triumph like that! You would be proud of it."

"No, we wouldn't," Cornelius said.

"After the revolt, the apes enslaved the humans, didn't they?" Bates insisted. "For revenge. And eventually exterminated every human with intelligence. Destroyed civilization."

"No," Zira protested. "It wasn't that way at all."

"How are humans treated in your time/place?" Amalfi demanded. "What would happen to me, for instance, if I went there?"

"I don't know," Zira answered.

"Ah," Bates said. "Sure about that? Real sure? Run that next tape, uh, tape B-5."

The screen lit again, to show Zira speaking to the Commission. "As to humans," her image said, "I've dissec— Excuse me. I have examined thousands of humans and until now I have discovered only two who could talk in my whole life. God knows who taught them."

"Now," Bates said, "we presume that you meant you had known two humans who could speak prior to your arrival in our time. Otherwise, your words make no sense at all." His voice hardened into a whiplash. "Who were the two? Colonel Taylor and who else?"

"I never met Colonel Taylor," Zira protested.

"You came here in his ship," Hasslein reminded them.

"Give me that special setup, sound only," Bates told the intercom.

Zira's voice came through. "As to humans, I've dissec— excuse me. I have examined thousands of humans . . ."

"Now what was that word you didn't finish?" Bates asked. "Just what were you afraid to tell the Commission?"

"I don't remember," Zira said nervously. "I—we weren't afraid of anything!"

"Hah. You don't remember," Bates said. "We'll refresh your memory. Run the loop."

"Dissec—dissec—dissec—dissec . . ." Zira's voice said endlessly.

"Finish the word, monkey," Bates snarled.

"I have told you not to use that word!" Cornelius snapped. He stood and advanced toward the table.

"If you don't sit down we'll put the chains back on you," Bates said.

"Dissec—dissec—dissec . . ."

"Complete the word, Madame Zira!"

She sniffed. "It sounds as if I had hiccups!"

"Good girl!" Cornelius encouraged.

"I see," Hasslein said. "I take it, then, you refuse to tell us of your relationship with Colonel Taylor?"

"We never knew . . ."

"Oh, don't lie," Amalfi said. "That won't do you any good.

Come on, tell us about it. You'll feel better, and we can leave you alone then."

"Those monkeys aren't going to tell us anything," Bates snapped.

"You shouldn't call them monkeys, Larry," Amalfi said. "Professor Cornelius said he didn't like that. Won't you just tell us about it? Please? We have to find out, you know. And we will, too. Make it easier on yourselves."

"Good advice," Hasslein told them.

"There is nothing to tell," Cornelius said.

Hasslein sighed. "You leave us no choice. Send for Dr. Dixon, please."

There was a long pause. Then Lewis Dixon came into the small clinic. "You wanted me?"

"Yes," Hasslein said. "I want you to administer sodium pentothal to these apes. You may begin with the female."

"I don't think that's wise," Lewis said.

"I don't care what you think, Dr. Dixon," Hasslein said. "I have not invited your comments, and I will not listen to your arguments. You may do as I have asked you, or you may refuse. If you refuse, I will have an NSA physician administer the dosage. I only invited you because these apes are under your care, and I thought you might prefer to participate."

"I see." Lewis was silent for a moment. "I'll get my bag."

"That will not be necessary," Hasslein said. "You will find everything you need in that cabinet there. I trust you already know the body weight."

"Yes," Lewis said. "But I don't necessarily know the dosage. Or the effect on a chimpanzee."

"It should be the same as with humans," Hasslein said. "Anyway, we'll try it."

"You haven't the right," Lewis protested.

"Dr. Dixon," Hasslein said, "that is the last argument I will hear from you. Either you do as I ask, or someone else will. Now is that clearly understood? Are you serious, for that matter? These are *animals*. They have no legal rights. Perhaps their owners have rights—"

"No one owns us!" Zira shouted.

"You see?" Hasslein said. "And of course they appeared in

a U.S. spacecraft. Trespassers. A *prima facie* case of skyjacking. Administer the hypo, Dr. Dixon, or we'll get someone in who will."

"All right." Lewis took the tray from the cabinet. What can I do?" he thought. If they get someone else in, he may not even care if he harms them. At least I'll be here to protect my—patients. He filled a hypodermic with sodium pentothal and turned toward Zira.

"No!" Cornelius shouted. He had seen the instrument for the first time. "When we use those things, it's for killing! No!"

"Restrain him," Hasslein ordered. Amalfi and Bates took Cornelius's arms.

"Killing what?" Bates asked. "Thought you were pacifist vegetarians!"

"Yes, just whom have you killed with those needles, Professor Cornelius?" Hasslein asked. "Well, we shall know all shortly. Proceed, Dr. Dixon."

"This won't harm her," Lewis assured Cornelius. "This isn't for killing. It's for—well, relaxing."

"Will it harm my baby?" Zira asked.

"No. Please lie down on the table, Zira," Lewis said. "And bare your left arm."

"You don't have to tell me," Zira said angrily. She climbed onto the operating table and lay quietly. Cornelius whimpered and tried to get closer to her.

"Take Professor Cornelius to his quarters, please," Hasslein said. Bates nodded and led the chimpanzee away. As he left, Cornelius saw Zira wince as the needle was pushed home into her arm.

Sixteen

Henry Amalfi and Larry Bates stood outside the interrogation room. Bates pulled at a big calabash pipe, while Amalfi puffed on a black cigar. "You had better stay outside," Amalfi said. "She's not going to relax with you around."

"Expect you're right," Bates said. "Can't really say I'm sorry to be out of it. This is a weird one."

"Maybe." Amalfi stuffed the cigar into a sandfilled ash tray. "You weren't on that interrogation of those cats from North Laos, were you?" When his partner shook his head, Amalfi continued, "Now that one was *really* weird. These monkeys speak English, anyway. That outfit spoke some brand of Gook that nobody else understood. Finally we found a Gook who could speak their gibber and could talk Chinese too, only then we had to get a Chink to translate *that*. Weird, I tell you. This is pretty straightforward."

"I suppose. Only, Henry . . ."

"Yeah?"

"You really shouldn't speak of them as Gooks and Chinks. It isn't nice."

"Yeah." They both laughed, and Amalfi went back into the interrogation room.

"This will have about the same effect as 'Grape Juice Plus'," Lewis told her. "You'll get sleepy . . ."

"And drunk," she said.

"More or less. OK, count backwards from ten, please," Lewis said.

"Sure. Ten—nine—eight—seven—seven—six . . ."

"That's fine. Just keep it up."

"Five—four—four . . ."

"What's after four?"

"I don't know—two? I'm very tired."

Lewis looked up to Hasslein. "We're ready."

"Thank you, Dr. Dixon. You may go now."

"No, sir," Dixon said. "This chimpanzee is my patient, and I'm staying here."

Hasslein said nothing. Lewis met his steady gaze. "Dr. Hasslein, I am both a member of the Presidential Commission, and the attending physician. If you have me put out of here I'll make so much noise you'll be hearing about it for the next ten years." Lewis spoke very quietly so that he wouldn't disturb Zira, but his voice was hard and determined.

Hasslein nodded. "Very well. Mr. Amalfi, you may begin."

"Zira," Amalfi said. "You remember me? I'm your friend."

"Friend . . ."

"Have you ever worked in a room like this one?" he asked.

"Yes. Mine was larger. But not so—pretty."

"Pretty? I wouldn't call this room pretty," Amalfi said.

"The equipment is lovely," she muttered. "Really beautiful equipment. We never had such good equipment."

"I see. And you had assistants?"

"Three. Three assistants, all chimpanzees. And one orangutan worked with us, sometimes . . ."

"And what did you do in your laboratory?"

"Comparative studies."

"Comparative studies of what?" Amalfi asked.

"Comparative ana—ana . . ."

"Comparative anatomy?"

"Yes," the sleepy voice answered.

Hasslein looked at Lewis with both triumph and sadness in his eyes. "You knew?" he asked softly.

Lewis didn't answer.

"Traitor," Hasslein said coldly. "Continue, Amalfi."

"What anatomies did you compare?"

The chimpanzee rocked gently on the table. There was no answer. Finally Amalfi said, "Human and ape anatomy? Is that it?"

"Mmm."

"Do you mean yes? Say yes if you mean yes. Did you compare human and ape anatomies?"

"Yes."

"So you dissected other apes? All species of apes?"

"Yes."

"Where did you get them?"

"Dead apes. From hospitals, and morgues."

"But to do comparative studies, you had to dissect humans as well, didn't you?"

"Yes. As they were—as they were made available."

"I see. How were they made available, Zira?"

"The gorillas hunted them. For sport. They used nets, and guns, and traps. Sometimes they caught them alive, and kept them in cages . . ."

