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NOVELLA

THE TROUBLE WITH TYCHO
By Clifford Simak

SHORT STORIES

SEEING EYE
By A. Bertram Chandler

THE MISSIONARY
By J. F. Bone

THE SOUND OF SCREAMING
By Theodore L. Thomas

FACT ARTICLE

HOMESTEADS ON VENUS
By Lester del Rey

FEATURES

EDITORIAL

THE SPECTROSCOPE

... OR SO YOU SAY

COMING NEXT MONTH

Cover: ALEX SCHOMBURG
THIS is the first issue of the "new" AMAZING that we have been talking about. Naturally, we hope you like the changes that have been made. Like most editors, things that looked magnificent to us in dummy stages now look awful, and there are some changes going to be made in the changes as we go on—all with the single objective of improving AMAZING to the point where it is the most satisfying magazine in the field.

There is one problem facing us—and facing all sf editors—which we must discuss frankly with you. That is the constant shortage of first-rate stories. It is no secret that most of the manuscripts sf editors see are miserable: stock plots, stock characters, bad endings, sloppy writing. It is a constant problem to find enough really good material to fill an issue that can be conscientiously called a good issue. The reason for this, of course, is that the great sf writers of the recent past are leaving the field for greener pastures. And who can blame them?

To maintain quality—and to bring to newer readers in the field an idea of the great past of science-fiction—we are going to begin reprinting AMAZING classics. The stories will go back at least 20 years or more. And they will not be chosen haphazardly. In charge of our reprint program will be Sam Moskowitz, who knows more about sf than probably anyone. He will pick each month's classic reprint for a specific reason, and will write a short introduction to each reprint explaining that reason: it may be the anniversary of a writer's first appearance in our magazine; it may be a story that science has just brought true. Thus, you will be getting a double-barrelled treat: a magnificent story from AMAZING's past, chosen and annotated by science-fiction's top historian. Watch for this new feature scheduled to start soon.

Continued on next page
EDITORIAL
Continued

NOW I'd like to get an opinion off my chest. We are carrying into space the same stupid technically-oriented policy that we have been applying, to our harm, on earth. It is an old story to observe that man advances technologically but not sociologically. The cryers in the wilderness point this out over and over, and perhaps we are now just starting to do something about this on our own planet. But meanwhile we go right ahead applying the old habits to the new realms of space.

To be concrete about this, there is much talk in scientific circles about the dangers of infecting the Moon with earth-bacteria carried from Earth by rocket probes. The Army Chemical Corps and NASA not long ago discussed the feasibility of sterilizing these probes to prevent contamination of the Moon and planets. Thus, the possibility that we would endanger our chances of finding the answers to the origin of life would be averted. The current solution seems to be to spray every instrument in a rocket, as well as the rocket itself, with a powerful gaseous disinfectant known as ethylene oxide. Scientists warn that neither heat, cold, radiation nor the impact of landing would
destroy viruses or bacteria on or in a space probe.

Well, it is all very well to have a germ-free Solar System, but what about an ideology-free one? No one has considered doing anything to assure that the viruses of jealousy, politics, war be eliminated from our explorations of space. Neither heat, cold, radiation nor impact will destroy these viruses. We have to clear away disease from not only the inside of the rockets we send up, but from the minds of the men who send them up, and who will go up in them.

Recently an Australian astronaut, Ronald Bracewell, suggested that mysterious radio signals heard in 1934 might have been an attempt by an advanced Galactic Federation to contact Earth. But Bracewell questioned whether our civilization, which took five billion years to evolve, has the moral stability to survive the few hundred more years that may be needed to establish this contact.

Unless we have the moral sense to keep our warring ideologies out of space the same way we have the technical know-how to keep our viruses out of space, we may contaminate God’s universe in more ways than one.—NL
Cruel the moon might be—barren, lonesome, ruthless—but always before it had made sense. Now the things that were happening were dirty things. Not like the Moon at all. So someone had to go and find out what was . . .

THE TROUBLE

By CLIFFORD SIMAK

ILLUSTRATOR FINLAY
EVERYTHING was all right. Not making too much money, naturally. You very seldom do—unless you make that one big strike, and not many of us make it. But getting along well enough so that the syndicate was content to let their holdings ride. Not quite satisfied, of course, but let's give the kid a chance. They still think of me as a kid for all I'm 27.