"And what did they do with the humans they kept in cages, Zira?" Amalfi asked. His voice was carefully controlled, calm and friendly, but he looked away with hatred and disgust.

"The army used them for target practice, some of them. We had our pick of the others, for scientific experiments. Some were very good specimens."

"I see." Amalfi's voice came alive, matching Zira's enthusiasm. "And you could make so many scientific discoveries that way. You dissected and removed and compared—"

"Bones, muscles, tendons, veins, arteries, kidneys, livers, hearts, stomachs, reproductive organs. Everything. We did very careful work. We mapped the nervous systems, and reflexes—"

"Reflexes," Hasslein hissed. He looked at Dixon, then at Amalfi. "What does she mean, reflexes?"

"Reflexes?" Amalfi said. "But dead humans don't have reflexes."

"Of course not," Zira protested. "I told you we did good work. We used *living* specimens. You can't make a dead man's knee jump, or test a corpse's reactions to a prefrontal lobotomy."

"Then you were very advanced," Amalfi said. "So much so that you were able to do experimental brain surgery on living humans?"

"Yes."

"How many survived?"

"Quite a few. Of course we lost a lot of them, too, but that was only to be expected," Zira said. "But my main project is to stimulate the atrophied speech centers of the humans."

"Have you had any success?"

"Not yet," Zira said. "I mean, not now—not anymore? Where am I?"

"She's coming around," Hasslein said. "Another injection, Dr. Dixon."

"I think not," Lewis said. When Hasslein started to protest, Lewis said, "If you kill this intelligent, speaking chimpanzee, you'll answer for it to the president. I won't take the responsibility, and I doubt you'll find another doctor who will."

"What about Colonel Taylor?" Amalfi asked. "Did you stimulate his speech centers?"

"Of course not," Zira snapped. "He could talk already."

There was a sharp sound from Hasslein as he drew in a deep breath. He nodded to Amalfi, then looked at Lewis again, the same look of sadness and triumph mingled.

"There were three men in Colonel Taylor's ship," Amalfi said.

"Yes," Zira answered. "There was one who—somehow—died."

"Died?"

"Yes. Before we found that he could talk. The gorillas killed him. He had a unique skin, something we'd never seen

before, until we came here. We had him stuffed and put in the museum—like the gorilla I saw in your museum."

"What do you mean, this human had a unique skin?"

"It was black," Zira said. "Coal black. He dominated the room in the Museum of Natural History."

"Lieutenant Dodge," Hasslein whispered. "What happened to Taylor?"

"Did you dissect Colonel Taylor?" Amalfi asked.

"No! We loved Colonel Taylor."

"All of you? All apes?"

"Many of us," she said. "We did everything we could to help him. Cornelius and I—"

She struggled against the restraining straps on the table. Dixon quickly stepped over and looked at her. "That's all," he said. "And no, Dr. Hasslein, I won't give her another injection."

"Cornelius!" Zira called. She opened her eyes and looked wildly around, but she could see only Lewis Dixon.

"It's all right," Lewis said. "Go to sleep now." He turned to Hasslein. "She'll need a nap."

"Very well." Hasslein opened the door to admit a white-coated young Marine. "Orderly, take this chimpanzee to its quarters, and see that Dr. Dixon gets anything he needs for treating it."

"Yes, sir." Tommy Billings, age nineteen, went over to the operating table. "Hey, she's really out, isn't she? Come on, girl, it's all right now. Let's get you back to your room." He looked up at Hasslein and Dixon. "You didn't hurt her, did you? You got no cause to hurt her. She never did anything—"

"Just return that chimpanzee to its room, Orderly," said Hasslein.

"Yes, sir." As he wheeled the rolling table out, he spoke gently to the sleeping form. "Come on, nobody's going to hurt you now. Tommy'll take care of you. I like monkeys. We had three pet monkeys and a chimp in the little zoo next to my high school. I took care of 'em sometimes. You just come on . . ." They left the room.

"I think we have heard enough," Hasslein said.

"Heard enough for what?" Lewis Dixon demanded.

"Come now, Dr. Dixon. Even you see the danger from these apes. But if you don't, yet, I'm sure you will when I've finished my presentation to the Commission. You'll understand then."

Seventeen

Victor Hasslein's voice was low and urgent as he spoke to the commissioners. "I think," he said, "that I have adequately demonstrated my points; allow me to sum up." He looked across at the dozen men and women seated at the big mahogany table in the Federal Building. He had them all, he was sure; all, that is, except Dixon. And possibly Cardinal MacPherson. The rest would agree.

"First," Hasslein said, "I have demonstrated that these apes can interbreed with primitive apes, and produce a talking species; and without that admixture, it is unlikely that apes will learn to talk within the next thousand years at least."

There were murmurs of agreement from the commissioners. "Second," Hasslein continued, "I have demonstrated that the development of talking apes would be an unprecedented and unparalleled catastrophe. In the future to which these apes belong, not only did the apes revolt against man, but after that revolt, it seems clear to me, the apes hunted down all the men who could speak or act rationally; they systematically destroyed every last trace of human culture. This was the reward they meted out to us for having given them the power of speech!"

"Surely, Dr. Hasslein, that has not been established beyond doubt," Cardinal MacPherson said.

"Perhaps not, Your Eminence," Hasslein replied. "But we do know that the apes revolted against men; and within a few centuries, men could no longer speak. It is a reasonable supposition."

"I see," the Cardinal said. He nodded slowly.

"Thirdly, I submit to you that this female chimpanzee has been guilty of the most unspeakable tortures of humans; and that although she personally did not kill Colonel Taylor, her people did, along with Lieutenant Dodge—whom they exhibited, stuffed, in a museum." Hasslein looked straight into Congressman Boyd's eyes as he said this; and was rewarded with a look of pure hatred. Boyd was ready to vote for anything.

"The president is waiting for your recommendation, ladies and gentlemen," Hasslein said. "We are faced with a danger, not to the United States alone, but to the entire human race. I say we must act."

"But surely," Chairman Hartley said, "surely, Dr. Hasslein, there could be no danger from these chimpanzees if they remain confined and under our control?"

Hasslein shrugged. "Gentlemen. Ladies. I haven't time to explain my notion of the meaning of time itself—no joke intended. But I can say this: the future is not unalterable, but the very fact that, to these apes, that bleak and horrifying world in which our descendants live as dumb brutes *has* happened makes it very likely that it *will* happen. So long as those apes are alive, their genes may, somehow, enter the breeding pool for all apes. So long as they are alive, they are a danger to every man who will ever live! To the descendants of every one of us."

"Very dramatic," the cardinal said. "As I have no descendants and no likelihood of any, I can speak with a certain detachment, and I say that neither of these chimpanzees is guilty of anything worthy of the death penalty. We would not execute dogs on that evidence. Why should we kill intelligent, speaking, aware beings?"

"Come now, Your Eminence, you are hardly suggesting

that these apes have souls?" Chairman Hartley demanded. "Surely—"

"I make no suggestion of the sort," the cardinal said. "I don't have to. On the other hand, I don't really feel comfortable about the world Dr. Hasslein describes. It is grim, and should be prevented. I do not think, however, that evil can be prevented by greater evil. The slaughter of the innocents did Herod little good. It was not successful for Pharoah. Why would not the very attempt bring about the evil we seek to prevent? It always has."

Hasslein snorted. "Admirable sentiment, but faulty reasoning. If we do nothing, then the future these apes come from is likely. We must prevent that. We must!"

Chairman Hartley rapped for order. "Gentlemen! Ladies! Please! Dr. Hasslein, I realize that the president wants a decision as quickly as possible. I suggest we have a half hour recess to regain our composure, and that we then meet here to make a definitive decision as to what must be done with these apes. Do I hear any objections? It is so ordered." The gavel fell.

It took three days, not three hours. Even then there was no unanimity to the decision. It was late in the evening when the Commission met for the last time. Lewis Dixon sat impassively, but there was a bitter taste in his mouth, and his throat was dry.

Dr. Hartley read to the commissioners. "It is my duty to announce that the president has accepted and approved the following final findings and recommendations made by this special Commission.

"First, we find no evidence whatever that either of these apes bears any hostility toward the human race as presently constituted, or that either ape represents, by himself or herself, a clear and present danger to the human race. This finding was unanimous."

There were murmurs of assent around the table. That one had been easy enough.

"Second," Hartley droned. "We find that the male chimpan-

zee known as Cornelius has not, so far as we can determine, taken any part in atrocities against human beings or crimes against humanity; and we further find that he is and was always a deeply interested and well-disposed academician who has studied the coming downfall of the human race with the objectivity of a good historian. He is guilty of nothing worthy of punishment. This finding is also unanimous.