Maybe I'd ought to explain about the syndicate. It has a big, hard sound to it, but it isn't really. It's just a bunch of people back in the old home town of Millville who put up some of their savings so that a Moonstruck kid they had watched grow up could go out there and try his luck. Not that I hadn't had to work on them plenty hard to talk them into it—that's understandable, for they're just small-town, average people and conservative. There is Mel

nally gave in was so they could talk about it. It isn't every one who can say they have an investment on the Moon.

So there I was, rolling along in the rig and thinking about all the folks back home and glad that I was finally heading into Coonskin after four days spent Out Back. Don't ask me why they call it Coonskin, either, or why they call the place down by Schomberger, Crowbait, or that other settlement in Archimedes, Hungry Crack. You'd think they'd call these places by a lot of fancy names, like the names of all those scientists they named the craters for, or that at least they'd be Lunarville or Moontown or some other name that made some sort of sense. But I guess that's just the way it goes. In those days when the Moon was a long ways off it was O.K. to hang all those high-sounding place-names on it, but when the people got there they

WITH TYCHO

Adams, the banker, and Tony Jones, the barber, and big Dan Olson, who operates the drug-store, and a dozen or so others. I think the only reason they fi-
picked old familiar names that had a homely sting to them.

I had spent my four days out northwest of Tycho and it was a crazy place—all the land stood
up on end—but I hadn’t done too badly. I had a fair-sized bag of lichens stuffed in the refrigerator and the quick test I had run on them showed that they crawled with microbes.

I was getting close to Pictet, less than an hour from home, when I saw the other rig. I was coming down a hogsback that rimmed one edge of a little sawed-off swale when I caught the gleam, sitting at the edge of shadow. I kept an eye fastened on the gleam, wondering if it might be a glass outcropping. There’s a lot of volcanic glass around. That’s what the rays are made of, mostly, and the finest ray system on the Moon is in the Tycho region.

I don’t know what it was that kept me watching, but there must have been something about it that helped to get my wind up. After you’ve lived on the Moon for a couple of years or so you get a feeling for it. Screwy as its landscape is, you get familiar with it; you get a sort of blueprint of it fixed inside your skull. And the upshot of it is that without knowing why, you can spot something instantly that is out of character. Back on Earth you’d call it woodcraft, but that’s sure the wrong word here.

I wheeled my rig around and headed down the hogsback, pointing for the gleam. Susie, my hound dog, came up out of the radio, where she had been resting, or hiding, or whatever Susie did. She perched on the rim of the wheel and fluttered in excitement and sparks flew out of her. At least they looked like sparks. They really weren’t sparks.

A meteorite pinged somewhere on the rig. It scared the life out of me. It scares you every time—not the sound so much as the sudden realization that it might have been a big one and that would have been the end. This one probably wasn’t bigger than a millimeter—a good-sized grain of sand. But it was traveling several miles a second and it packed a lot of punch.

I reached the foot of the hogsback and went bowling across the floor of the small depression and now I saw the gleam came from a moon-rig. It wasn’t moving and there was no one near that I could see. It looked like it had been parked and if someone had parked it out there in the sun with the shadow not too distant they either were stark crazy or a terrible greenhorn. When you park your rig during the lunar day you always try to park it in the shade. The Moon gets hot, let no one tell you different. Not as hot here in the polar regions as it gets in the equatorial zone, but plenty hot.
enough—up to 250 degrees Centigrade or more in the afternoon. You have your refrigerating units, sure, but they cost a lot of power to run and there are two things that are precious on the Moon—power and oxygen. You hoard them like a miser. Not because you are short on power, because the atomics pack a lot of power. But you are never long on water and you have to hoard the water to drive the steam turbine.

I swung the rig up close, shutting off the turbine. I flipped my helmet over my head and heard it click, slapped the top of it to get it firmly seated. When you're out on the surface, even in a rig, you always wear your spacesuit. Then, if a meteorite should smash the rig without killing you or should punch a big hole in it, you have a second chance. Although, truth to tell, that second chance isn't worth too much to a lone man stranded miles from nowhere in nothing but a spacesuit.