"Third, we find that the female chimpanzee known as Zira has been guilty of actions which, considered objectively, constitute crimes against humanity, and if such actions were committed today, would warrant the most severe punishment. However, this Commission finds itself unable to agree upon whether such actions, undoubtedly atrocities in our present time, can be called crimes at all given the circumstances of the chimpanzee Zira's culture. It is specifically noted that the actions, which we call atrocities, committed by Zira on the persons of humans in her time are commonly performed today on the bodies of beasts, and for the same motives; and that Zira apparently believed, until her encounter with Colonel Taylor, that humans were no more than dumb animals."

Congressman Boyd cleared his throat loudly.

"Yes, Mister Boyd?" Chairman Hartley said.

"Mister Chairman, I want that report to show that this finding was *not* unanimous. Given the history—history which her husband Cornelius undoubtedly knew—the apes had no right to consider humans in the same category as beasts, and furthermore, I submit, they did not so consider them. They saw them as former masters, and took revenge on them when and where possible—"

"Excuse me, Congressman," Hartley interrupted. "You will be allowed to present the minority report—"

There were more murmurs around the table.

"—your minority report, I should say, at a later time. All of you who wish to present minority reports will be given the opportunity. The majority report notes that this finding is not unanimous."

He continued reading. "The Commission does find, by majority vote, that either Zira has committed no crime which deserves prosecution; or that, being an ape, she cannot be

tried by the standards imposed by the International Law of War Crime; or that this Commission has no jurisdiction over Zira, without regard to the truth or falsity of the first two propositions; and the Commission is therefore agreed that it does *not* recommend any prosecution of the chimpanzee Zira. Is this a fair statement, Commissioners?"

There were more murmured assents. Someone said, "Get on with it. It's nearly dinner time."

"I will attempt to do so," Hartley said. He lifted his paper again and read, "This Commission finds that although these apes do not themselves represent a threat to the human race, their progeny, by interbreeding with common apes, may well do so; that unless these progeny interbreed with common apes, the future described by Cornelius and Zira is so improbable as to be to all purposes impossible; and that, therefore, without considerations of justice, but purely in the interests of expediency and the physical salvation of the human race, this Commission recommends to the President of the United States that the birth of the female ape's unborn child be prevented, and that the two adult apes be sterilized permanently by painless means; that after sterilization is performed, they may be considered wards of the United States and employed in such wise as their talents would best indicate, with due regard to their own stated desires."

"It's still murder," the Cardinal muttered. "Abortion is always murder. Why not let the little ape be born and sterilize *it* if they're so anxious—it's the Slaughter of the Innocents again, and no good can come from it."

"We have heard your views before," Hasslein said. "I appreciate your concern, Your Eminence. It is not your responsibility. Let it be on my head."

"On your head and on your children, is that it, Dr. Hasslein? Fortunately, God won't permit you to pass that guilt on to your children."

"If you are quite finished," Chairman Hartley said. He read again. "These findings being adopted by this Commission and presented to the President of the United States, and having been accepted by the president, Dr. Victor Hasslein by Executive Order is given authority to carry out the recommen-

dations of this Commission, and is hereby ordered to do so immediately." Hartley looked at the assembled group. "I think there is nothing else, is there? No?" He raised his gavel. "I hereby declare this Commission dissolved." The gavel fell again, and the sound was like the crack of doom to Lewis Dixon.

Lewis parked in the driveway outside Stephanie's Glendale home. She came outside to meet him, and he pulled her to him, kissed her desperately.

"Hey," she said finally. "What's wrong?"

"Does it show?"

"Yes. That wasn't just for me, Lew—what is it?"

He told her. All of it. "At least they'll be allowed to live, but—it's horrible, Stevie."

"Do they know yet?"

"No," Lewis said. "But Hasslein will tell them tomorrow. He'll have the operation done tomorrow, too. Stevie, he's terrified of those chimpanzees. He really sees them as the end of the human race."

She shuddered in his arms. "Lew—shouldn't we tell them? Shouldn't someone, a friend, be with them when they find out? We can't just wait until Hasslein comes in and—does it."

"Yeah. I'd thought the same thing. That's why I came here, Stevie. I can't face them alone. Will you come with me?"

"Of course."

"Let's go."

"But, Lewis, I can't now. Not for an hour. I've got my sister's children here! I can't leave them alone . . ."

"Get a sitter," Lewis growled. "You know Hasslein. He's likely to go down there tonight."

"It will take a few minutes to get a sitter," Stevie said. "Lewis, if it's that urgent, you better drive down right now. I'll join you as soon as I can. I won't be long, not more than half an hour behind you."

"But that half hour could be crucial. All right, darling. Hurry. And—I love you."

"I'm glad." She smiled, but there was pain in her eyes as well, and she stood watching him drive away for nearly half a minute before running inside to the telephone. Her nieces couldn't understand why she was crying.

Eighteen

"Here's your wife back, sir," Tommy Billings said. He wheeled Zira into the suite she had shared with Cornelius. "I know you've been worried about her, sir. Here she is, safe and sound." The orderly helped Zira to her feet, then left them alone.

"Three days," Cornelius said. "I've been nearly out of my mind!"

"Didn't they tell you I was all right?" Zira asked.

"Of course they *said* so," he answered. "But after what they did I wouldn't believe anything they said. Savages! Barbarians! Jabbing needles into a pregnant woman! Even gorillas wouldn't think of that."

"Yes, dear." She moved closer to him. "Aren't you glad to see me?"

"O Lord, yes." He took her in his arms, then led her to a chair. "You shouldn't be standing. Sorry the furniture's so—" he shrugged, "functional." He gestured at the plain room with its government-issued equipment.

"It's all right," Zira said. She took a seat and watched as Cornelius paced around the room.

"Savages," Cornelius repeated.

"I've done as much to humans as they did to me," Zira said. "And more. Much worse things." She shuddered. "If we'd only known—you must remember, Colonel Taylor thought *we* were savages. At first."

Cornelius looked frantically around the room. "They're probably listening to us," he said.

"So what? They know about Taylor."

"They made you tell about him, too?"

"They made me tell about everything, Cornelius. We no longer have anything to hide."

"Brutes!"

"And may I tell you something? I'm glad, Cornelius. I'm glad because now there's nothing to lie about. I hated that. We can't live with lies."

"If we live at all," Cornelius muttered. "They may not let us live, you know."

"That's nonsense." She rubbed her swollen belly. "It is nonsense, isn't it? They aren't really savages . . ."

"I don't know." He took her hand and held it to his cheek. "How long, now?"

"A week. Not more. Perhaps less."

"So close. And they treated you that way. *Savages.* How could they do that?"

"Cornelius . . . you didn't really mean it, did you? They won't—they wouldn't hurt us? Not now?" She touched her swollen abdomen again. "They wouldn't—oh!" A key rattled in the lock. Zira looked fearfully at the door.

It opened, slowly, to admit Tommy Billings. "Chow time," he said. He carried a tray with soup, juice, and sliced fruit. "Time to eat up."

"Bah," Cornelius said. "Get out."

"Aw, that's no way to talk."

"I'm not hungry, either," Zira said.

"Well, maybe you aren't, Ma'am, but maybe someone else who can't talk yet is. Come on, at least drink your juice. You need the vitamins. And the soup. You ought to eat, if only for the sake of the little monkey inside you."

"Damn you!" Cornelius shouted. He seized the tray and shoved it in Tommy's face.

"Here, now!" Tommy shouted. His arms flailed wildly, as the hot soup blinded him and he struggled to get his balance. "Here, what are you doing?"

"Damn you, damn you, DAMN YOU!" Cornelius shouted again. He took the tray and struck at Tommy's head.

"But what did I do?" Tommy wailed. He staggered forward, and his foot slipped in the spilled soup and juice on the floor. He toppled forward and struck his head against the table; then he was very still.

"Is—is he all right?" Zira asked.

"Of course he's all right," Cornelius snapped. "You know how thick human skulls are. Serves him right. Nobody makes a fool of my wife."

"He's not moving."

"He's unconscious. Let's get out of here."

"But—Cornelius! Shouldn't we call for a—"

"We call for nobody and nothing. We leave. We're intelligent beings; it's about time we showed some intelligence instead of waiting around to see what these savages will do with us. Let's go."

The hall was empty. Cornelius led Zira to its end, and peered out the glass in the door. There were Marines outside.

"Guards out there," he whispered. "Probably all around the place."

"Then how do we get out?" Zira demanded. "Cornelius, I think we ought to go back and—"

"No." He looked around the low building, then went into one of the empty offices, where he examined the ceiling. He looked especially at the ceiling of the closet in the office, then led Zira into another office, where he did the same thing. "Aha," he said. He pointed to the closet ceiling. "I knew there had to be a way *up* in this building. There's an attic up there, and I'll bet we can find a way onto the roof."

"And what does that do for us?" Zira asked coldly.