I opened the door that led into the lock. Once inside, I pushed the lever that shut the inner door, then opened the outer one. I crawled out, like a worm wriggling from an apple. It’s not too dignified, but the principle of the engineering is sound and that counts for a lot. Dignity doesn't count for much out here on the Moon.

As soon as I stuck my head out I was blinded by the glare. I had forgotten to put down the filter visor. You don't need it when you're in the cab, for the visiplate has a filter of its own. I cussed myself, not because I had caught the glare, but for forgetting. You don't forget, even minor things, and stay alive for long.

I couldn't reach the visor, for my arms were trapped at my side and I had to wriggle clear before I could pull down the visor. So I squeezed my eyes tight shut until I could get my hands free.

The first thing that I saw was that the outer door of the parked rig's hatch stood open, so I knew that whoever had been in it now had gotten out. I felt a little silly for the momentary alarm that I had felt. Although in coming up, I had only done what might have been expected. You don't meet too many people when you're out and it's just plain good manners to stop by and say hello.

I walked toward the rig and not until then did I see the neat round hole drilled through the visiplate.

I turned up the volume of my suit radio: "Is there anybody here?"

There wasn't any answer. And Susie, who had come out with me, danced excitedly in front of me, twinkling and flashing. No matter what you say of them,
there are times when the hound dogs are good company.

"Hello," I yelled again. "Do you need some help?"

Although that was a silly question. The meteorite must have slammed straight through the control panel and the rig was useless as it stood. A dime would have fitted almost exactly in the hole and that is big enough to make an awful mess.

A voice came faintly to me.

"Hello. You bet I need some help."

It was a funny voice. It sounded womanish.

"How bad is it?"

"Bad enough," said the voice.

"Be with you in a minute. I was working at it, but it got too hot. I had to get into the shade."

I knew what it would be like inside the rig. With the refrigerating units off, it would heat up fast. With the sun beating down through all the glass, the hothouse effect would shove the temperature far above the surface heat.

"I can tow you into town," I said. "It's just an hour or so away."

"Oh, I can't do that. I can get it fixed."

A spacesuited figure came around the rig and walked over to me.

"I'm Amelia Thompson," she said, holding out her hand.

I took the hand, the steel of our gloved fingers grating at the grip.

"A woman?"

"And why not?"

"No reason, I guess. There just aren't many of them out here. I've never heard of one before."

I couldn't see her face, for she had the filter down.

There was a hound dog riding on her shoulder. Susie drifted over and spun around the roosting thing. They shot sparks at one another.

"Perhaps," she said, "you could push it over in the shadow and let it cool a bit."

"Amelia," I told her, "my name is Chris Jackson and I'm no Samaritan, but I can't let you stay out here with that panel jury-rigged. And that's the best that you can do. It could go out on you a dozen times in the next thirty miles. You're simply asking for it."

"I can't go back to town," she said.

"And I won't let you stay here. You're crazy to even think of it."

She motioned at my rig. "Do you mind?" she asked. "We could talk it over."

"Certainly," I told her, although, for the life of me, I couldn't figure what there was to be talked about.

We walked over to my rig and she went in ahead of me. I wait-
ed for a minute and then went in myself.
I pulled the rig ahead, out of the sun.
The two hound dogs sat side by side upon the panel, sparkling very quietly.
Then I turned around.
She had flipped her helmet back and she was smiling at me, but in a determined sort of way. Her hair was black and straight, cut square across the front. She had milk-white skin and a lot of freckles. She looked like a school girl who had suddenly decided to grow up.

I did the honors. I went to the refrigerator to get the water flask. I had to walk around her to get there. We didn’t have much room. The cab of an exploration tractor isn’t very big.

I got the flask and a couple of glasses. I poured a big one for her, a short one for myself. I figured that she needed it. After a few hours in a suit, with only a sip now and then of tepid water from the tube, you dream of ice-cold water.

She drank it thirstily and handed back the glass.
“Thank you,” she said.
I filled it up again.
“You shouldn’t have done that. It’s pure extravagance.”
I shook the flask. There was still some in it, but it was the last I had.

“Almost home,” I told her. “I won’t be needing it.”
She sipped at the second glass, making it last. I knew the kind of restraint it took for her not to gulp it down. There are times your body screams for the cold and wet.

I put the flask back in the refrigerator. She saw the bag of lichens.