"Humans can't climb," Cornelius said. "They don't think of looking up when they guard a place. I know—I've been watching them while I nearly went out of my mind worrying about you. And you can climb better in your present condition than humans can in the peak of health."

"All right."

He swarmed up the closet shelves and opened the trap door, then, once up, reached down to help Zira. They were in a dusty attic, and at its end they found a ventilator. Cornelius cautiously removed it, and looked out onto the roof. "Now be very quiet," he whispered. "There are guards below. But notice, they never look at that tree over there—and we can just reach it from up here. Once we're out on the roof, don't talk and don't stop. Just make for the tree and get down on the far side of it. I'll be right behind you."

"All right. I—hope everything will be all right."

"So do I," he whispered. "I love you."

"And I love you." She climbed out onto the roof.

Lewis glared angrily at Victor Hasslein. The scientist's pale eyes glared back, and Lewis found it difficult to keep from reaching across the desk and smashing Hasslein in the face. "You could give them a few days," Lewis said.

"The instructions said immediately," Hasslein told him. "Immediately does not mean in a few days. Damn it, Dr. Dixon, if something unpleasant must be done, putting it off makes it neither easier nor less unpleasant."

"So you admit this is unpleasant."

"Unpleasant?" Hasslein said. "It's a tragedy! Dixon, do you think I *enjoy* this? Do you?"

"Yes, I rather think you do," Lewis said.

"How wrong you are," Hasslein said. "Sit down, Dr. Dixon. You may as well. I doubt that either of us will convince the other of anything, but you can be comfortable while we argue. When the argument is finished—I don't suppose you would care to perform the operation yourself?"

"Jesus Christ, Hasslein! I won't be a part of your monstrous—"

"You don't have to, Dr. Dixon. I merely suggested it in case you loved them enough to want to be sure it was done as painlessly and efficiently, and as safely, as possible. I see that you do not."

"That's hardly fair," Lewis said. He sat heavily in the pad-

ded chair across from Hasslein. "Got another of those cigarettes?"

"Certainly." Hasslein passed the pack across the desk. "I didn't know you smoked."

"I haven't, for five years. It seems like the thing to do tonight."

"You are very concerned, and it is fitting," Hasslein said. "Have you thought that I am also concerned? Consider, Dixon. I am sacrificing what may be one of the most important discoveries in history. Talking animals—intelligent, nonhuman creatures, who are *aware* and conscious, and who breed true. Marvelous. And I am as uncomfortably aware as you that I have no philosophical grounds for thinking myself any better than they are."

"But—Dr. Hasslein, if you believe that, why are you doing this?"

"Because if I am right, the human race will be sacrificed if we preserve these animals. If I am wrong, then we have sacrificed only two individuals. Charming. Innocent. But only two."

"Two? The orders said nothing about the parents. Only the unborn child. You want the parents dead as well, don't you, Hasslein? Damn it, answer me!"

Hasslein shrugged. "I would be more comfortable if they were all dead. Yes. But the orders are precise, and I will carry them out to the letter. That is why I asked if you wish to perform the operations—so that you can be certain that no more is to be done than we have been ordered to do. I would not care to be accused of killing the adults if—if anything goes wrong."

"What could go wrong?" Lewis demanded. "There better not be anything. If you murder those chimpanzees, you'll answer for it."

"How you misunderstand me," Hasslein said. "I carry out my duties, Dr. Dixon. I think we are taking sufficient measures to safeguard the human race. I only want to see them accomplished, and until the job is done, I will worry. We are attempting to change the future, and although I believe in

theory we can do that, I confess some doubts. Have another cigarette?"

"No, thank you—what's that?"

There was a disturbance outside in the hall. "It sounds as if someone is shouting," Dr. Hasslein said. "Come, let us go see what it is . . ."

Cornelius looked back at the chain-link fence of Camp Pendleton. "I think that is the last of them, my dear," he said. "We are outside the camp entirely now, if my memory is correct."

"But what will we do?" Zira asked. They stumbled along in the light of a quarter moon. The narrow road seemed eerie, and they heard rustlings in the chaparral and scrub oak of the fields around them.

"We'll have to find clothing," Cornelius said. "Hats. Enough clothes to disguise ourselves as humans."

"I don't think we can do that—oh. Uh!"

"What's the matter?"

"Calmly, Cornelius. Calmly. Now. Are you calm?"

"Yes—"

"Good. I think my labor has started."

"You what?"

"It must have been the exertion of climbing. I wonder what it was like for primitive apes, when they had to climb trees all the time, right up to the time—"

"But—but—we have to do something!" Cornelius protested. "I'll have to go back for help!"

"Nonsense. We had children for thousands of years without help. I'll manage. And I do have you."

"But—"

"We had better get off the road, though," Zira said. "Come on." She took his hand and led him down the embankment and into the chaparral. "There's a road on the other side."

"Same road," Cornelius said. "It makes a big U here to get up the side of the bluff. Are you sure you're all right?"

"Of course—oh!"

"Again? We'd better—" he broke off, as there was a thun-

der of wings. A California quail took to the air from beneath their feet.

"Like a machine gun," Zira said. "Will they come looking for us? With their army?"

"Possibly. You'd better get some rest. Only—if you can still walk—"

"Of course I can still walk. I'm a perfectly healthy female chimpanzee."

"Then I would like to get further away while we can—" he stopped to listen.

"What do you hear?" Zira asked.

There was the faint wail of a siren behind them. Cornelius turned back to his wife. "Nothing. Just another bird." He took her hand and led her down the embankment.

Nineteen

Lewis Dixon knelt beside the white-coated body. There was no pulse at all. He motioned for a blanket, then looked up to Victor Hasslein who stood in the doorway. "Dead," Lewis said. His voice was incredulous.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Hasslein said.

"Sure you are," Lewis said. He covered the dead orderly and stood. "Sure."

"I really am. I don't know why your opinion is important to me, Dr. Dixon, since it is obvious that you will never think well of me, but I find myself trying to convince you that I'm not a monster thirsting for innocent blood."

"You want the chimpanzees dead. You'll use this as an excuse to hunt them down."

"Certainly. They are a threat to humanity, to civilization, to science, to everything I hold dear, and they must be destroyed. I wish they *were* evil. It would make this easier." Hasslein waited until the attendants had finished covering Tommy, then turned away. "Even this, I expect, was an accident; but it will make things easier." He walked rapidly to his office and began telephoning. Within minutes there were

sirens throughout Camp Pendleton, and jeeps of armed men drove rapidly through and around the camp grounds.

Hasslein hesitated before making the next telephone call. As he stared at the phone, Lewis Dixon came into his office. Hasslein looked up with a frown. "Yes?"

"What orders did you give them?" Lewis demanded. "Are they going to shoot on sight?"

"I merely told the Admiral that the prisoners had escaped, and that they had killed one of his Marines doing so."

"Jesus! That'll make the others trigger-happy . . ."

"Possibly. I hope so," Hasslein said. "I can admit that to you. Dixon, don't you care? In future times, another Shakespeare, another Edison, another Einstein, may be crawling on all fours, unable to speak, a brute with no culture doomed to a life of misery—and all because of these apes. Can't you understand it's them or us?"

"Even if I believed that, I couldn't condone killing them out of hand."

"No. I suppose not." Hasslein lifted the telephone. "General Brody, please. If you'll excuse me, Dr. Dixon, I must report to the president." He waited until Lewis had gone, then lit a cigarette. They took a long time getting Brody on the phone, and it took even longer for Hasslein to explain what had happened.

"What orders do the Marines have?" Brody demanded.

"To recapture them, of course—"

"Yeah. Recapture them, but they know these monkeys have killed one of their buddies. They won't do it without damned strong orders. You'll see that they *get* those orders, Hasslein. We want those chimps alive. Is that understood?"

"I thought you were in agreement with me, General," Hasslein protested.

"What's that got to do with it?" Brody demanded. "The president's going to insist on the same damned thing. Those apes are to be recaptured, alive, and to hell with what they've done or haven't done. Have you got that? I've seen the Harris poll on those monkeys, Hasslein. You shoot them down out of hand and you'll make a political crisis. The people think of those apes as human. Every science type in the

country wants an interview with 'em. And so on. I want them back alive, Hasslein, and so will the boss. You got that?"

"Yes, General."

"I'll make bloody sure of it, Victor. I'm calling Admiral Jardin right now. Meanwhile, you issue the proper orders. And call me if anything new happens."

They watched the cars full of soldiers race back and forth on the road, and felt increasing horror. Zira moaned again, and finally Cornelius could not stand it any longer.

"I'm going to go get help," he said. "I'll find Lewis."

"No ... please." She looked around their small hollow. Chaparral grew thick on all sides, so that they were invisible from the road.

"Look, I only lost my temper with that boy. I hurt him, but he'll be all right. I owe him an apology. I've felt miserable ever since I struck him—and it wasn't his fault. We've got to go back, we've got to have help."