“Good trip,” she said.
“Not too bad. Lousy with the microbes. Doc will be glad to get them. He’s always running short.”

“You sell them to the sanitarium.”
I nodded. “Keeps the outfit running while I hunt for other things.”

“What other things?”
She laughed a short and throaty laugh. “Agates!”
“There’s a fellow in Cooskin makes a hobby of them. Cuts and polishes them. Keeps what he likes, ships the rest to Earth. Good steady demand for gemstones from the Moon. Don’t have to be good. Just so they’re from the Moon.”
“He can’t pay you much for them.”
“He pays me nothing. He’s a friend of mine. He does me little favors.”
"I see," she said.
She was looking at me with a
calculative squint, as if she
might be making up her mind.
She finished off the water and
handed back the glass.
"There's another left," I
offered.
She shook her head.

"Chris," she said, "would you
mind just going on to town and
forgetting that you saw me. You
could push the crate into the
shadow for me. I'll get along."
I shook my head. "No soap.
You'd be committing suicide. I
can't let you do it."
"I can't go back to Coonskin . . . ."

"You can't stay here," I said.
"I can't go back to Coonskin
because I am illegal. I haven't
got a license."
"So that's it," I said.
"You make it sound pretty
nasty."
"Not that. It just isn't very
smart. You know what a license
is for—so they can keep tab of
you. So that if you get into a
jam . . . .
"I won't get into any jam."
"You're in a jam right now," I
told her.
"I can get out of it."
I felt like belting her, just to
snap her out of it.
She was putting me in an
impossible position. I couldn't let
her go on with the panel jury-
rigged; I couldn't turn her in.
There's just one rule Out Back.
Us prospectors stick together.
You help another fellow any way
you can. You share, if necessary,
your food and air and water.
You never snitch on him.
The time will come, perhaps,
in another hundred years or so,
when there are too many of us,
that we'll steal from and lie
about and rat on one another—
but that time is not yet.
"I could help you rig it up," I
told her, "but that is not the
point. You're taking your life in
your hands if you go on with it
that way. You need a complete
replacement job. And that hole
punched in the plate."
"I can patch that up."
And that was right. She could.
She said, "I have to get to
Tycho. I simply have to get
there."
"Tycho!"
"Yes. You know, the crater."
"Not Tycho!" I said, a little
horrified.
"I know," she said. "A lot of
silly stories."
She didn't know what she was
talking about. The stories were-
't silly. They were hard, cold
record. They were down in writ-
ing. Men still living in Coonskin
remembered what had happened.

"I like your looks," she said.
"You're an honest man."
"The hell with that," I said.
I went over to the controls and started up the engine.

"What are you doing now?"
"I'm going on to Coonskin."
"You're going to turn me in."
"No," I said. "I'm going to turn you over to this agate-loving friend of mine. He'll hide you out until we figure what to do. And keep away from that hatch. I'll swat your fanny if you make a dive for it."

For a moment I didn't know if she was going to cry or jump me like a wildcat. It turned out that she did neither.

"Wait a minute," she said.
"Yes?"
"You ever heard of the Third Lunar Expedition?"

I nodded. Everyone had heard of it. Two ships and eleven men swallowed by the Moon—just dropping out of sight. Thirty years ago and they never had been found.

"I know where it is," she said. "Tycho?"

She nodded.
"So what?"
"So there are papers there."
"Papers..."

Then it hit me. "You mean museum stuff."
"You can imagine what it's worth."
"And the story rights. 'I Found the Lost Lunar Expedition.'"

She nodded. "They'd make a book of it and a movie of it and it would be on television."
"And the government maybe would pin a medal on you."

She said: "After. Not before."

I saw what she meant. Open your yap up now and they'd push you to one side and go storming out, stories or no stories, to collect the glory for themselves.

Amelia Thompson looked at me again with that calculating stare.

"You've got me across a barrel," she said. "I'll make it fifty-fifty."

"That is right," I said. "Share and share alike. Both of us stone dead. They tried to build an observatory there. They had to give it up."

She sat silently, looking around the cab. It was a small place. There wasn't much to see. "How big a mortgage do you have on this?" she asked.

I told her a hundred thousand dollars.

"And some day the syndicate will get tired of carrying you," she said, "and they will sell you out."