"I can walk," Zira said. "Or I can have the baby here. We'll be—"

"No." Cornelius was firm. "They may punish us, but at least the baby will be delivered with proper care. I'm going to get help. You wait here." Before she could protest, he scrambled down the hill toward the lower loop of the road.

There were soldiers there. They had a barrier across the road, and they carried rifles. Cornelius waited, afraid, hoping to see someone he recognized. Finally a car came, its lights showing the dozen Marines clearly. One of them came forward and shined a light into the car.

"Miss, I'm afraid this road's closed," the soldier said.

"I am Dr. Branton," she said. "Captain, I have a pass. Here."

"Oh. Right, Miss."

Cornelius recognized Stevie and felt relief. He started forward through the bushes, ready to show himself, and the Marine continued to speak. "Better be careful, Dr. Branton. Those monkeys killed one of our troopers, that young orderly Corporal Billings, and they're on the loose. Out there some-

where. I ought to send a trooper with you, but I don't really have the men to spare. You lock all your doors and don't open them 'till you're at the compound, you hear?"

Cornelius turned away in horror. What had he done? The boy was dead! Dead! What of the law now? He saw Stevie's car drive away, and remembered how the road looped here.

Quickly, he thought. I have to catch her. He ran uphill, through the chaparral, heedless of noise but silently all the same, ten thousand years of instinct protecting him from being heard. He reached the upper section of the road and stood panting, waiting, as Stevie's car came up the hill.

She braked hard, and the car stopped with a screech. Cornelius went to the driver's side. The window was rolled up, and Stevie did not move. Cornelius stood there, silently, in mounting panic.

Stephanie rolled down the window. "Cornelius! What's happened?" she said. She sounded very frightened.

"Thank you for trusting me," he told her. "I do not deserve it. But I didn't mean to kill the boy. He was teasing Zira. Or I thought he was, and I struck him. He fell. It was an accident. You must believe me."

"I do," Stephanie said. "But *they* won't. Where's Zira?"

"In the bushes there. She's in labor, or very nearly so. Stevie, what are we going to *do?*"

"Oh, God, I don't know—can you get Zira into the car? We'll have to find Lewis."

"I'll get her."

"And hurry, Cornelius. The Marines will be all over this road."

He rushed down the slope, and lifted Zira tenderly. "Can you walk?"

"Yes. It will be all right—where are we going?"

"Stevie has a car. She's going to help us." They struggled up the hill. Stephanie had the back door of the car open.

"Get in," Stevie said. "And get down. Cover yourselves with this blanket. I'll have to think of a story to get us past that roadblock down below. Don't move, whatever you do."

She jockeyed the car around in a U-turn, backing up twice

to get the long station wagon turned around on the narrow road. Then she drove back down the hill.

"Back so soon, Dr. Branton?" the Captain asked.

"Yes. I've been thinking about what you said. If they've killed one of your men, I want no part of them, Captain. I'm going home."

"Don't blame you, Miss." He shined his light into her car and glanced in, but made no thorough search. "I'm supposed to open the trunk—you got no trunk in a station wagon, though. Have a good trip, Doctor."

"Thank you, Captain." She drove away.

"Killed?" Zira said. "Cornelius, what have you done?"

"I killed that boy. The orderly," Cornelius said miserably.

Zira groaned. "Would it have helped if we'd called for help after he fell?" she asked.

"I don't know," Cornelius said. "Be still. Rest. Think of the new life on the way, not about—one dead human. Stevie, where are we going?"

"You'll see. It's the only place I can think of. We'll call Lewis when we get there."

She drove on into the night, through the brown hills of Orange County. Behind them they could hear the sirens of the Marine trucks, and the sounds of helicopters searching the camp.

They drove through the darkened streets of San Juan Capistrano, past the old mission to a vacant field beyond. There were tents pitched on the field, and a number of truck-mounted circus wagons parked next to them. Stevie drove to a camper-trailer marked "ARMANDO'S SENSATIONAL CIRCUS." "Wait here," she said, and went to the door.

After a long time it opened and Stevie vanished inside.

"Can we trust her?" Cornelius asked. There was agony in his voice.

"What else can we do?" Zira said. "Cornelius, if she intended to betray us she need merely have spoken to the Marine captain at the roadblock."

"Yes, but suppose she has changed her mind? Or—why would this man help us? This Armando?"

"What else can we do?"

Stevie and Armando came out of the caravan. The short, dark man peered into the station wagon, then opened the door. "Come out, come out," he said. His voice was almost musical. "We have better places than the back seat of a Plymouth for a chimpanzee to be born. Come along, come along."

His enthusiasm was infectious. Cornelius and Zira were led through the tent and caravan city to a small tent at the end. Inside they found a small infirmary, as well as cages. Armando pointed to the cages and laughed. "You will not be the first chimpanzee to give birth in Armando's infirmary. Nine, nine healthy young apes have been born here, the last one less than a week ago. Now, Madame Zira, if you will consent to sleep in a cage—"

"Anywhere," Zira said. "I'm exhausted."

"Can you send for Lewis?" Cornelius asked.

"Certainly," Armando said. "Certainly. Although you will find that Armando is not inexperienced in these matters."

"I already called him," Stevie said. "You'll be all right here, Cornelius. You'll see."

Zira lay on the pallet in the cage. "If Lewis is going to deliver this baby, he'd better hurry," she said. "I don't think he's going to make it."

"Oho," Armando said. He looked at Cornelius, then shrugged. "Out. Out! Go to my caravan and wait. You will find cigars and scotch there, if you wish them, but leave."

"But shouldn't I stay?" Cornelius said.

The other three laughed in unison. Cornelius let himself be pushed out of the tent, their laughter ringing behind him. "Fathers!" Armando snorted. "I have delivered five human children here, when this circus was on the road, and I tell you, I prefer the animals, because the fathers of apes do not care. Go, Cornelius, you are worse than a human midget."

He went to Armando's wagon and found a seat at the dinette. The caravan was small but neat, and there was plenty of room to sit, but none to pace. Cornelius sat in the

dark, his face in his hands, and he listened, and waited, while his thoughts haunted him with memories of the dead boy lying motionless on the hospital floor.

They will demand my child's life as the price of that boy's blood, he thought. I do not know how I know this, but I do know it. My child's life for that boy.

Twenty

"You're taking a big chance, Armando," Lewis Dixon said.
"Why?"

The circus owner shrugged. "What have they done to deserve death? Imprisonment? Their baby killed? Come, it is nearly time. Stephanie is waiting for you."

They walked quickly through the circus yards. "In that cage we have Heloise, and her daughter Salome. Our last maternity in this circus. We have had more chimpanzees born here than you have in your Los Angeles Zoo!"

They reached the infirmary tent. "Cornelius!" Armando said. "I told you to wait in my caravan."

"I had to see Lewis. I didn't mean to kill that boy, Lewis. I didn't—"

"I believe you," Lewis said.

"But will the others? While I waited, I had the most horrible thoughts. Nightmares, but I was fully awake. I thought—that humans would demand the life of my child in exchange for the orderly. I want them to take mine instead."

"Nonsense," Armando said. "No one will die for that boy. There was an accident. A very bad thing, but no one should die for it. Now go and wait for us. It is nearly time."

Stevie looked out through the tent flap. "Yes, hurry, Lewis. Armando. Please."

"We're coming," Lewis said. "Wait here, if you can't go to Armando's caravan. But stay out of sight."

"My people may be trusted," Armando said.

"Perhaps. But they can't go to jail for what they don't know. Or they'll be less likely to, anyway," Lewis said. "Now let's deliver that baby."

Again Cornelius was alone. He went to the other cage and looked inside. The chimpanzee whimpered at him, and clutched its baby protectively.

"Confused, aren't you?" Cornelius said. He used soothing tones, knowing the chimpanzee couldn't speak. "An ape, like you, but wearing clothes, and speaking. Well, you needn't worry about it. Your child won't speak. But she's a fine one, anyway . . ." He paced again, waiting, and it seemed to be hours before he heard a cry from the infirmary.

He rushed to the entrance, but no one came out. He heard more cries from inside, and voices, low, urgent. What was happening? He was reaching for the tent flap when it opened and Stephanie came out.

She smiled. "It's a boy. A fine healthy one, so far as I can tell. And Zira's all right. Everything is fine, Cornelius."

He looked around at the shabby circus wagons, and remembered the soldiers searching for him in the dark. "Sure," he said. "Everything's fine."

Zira lay under blankets on a bed in one of the circus caravans. The baby suckled as she cradled it in her arms.

"What will we call him?" Cornelius asked.

"Milo," Zira said firmly.

"Milo. Yes, certainly," he said. "Are you sure you feel all right?"

"I'm fine, Cornelius. But what are we going to do now?"