"I would think it quite unlikely," I told her, but I wasn't nearly as confident as I tried to make it sound. Even as I answered, I could see them drinking coffee at the drugstore or sitting around and talking in the barbershop or, maybe, taking off
their jackets and settling down to an evening of poker in the back room at the bank. And I knew just how easy it would be for them to idly talk themselves into dissatisfaction first and into panic later.

“Right now,” she said, “you’re just barely managing to get by. You are always hoping for that lucky strike. How many have you known who hit that lucky strike?”

I had to say: “Not many.”

“Well, this is it,” she said. “Here is your lucky strike. I’m offering it to you.”

“Because,” I reminded her, “you are across a barrel.”

She smiled a bit lopsidedly. “That and something else.”

I waited.

“Maybe it’s because it’s not a one-girl job. I tell you, mister, honestly, I was half-scared to death before you came rolling up.”

“You thought at one time it was a one-girl job.”

“I guess I did,” she said. “You see, I had a partner. Then he flunked out on me.”

“Let me guess,” I said. “His name was Buddy Thompson. Where is Buddy now?”

For I suddenly had remembered him. He’d operated out of Coonskin a year or so before. He’d been around for a month or so and then had wandered off. It’s not too many prospectors who stick to one place for long.

“Buddy is my brother. He ran into tough luck. He got caught in a radiation storm and was too far from cover. He’s in the hospital up at Crowbait.”

“That’s tough,” I said and really meant it. It was the kind of thing that could happen to any man without a second’s notice. That was one of the reasons you didn’t go wandering around out in the open too far from your rig. And even with your rig nearby you kept out a weather eye for caves or walls or crevasses that were in handy reach.

“He’ll be all right,” Amelia said, “but it will take a while. They may have to send him back to Earth for better treatment.”

“That will cost a pile of money.”

“More than we’ve got,” she said.

“And you came from Crowbait.”

“I was flown in, rig and all,” she said. “That took about the last cash that I had. I might have made it on the ground, but it’s pretty far.”

“Pretty chancy, too.”

“I had it planned,” she said, and I could see her getting sore at the way it had worked out. “This flier brought me in and put me on the spaceport. I drove over to the administration building and parked out to one side. I
walked into the building as if I were heading for the registration desk, but I didn’t go there. I went to the powder room and waited there almost an hour until I heard a ship come in. Then I walked out and everyone was busy and no one noticed me. I walked over to the rig and simply drove away."

"Crowbait will notify..."

"Oh, sure, I know," she said. "But by that time it’ll be too late. I’ll either have what I’m going after or there’ll be no Amelia Thompson."

I sat there, thinking of the sheer impudence of what she’d got away with. Since she was working on Cooskin jurisdiction, she had to have a Cooskin license so that Cooskin Central could keep track of her. She’d have to file a travel plan and she’d have to report in, by radio, every twenty hours. Let her fail to do so and the rescue units would be out. And a setup such as that would have cramped her style.

Anyhow, they’d not have given her clearance for Tycho. They’d likely grabbed her rig if she’d even breathed the word. Tycho was pure poison and everybody knew it.

So she’d landed on the strip and gone to the office so that anyone seeing her would figure she’d gone to get her license and file her travel plan. And when she came out again, if anyone had noticed her, they would have figured that she had her license and wouldn’t give the matter any thought at all.

And that way, without any license, without a travel plan, with not a line of record except back at Crowbait, she was perfectly free to go anywhere she wished.

It was, I told myself, a swell, suicidal setup.

"Buddy found the man," she said, "on the outer slopes of Tycho."

"What man?"

"One of the Lunar Three crew. He’d got away somehow, from whatever had happened. His name was Roy Newman."

"Buddy should have reported it."

"Of course, I know he should have. He knew it, too. But I ask you, what would you have done? Our time was running out, our money running low. There are times you have to take a gamble—even with the law."

She was right. There were times when you had to take a gamble. There were times when you got desperate. There were times when you said the hell with it and risked everything you had.

Usually you lost.

"This Newman had a diary. Not too well kept, as it turned out. But it told how they’d all
made out their wills and written out their stories..."

"Those are the papers you are after."

She nodded.

"But you couldn't keep those papers. They'd have to go back to the families."

"Yes, I know," she said. "But we could photostat them and we'd have the story—and the story rights. An there'd be other papers, ones that weren't personal. There are other things besides. That expedition had a lot of scientific instruments. And there are the ships. There were two of them, one of them a passenger, the other one a cargo. Can you imagine what those two ships would be worth today?"

"But they aren't..."

"Yes, they are," she said. "They're salvage. I looked it up. The limitation has run out. It's finders keepers now."

I thought about it and it was a mint of money. Even thirty years old, those ships might still be serviceable, if meteors hadn't punched them full of holes. And even if they weren't, they'd bring a good scrap price. Fabricated metal, right here on the Moon, would be worth a lot of money.

"Look," she said, "let's get down to business. You could leave me here. You could hurry back with a replacement panel. We could do this together. They know you back in Cooskin. You could file a travel plan for the outer slopes of Tycho. You could get away with it. We could get that far without them checking up on us."

I sat there thinking and there was nothing wrong with it except that you were throwing the rules back into their faces. If you found this expedition you would be a hero and maybe rich to boot. And if you failed, you'd probably be dead and it wouldn't matter to you.

I thought of the years behind me and of the years ahead and I imagined the members of the syndicate sitting in the barbershop, snapping their suspenders. And I imagined how good it would feel to walk down Millville's streets again and have all the people say: "There goes Chris Jackson. He made it on the Moon."

"Fifty-fifty," Amelia Thompson said.

"Let's split it into thirds," I said. "We can't deal Buddy out."

That's the trouble with me—I have a sentimental streak.

II

We had six days of light to do it and by the time that I got back that margin would be cut to something less than five. But in five days a man can do a lot. From where Amelia's rig stood, it was only a few
hours time to the rim of Tycho.
We could come back in the dark—if we were coming back—but we needed light to do the job itself.

I drove mechanically, thinking as I drove, alternately damning myself as a fat-headed fool for touching any of the scheme with a ten-foot pole, and congratulating myself on my good luck to pick up such a deal.

And scared. I was scared pink, with purple spots.

Because, no matter what Amelia said, Tycho wasn’t anything for a man to fool around with. Just what was there no man pretended that he knew, but some of the speculations were enough to curl the short hairs on your neck.

They had wanted, in the early days, some twenty years ago, to build an astronomical observatory on the floor of Tycho, but after what had happened they built in it Cuvier instead. They sent out a surveying crew to lay out the Tycho installation and the crew had disappeared. A land rescue crew went out and the rescue crew evaporated, as it were, not into thin air, but rather into space. Space search went out and the ships shot across the crater, criss-crossing it for hours. The crater was empty of all life. There was not a single movement nor any hint of it. The surveying instruments stood

where the men had left them. Bundles and piles of other equipment and supplies lay darkly about. There were tracks that led southward, but they seemed to end in the blankness of the crater wall. There was no sign of men.

That was the end of it. No one else went into the crater or even close to it. You sort of went stiff-legged, circling cautiously, when you came in miles of it. No one in his right mind would consider going down into the crater.

I don’t suppose I was strictly of sound mind.

Let’s cut out the fooling and be honest. No Moon prospector is ever of sound mind. If he had a brain at all he would be safely back on Earth.

Susie perched on the panel and she wasn’t sparkling much. I could see she was depressed. The radiation counter kept up a steady clicking. The dead white of the gully running between two walls spun out like a railroad track before me and I was pouring on the coal. I had left the most of my oxygen with Amelia and I had no time to waste. Run out of oxygen and you’ve had it. You can only hold your breath so long.

And I was worrying, not alone about the oxygen, but about Amelia, too. Although I suppose I shouldn’t have, for she seemed
to be a level-headed kid. She had oxygen enough; I'd pushed her rig into the shade and that shade would hold until the dawn of another lunar day. Except for the thermal units in her suit, she'd have no heat, of course, but anytime she got cold all she had to do was step out in the sun and she'd get warmed up. We'd plugged the hole in the visiplate and so she could live in the cabin of the rig and she had plenty of water.

Directly south of me loomed the broken western wall of Pictet and to the southwest the more distant peaks of Tycho, glistening spears of white thrust into the coal-black sky.