"Armando goes on tour in a month. We stay with him. Where better for apes to hide than in a circus?" Cornelius said. "We can help him train the others. We can even be per-

formers, so long as we're careful not to appear too intelligent."

"It's not much of a life," Zira said. "Wouldn't it be better to go back, now?"

"How?" Cornelius asked. "Even if they would forgive us for the orderly, the Commission gave orders for—for our child to be aborted, and for us to be sterilized."

"What?" She clutched the infant closer to her. "Savages!"

"They believe they are protecting their race. Would we act differently? I didn't hesitate to hit that boy over the head—"

"Stop torturing yourself."

"Yes. Anyway, you see that going back is impossible. And even if we could, we would have to tell where we have been, and Armando would be punished."

"Then we can't go back," Zira said. "We'll have to stay with Armando. Forever."

Victor Hasslein's office had become a command post. It was lined with maps, and his three telephones would reach, through the switchboards in the lobby, every law enforcement unit in Southern California. He stabbed out a cigarette into the overflowing ashtray and looked up at Lewis Dixon in desperation. "She couldn't have had more than two weeks to go before giving birth, could she?"

Dixon shrugged. "I'd say less time. Certainly no more."

"Then that definitely limits where they could go."

"I wonder," Amalfi said. "It's been thirty-six hours, Dr. Hasslein. They could be anywhere now."

"You are implying that someone helped them. Some traitor to the human race drove them away from here."

Amalfi shrugged.

"I don't believe it," Hasslein said. "But—it's worth checking out." He lifted a telephone. "Major, find out what automobiles left here on the first night of the escape—and have those automobiles examined by the crime laboratory people. They are to search for signs that chimpanzees traveled in the cars." He laid the phone in its cradle. "Where? Where would apes go?"

"To other apes?" Amalfi said aloud.

Hasslein looked up with a frown. Then he nodded slowly. "Of course!" He lifted the telephone again. "Major Osgood! Have all units begin a systematic search of every zoo, veterinary office, circus, menagerie—anyplace that would normally shelter apes. Begin with Orange County and then spread out to Los Angeles and San Diego." He paused a moment.

"Yes, Osgood," Hasslein said. "All of them. Ask for permission to search, first. If they won't cooperate because you ask them, remind them that they probably want research grants and this is a federal matter. Tell them the IRS can look into their books. And if that doesn't get you permission to search, we'll have a federal judge standing by to issue search warrants. . . . Right. Immediately." He laid the phone down again. "That, gentlemen, may just do it."

It took Lewis ten minutes to find an excuse to leave Hasslein's office. He got coffee from a machine in the lobby, and went to a pay telephone when he was sure no one was watching. The phone rang and rang, and he was afraid no one was answering. Finally someone did.

"Stevie?" he asked hopefully.

"Lewis? Darling, are you all right? You sound so—"

"No time," he said. "Hasslein's ordered a search of all circuses and menageries. You won't have long, they're starting in Orange County. You've got to get the apes out of there!"

"But where?" she asked.

"I'll think of something—just get them out of Armando's, fast. Take them north, toward Laguna. I'll meet you at that coffee house south of Laguna. The place where we had lunch last month."

"Right. I'm on my way."

"I love you, Stevie."

"Yes. Lewis—will it be all right? Can we save them?"

"I wish I knew. We'll try. I love you."

"Yes. That helps. I'm going now. I love you too, Lewis." She hung up the pay phone and left the booth, running to

Armando's tent. He wasn't there, and she found him in the caravan with Cornelius and Zira. Quickly she explained what Lewis had told her.

"Bastards!" Armando exclaimed. "No, no, Zira, you rest. Cornelius and I will pack what you need. Where will you go?" he asked Stevie.

"I don't know, yet. Lewis will think of something."

"It is better that I do not know, anyway. What Armando does not know, Armando cannot be made to tell." He took out a suitcase and began stuffing it with baby clothes and equipment. As he did, he muttered. "I had planned it all so well! In a month—in just one month—we move on to our tour and eventually to winter quarters in Florida. I could have released you in the Everglades, and you would have lived happily. Or you could stay with Armando! My friends, my dear friends, what can I say? What can I do?"

"You've been a saint already, Armando," Stevie told him.

"No, no, a real saint can work miracles, and Armando has none of those."

"A man like you is a miracle," Cornelius said. "We will be grateful forever."

"I am grateful to you," Armando said. "It has been a privilege to know you. I hate those who wish to tamper with destiny, which is the unalterable will of God. If it is God's will that man destroy his fine civilization, and dominion over the earth pass to the apes, then that is God's will; and no man has the right to change that. Dear friends, you must go. Now, before the police come." He reached up to his collar and took a medal on a silver chain from around his neck. "Wait. Take this. For the baby." He put the medal around the infant chimpanzee's neck and fastened the clasp.

"But what?" Zira asked.

"It is a medal of St. Francis of Assisi, and it has been blessed by the cardinal himself. Armando has no miracles, but perhaps St. Francis has."

"Who is he?" Cornelius asked.

"He was a very holy man who loved animals," Armando told them. "And some of us believe he can work miracles to

this day. I know this is superstitious nonsense to you, but for Armando, leave the medal on the child. Please."

"We will, Armando," Zira said. "Always. It will never be taken off him. I promise you that." She turned away, then suddenly looked back. "Armando? I would like to say goodbye to Heloise."

The circus master frowned. "There is little time—but of course."

They watched as Zira, carrying her child, went into the infirmary where Heloise cared for her own baby chimpanzee. Then Armando and Cornelius were busy again, gathering the things they would need on the road, and Stephanie brought the car around.

They did not have to wait long before Zira joined them.

It was night, and the oil derricks stood above them like giants. The grey bird pumps pecked endlessly at the ground, bringing up oil for the power plants just visible in the distance. The ground was covered with blowing dry dust.

Lewis stopped the station wagon at the edge of the oil field. "This is as far as I can take you," he said. "We have to get back to the labs and clean up Stevie's car." He switched on the interior lights of the car and held out a map. "Can you read this, Cornelius?"

"I am familiar with maps," Cornelius said. "If the conventions are explained—yes. Certainly. I could have drawn this."

"OK," Lewis said. "This is the oil field. It goes on that way to a bluff overlooking the sea. There's a small bay right here, about two miles, just beyond an abandoned oil refinery. The bay's crowded with wrecks. Old ships, brought in and beached. It's not deep enough to use for a harbor."

"Yes, I see," Cornelius said. "Zira, wrap that baby up well. It's chilly out there, and we have a long way to walk."

"I used to play here when I was a kid," Lewis mused. "Anyway, there are some old ships there, intact enough to give you good shelter. You can hide in them for the next month—"

"A month?" Zira protested.

"At least," Lewis told her. "I'm still hoping we can get you out of here and past the search, so you can go with Armando. I'll bring you more food when it's safe."

Cornelius nodded, and got out of the car. He shouldered the backpack from the trunk, and looked to Zira. "Ready?"

"Yes."

He turned to Lewis. "They'll kill the baby if they find us?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so. Yes," Lewis said. His voice sounded as if the words had been torn from him with hot pincers.

"Then—give us a chance to kill ourselves. Please."

Lewis hesitated, then nodded. He took a pistol from his pocket. "Do you know how to use this?"

Cornelius nodded, then laughed bitterly. "That was one portion of your technology which we never lost. Please, Lewis."

"All right." He handed Cornelius the weapon.

"You're the second human I've kissed," Zira said. She put her muzzle to his lips. "Colonel Taylor was the first."

"And you're my first," Cornelius told Stevie. He kissed her. "Goodbye."

"Till we meet . . ." Lewis said. "Not goodbye."

"Come on, Zira. Don't dawdle," Cornelius said. He moved briskly away, his voice harsh to mask his emotion.

Twenty-One

They paused at the edge of the ridge and looked across the bay toward Los Angeles. The lights were very bright, glittering slightly in a haze rising from the sea. The waves pounded on the coast below, marching endlessly from the west.

They were so close to the city lights that they could not see many stars, but they had never seen city illuminations before. They stood looking for a long time.

"Brighter than the stars," Cornelius said. "Beautiful."

"From here," Zira agreed. "I think it wouldn't be so pleasant if we were there."

"Yes." He took her hand. "Let's go."

They went along the top of the bluff until they reached the sheltered bay. As Lewis had told them, there were a number of abandoned boats, mostly fishing craft, beached in the shallow water. One large old tramp steamer stood out from among the others, and Cornelius pointed to it. "We can hide in that."

They threaded their way down the bluff. Oil tanks stood on the sky line above them, each marked by winking red lights.

"Who lives in those?" Zira asked.

"No one. It's where they store the food for their machines.

This whole vast mechanical civilization depends on—" he paused. "Quiet!" he whispered.

"Is there someone out there?" Zira whispered.

"I don't know. I thought I heard someone," Cornelius said. "I don't hear them now. Let's go." They crept on toward the abandoned ships. Oil had seeped from the ground near them, and made the way slippery. They reached the beach, and soft sand made the going even harder.

Then they came over a slight rise, and saw the fire.

"We've checked out just about every place that *ever* had apes," Larry Bates told Hasslein. "Nothing. It wasn't such a good idea after all."

"But where, then?" Hasslein demanded. "They must have had help. Widen the perimeter of search. Assume that someone met them and took them out of the camp."

"Who?" Amalfi demanded.

"Assume anyone who left, and see what you get from that," Hasslein said. "Start with that Dr. Stephanie Branton. She came up to the camp gates, ran into the road block, and turned around. Her car was searched—but suppose it wasn't searched very well? Make the assumption she took the apes away with her, and trace her movements."

"Right, sir," Amalfi said. He went out of the office.

"You'll get them, sooner or later," Bates said.

"Yes." Hasslein's snarl was savage. "That's what I'm afraid of. Later. Later we'll do something about the population explosion. Later we'll do something about nuclear weapons. We think we've got all the time in the world—but how much time has the world got? How can we buy it more?" Hasslein waved expansively. "Someone's got to care NOW!"

"Yes, sir," Bates said woodenly.

"Yes, sir. Dr. Hasslein's fanatical again. Stark raving mad. Bates, do you know that twenty-five years ago they told me that *later* they were going to do something about Mongolism in children?"

"Sir?"

"Forget it. Find those apes." His voice dropped danger-

ously low, and he snarled ferally. "Find them, Bates. And tell me where they are."

It wasn't a very large fire, because Zeke didn't want it seen by anyone. He huddled close to it and watched his stew bubble. It was already cooked, but Mulligan got more flavor the longer it simmered, and Zeke wasn't in any hurry to eat. He'd had a sandwich for lunch, and there was half a bottle of wine left to drink after the stew. With what he'd drunk before, that was plenty.

Zeke was sure he wasn't a drunk. He liked to drink, and he liked the warm feeling wine gave him, but he didn't wipe himself out. He ate well, and he was willing to work when he couldn't find any other way to get a meal.

He was thinking about the wine when he saw the chimpanzees.

"Jee-sus Christ!" he shouted. "What're you?"

They looked back at him, two chimpanzees wearing human clothing, one carrying a baby wrapped in a blanket, the other wearing a knapsack on his back and carrying a revolver in his belt.

"We won't hurt you," Cornelius said.

"Great God Almighty! I'll never drink another drop," Zeke shouted. He leaped to his feet to run away, but he slipped in the sand. He scrambled up and slipped again.

"If he gets away he'll tell—" Zira said.

"Please! Stay!" Cornelius shouted.

"I won't tell nothing! I swear, I won't ever say nothing to nobody!" This time he made it to his feet. He looked at Cornelius, his eyes staring at the gun. "I promise, nothing, nothing—"

"I told you, we won't hurt you," Cornelius said.

"Yeah! Sure!" Zeke shouted. When the chimpanzee did nothing, did not reach for the gun, came no closer, Zeke ran past him and scrambled up the bluff.

"Should you let him go?" Zira asked.

"How could I stop him?"

"You're stronger than he is," she said.

"And suppose I hurt him? As I did that boy? No, I can't do it," he told her. "He promised he'd say nothing. Now let's find a place to hide." He led her down to the water's edge, and across planking to the carcass of the freighter.

They clambered aboard the decaying ship. "Even like this, it is magnificent," Cornelius said. "We never built anything like this. All this, all of it, they have it now," he said. "Why would they take any chances? You'd think they'd work and work and work to keep it . . ."

He led her below to the cabins. There was a stateroom which had once belonged to the old ship's captain. Tramps had been using it, but they had kept it neat, and there were blankets. "That man we frightened away must have stayed here," Cornelius said.

"Do we dare stay?" Zira asked.

"Where can we go? Lewis said he would meet us here. Without Lewis we can't escape. There is no place to go."

"But that man—"

"May not say anything," Cornelius said. "Go to sleep. I'll keep watch."

Dawn showed them the entire bay. It was shallow and stagnant, with small patches of oil and dead fish. Zira found a protected spot that could not be seen from the land, and brought the blanket-wrapped baby out to nurse in the warming sun. She waved at the dirty water below. "Did Lewis really play here?" she wondered.

"It must have been cleaner then."

"It stinks of man. Human stench."

"That's oil," Cornelius said. "And dead fish."

"Is that what man wants oil for? To kill fish?" The baby made happy sounds as she cradled it.

"You don't like humans, do you?" Cornelius asked.

"We've met hundreds here, and only three we can trust." She continued to pet the baby. "I don't like that cabin, Cornelius. I think there are fleas in there."

He shrugged. "I'll see if I can find a better place." He moved off through the ship graveyard, hoping for a nicer

cabin. The human smell *had* been very strong in the one they were using now.

"How long have you had this man in custody?" Hasslein demanded.

"He was picked up about 2:30 this morning," the deputy sheriff said. He looked at his notebook. "Drunk and disorderly. Suspect was taken to the county lockup to sleep it off. He was babbling about talking apes waving guns at him. The desk sergeant wrote it up, and the lieutenant noticed it coming on duty this morning."

"Idiot," Hasslein growled. "Almost nine hours you've had him!" He turned to Zeke. "Where did you see them?" he demanded.

"I didn't see anything, sir," Zeke said. "Honest, sir, I got too much wine last night, and—well, that's all there was to it."

"Nonsense," Hasslein snapped. "You saw two chimpanzees, one carrying a baby chimpanzee or else very pregnant. Both animals could talk, and probably spoke to you. Haven't you been reading the newspapers?"

Zeke looked surprised. "I haven't been following them for a while—"

"He's a common drunk," the deputy said. "We get him about twice a year. I doubt Zeke *can* read—"

"I most certainly can!"

"Anyway, he generally doesn't know what's going on in the world. Zeke, we keep trying to tell you, those apes you saw were real," the deputy said. He saw a copy of *Time* and grabbed it. "Look. Right here, see, that's their pictures on the cover."

"I'll be damned," Zeke said.

"So. You admit you saw them?" Hasslein said triumphantly.

"Well—"

"Where?" Hasslein demanded. "Where? WHERE?"

"Don't shout at me. I promised I wouldn't tell."

"Promised whom?"

"Uh—them, cap'n. The ape had a gun in his belt, and they was talking about not letting me go—so I promised I wouldn't tell about them."

"But you already have," Hasslein insisted. He got silence. "Do you know who I am?"

"No, Cap'n."

"I am the chief science advisor to the President of the United States."

"Well, smell you!"

The deputy choked back laughter. "Zeke, what he means is he can have you put away for a long time. In some awful place, too, I expect."

"He can?"

"Sure."

"Oh." Zeke thought about it for a while. "It was by Point Doom," he said. "You know, that old ship graveyard? I been living on one of them ships for a few weeks now. Like a fool, I came ashore to cook my dinner. Didn't want to smoke up the ship. Besides, they're all over oil. And I saw those chimpanzees, just like you said. One of 'em was carrying a baby, and the other had on a knapsack, regular backpack thing, and he had a gun in his belt."

"Thank you," Hasslein said. "You may release this man, deputy. And get me your superiors. I will want the police to seal off that area." He stood and put on his lightweight topcoat. It thumped hard against the desk as he did, and Hasslein put his hand into the pocket to check on the automatic.

As the deputy led the old wino out, Hasslein nodded grimly to himself. The baby chimp was already born. That changed everything—and made the threat to the human race even greater.

"Get me my driver," Hasslein snapped to the Marine outside his door. "And a squad of your Marines. With a sergeant."

"Uh—shouldn't the Lieutenant come with us?" the trooper asked.

"No. That won't be necessary. Just your sergeant. And let's go!"

The jeep drove swiftly through the oil fields. Hasslein did not wait at locked gates; he had his Marine drivers break through them. The county sheriffs spread out behind them sealing off the area, as Hasslein brought his troops to the small bay. He stood at the top of the bluff and searched through the wrecked ships with binoculars.

"Nothing," he muttered.

"Nor me, sir," Sergeant Meissner said. "But they'd keep out of sight, I reckon."

"Yes." Hasslein examined the ridge. "They must have gone down this path. We'll take the same route. Bring your troops. And remember, Sergeant, those apes have guns."

"Yes, sir. The Captain said we were to take them alive."

"Of course," Hasslein said. "But you wouldn't want any of your men to be killed. Just be very careful."

They reached the bottom of the bluff and started across the soft sand, Hasslein and Sergeant Meissner in front, a dozen Marines behind fanned out with rifles ready.

"There's where that wino had his fire," Meissner said, pointing. "Looks like he took off in a hell of a hurry. He left his stew."

"Yes. And here!" Hasslein pointed in triumph. "One of them fell here. Slipped in the oil. There is a bare foot print. The foot print of an ape!" They reached the water's edge and Hasslein looked out at the ships. Where would he hide if he were an ape? "Sergeant, I'm going out there. You deploy the men around here so the chimps can't escape, then follow me."

"Sure that's wise, sir?" Meissner asked.

"I'm sure it is not, Sergeant. But I'm going all the same."

"Yes, sir." Meissner watched Hasslein take his automatic from his pocket and work the slide. The scientist walked gingerly out on the planking leading to the big wrecked freighter in the center of the bay.

It bothered Meissner. He wasn't responsible for Hasslein's safety, but his officers would have his hide if anything happened to the president's advisor while Meissner was with him.

And what about those apes? Meissner didn't trust Hasslein. But the Captain had told him to take Hasslein's orders—what could he do? He moved quickly to deploy the men. The sooner he could get out there, the better he'd feel.

Twenty-Two

"It's no use, Stevie," Lewis said. "They're not going to let us in." He turned back to the Marines at the gate to the oil field. "Corporal, do you understand what responsibility you're taking? Those chimpanzees were put under my care, I know they're down there and Dr. Hasslein is searching for them—and you won't let me in! What if something happens to one of the apes? Who'll care for them?"

The Marine stood impassively in front of the gate. "All I know, sir, is the Sergeant told me to wait for an officer and not to let nobody in here until the officer came. I'm doing that."

"Lewis," Stevie called from the car. "Does he have a radio? Can he call someone?"

'Right," Lewis said. "Well? Do you have communications?"

"Well, yes, sir, but I don't think civilians are supposed to—"

"Corporal, if you don't use that set to call an officer for me, and anything happens to those chimps while we're standing here waiting for orders, I'll do my best to have you shot."

Lewis's voice was cold and hard, and he saw he'd gotten to the Marine. "Call the base."

The Marine nodded. "All right, sir. Who do you want to get?"

"Admiral Jardin. Now!"

"The admiral—" the Marine's eyes widened slightly. "Yes, sir." He lifted the microphone from its hook in the jeep and called.

Lewis stood and fidgeted. Stevie got out of the car and stood with him. It seemed to take forever. Finally the Marine motioned to them.

"Yes, Dr. Dixon?" the admiral's voice said.

Lewis explained the situation. "Hasslein's down there with a squad of Marines and no officer," he finished. "I don't like it, Admiral."

There was a long silence. "I don't like it either, Dixon. Corporal!"

The Marine snapped to attention, then looked sheepish and took the mike. "Yes, sir."

"Let Dr. Dixon and Dr. Branton go through that gate. No. Cancel that. Go with them, Corporal. Do as Dr. Dixon tells you, and when you see your sergeant, tell him that I said he is to take Dr. Dixon's orders too. Even if Dr. Hasslein orders differently. Is that understood?"

"Yessir. I'm to go with these people and tell the Sarge he's to do what this man here says."

"Get moving," the admiral snapped.

"It'll be faster in my jeep," the Marine told them. "Sir. Ma'am. Get in." He turned the jeep and headed over the oil field. As Dixon urged him on, the jeep began to bounce and left behind a cloud of dust.

They stopped at the edge of the bluff. Below, Sergeant Meissner had deployed his men around the small cove, and now moved cautiously out on the boards toward the freighter. Hasslein was already on the ship. Lewis and Stevie saw him vanish down a companionway.

"Quick," Lewis said. "We've got to get down there!" He took Stevie's hand and they ran down the pathway, with the corporal scrambling after them. When they reached the

water's edge there was no sign of either Hasslein or Sergeant Meissner.

It was dark in the old ship, and Victor Hasslein wished for a flashlight. He stumbled on something, and caught himself; some small hard object rattled down the stairs and into the rotten hull below.

"Cornelius?"

Zira's voice! He was certain of it. Hasslein moved toward the sound.

"Is that you, Cornelius?"

He heard scrambling. She was leaving her hiding place, moving somewhere, suspicious, but Hasslein did not dare answer. He listened, and moved cautiously, following the sound. She would have the infant with her, and she was separated from the other ape. That should make it easier.

She was moving upward, toward the deck, he realized. Quickly he turned back up the stairs and went out onto the deck, moving silently, and crossed over to the other stairway he'd seen. He listened. Yes, she was coming. Hasslein stepped back, away from the cabin entrance, and waited.

There she was. Carrying the baby, wrapped in a blanket. He waited until she was completely out of the cabin, out on the deck where she couldn't escape—"Hello, Zira."

She screamed. The shrill sound carried all over the shipyard. Then she turned to run.

"No," Hasslein said. "I'll shoot. Stand where you are—"

She darted around the cabin side. Hasslein ran after her, not in time, as she vanished down into the ship again. He looked around for the first time, to see Dixon and another Marine coming across the boardwalk toward the ship.

Now or never, Hasslein thought. Pity it has to be this way. He ran into the interior of the ship. It was silent—and then he heard the cry, the whimper of an infant. He went through the old superstructure, and came out in the open at the ship's fantail. Zira was there, cornered.

"Give me the baby, Zira," he said. He held the pistol very steady. "Give it to me, now, or I'll shoot both of you."

"No. You'll kill us both anyway—"

"The Commission ordered you sterilized. The same thing could be done with the baby. None of you has to die—"

She turned to run again. Hasslein shouted, "No, wait—" Then he took careful aim and fired.

Zira fell to the deck. Hasslein fired again, into the blanketed form she carried. He started toward the two still forms, moving slowly, his face a mask.

There was a shot. Victor Hasslein felt it before he heard it—excruciating pain in his chest. Suddenly he couldn't breathe, and every beat of his heart was agony. He turned to see Cornelius, pistol in hand, on the ship's bridge high above. The ape's face was twisted with rage.

"Zira!" Cornelius shouted.

It all seems so trivial now, Hasslein thought. The pain wasn't so bad, it had been much worse a minute ago. *I don't feel it because I'm dying,* he thought. But what happened to Cornelius? And who is shouting so loud? There were other shots, and screams, but he no longer heard them. Hasslein fell to the deck and was very still.

Lewis Dixon saw it as a nightmare, the kind in which everything happens in slow motion and there is nothing anyone can do no matter how horrible it is.

He ran across the planking toward the ship. He had almost reached it when he heard the first shots.

"No!" Lewis shouted. "Sergeant! I have orders from the admiral! The chimpanzees are not to be harmed!"

There was another shot. Cornelius stood high above him on the bridge of the ship, and he held the pistol Lewis had given him. He was aiming at someone or something below, and Sergeant Meissner was coming up behind him shouting for him to drop the pistol.

Cornelius took careful aim.

"God damn you!" the Sergeant screamed. "Drop that—"

Cornelius fired again. And again.

Sergeant Meissner screamed wordless rage and triggered his weapon. Cornelius straightened and half turned toward

the Marine; then he fell from the bridge onto the fantail, landing in a heap near the motionless form of Victor Hasslein.

Nightmare! Lewis thought. And it was not over yet. Now Zira pulled herself up, holding the blanketed baby, and threw it over the side into the oily water below.

"Zira!" Lewis shouted, but she didn't hear him. Or if she did, she no longer cared what any human had to say. She staggered along the deck until she reached Cornelius, and sank down beside him, her hand in his, her muzzle next to his breast.

That was how Lewis Dixon found her; and that was how they were buried, with the infant beside them.

Twenty-Three

"Nearly ready to roll, Armando."

"Very good. I will not be long, but I wish to see to Heloise and her baby." The sounds of a circus on the move were around him: grunts and snarls from disturbed animals, the roar of the motors warming up, shouts from the drivers. The dogs barked in excitement—circus dogs, who enjoyed being on the road again.

He carried the newspaper to the cage door. Beyond the bars a female chimpanzee fondled a baby. "You will not understand," Armando said. "But I will tell you anyway. They buried them. A scientist who proposed that they be stuffed and exhibited in a museum barely escaped with his life from his own students, while policemen stood by and did nothing! They were buried."

The chimpanzees made contented sounds. The baby nuzzled closer and began to suckle. "You will be fine with Heloise," Armando said. "And—later, Armando will teach you himself. Armando will teach you everything. Papa Armando and Mama Heloise, eh? But now you stay with your mama."

The baby looked up at him with bright eyes. Armando

nodded. "Intelligent creature. But then you should be." He peered into the semidarkness and caught a glint of light from the baby's breast. "Saint Francis protect you, Milo. St. Francis and Mama Heloise—" He turned away. "Ready to roll!" he shouted to his crew.

Behind him the infant chimpanzee toyed with the St. Francis medal on its silver chain around his neck. "Ma-ma-ma? Ma-ma? Ma-ma! Mama!"

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