There was dust in the gully bottom and that was not so good. You never knew the minute when you might hit a hole hidden by the dust. It might be just a little hole or it might be big enough to swallow you and a dozen other rigs.

But I didn't have the time to start hunting around for a safer rubble surface. And I didn't have the time to creep along at a slow and cautious pace that would have allowed me to brake the machine and back up to safety if I had hit a hole.

If I had known that the gully had been dust I never would have gotten into it, but the upper reaches of it, where the walls were lower, had been sound and solid gravel and very easy going. I could see ahead, of course, but in the white glare of the sun, there is no telling at a distance the difference between dust and gravel.

That's the one thing that hits you about the Moon when you first step off the spaceship. The Moon is black and white. Except for the streaks of color here and there in some rock formation, there isn't any color. And you only see that color when you are nearby. The glare of the sun whitewashes everything. And where there is no sun, there is utter blackness.

So I went bowling down that dust alley—dust that had never known a track before, dust all pitted by tiny, one-inch craters pinged out by the whizzing bits of tiny debris that comes storming in from space, dust that had piled up for ages, chiseled off the walls by the endless hammering of the radiations, by the clicking bits of sand moving miles a second, by the slow patience of the heat and cold that spanned hundreds of degrees.

It's a mean life and a bitter one and hard, but there's a lot of glory and of beauty in the very harshness of the Moon. She is waiting for a slip to kill you, she has no mercy in her, she doesn't simply give a damn, but
there are times when she can cut your breath with the very wonder of her, when she can take your soul and lift it high into the black emptiness of space and give you peace and insight. And there are other times when she simply strikes you numb.

That's the way she had me now, sitting stiff and rigid, with my throat bone-dry and the fine sweat standing out, whooping down that alley where a trap might wait me and not a chance to dodge it.

I made it. My number just didn't happen to be up that time. Old Madame Moon had saved me for another day.

I came out of the gully onto a flat, smooth plain a couple of miles across and just beyond the plain was Hunkadory pass that led into Pictet and to Coonskin.

The terrain was rubble now and it was good going. I took a look at the cab's oxygen supply and the needle was swinging close down toward the pin, but I had enough. Even if I didn't, I still had a little in the tank on my suit and I would be all right.

So I'd come through the dust all right and the oxy looked about to last and there was very little to worry about right then.

I drove up the short slope of the pass and there was Pictet spread out before me, a ringed plain with the town of Coonskin huddled against the northeast wall and out beyond the town the sharp, hard glitter of the spaceport which was used as a staging center for the other planets. Even as I watched, a spaceship came mushing down on it with the mushrooming flame of braking jets spewing down with a fiery viciousness. And it was weird to watch it, for all that power, all that ferocity of flame, was blanked by utter silence.

The whiteness and the blackness of the Moon is what first impresses you, but it is the terrible arrogance of its silence that lives with you all the days you spend upon its surface. The silence is the one thing, the one unbelievable and unacceptable thing that is very hard to live with.

I picked my way slowly down the pass, for there was little more than a trail and there were some turns that called for creeping speed. The oxygen needle swept lower, but I knew that I was safe.

I reached the bottom of the slope and turned to my left and went around a talus slope that bulged out from the ringwall and there, huddled in the angle between the slope and the wall itself, was the sanitarium.

On the Moon you don't build
out in the open. You build against high walls, you huddle under mountains, you look for little nooks, for you need protection. You need protection from the radiation and the meteorites. You can't get complete protection except by going underground and there's something in the human makeup that rebels against living out one's life in burrows. But you can get shielding of a sort by building in the angle of high walls—and that was the way of Coonskin. It was strung out for almost three miles, with no streets at all, but all the buildings standing against the high north wall.

I pulled my rig around and stopped outside the sanitarium lock. I slapped down my helmet and took the bag of lichens and crawled out of the lock. Someone inside the sanitarium must have seen me, for the outer lock of it was beginning to unscrew. By the time I got there it had whirléd free and dropped back and I stepped into the chamber. The outer lock closed behind me and I heard the hiss of air being fed into the chamber. I waited for the inner lock to open, then I unhinged my helmet and stepped into the building.

Doc Withers was waiting there for me and he grinned beneath his great, gray walrus mustache when he saw the bag I carried.
"Katie," he called and then he was reaching for the bag with one hand and thumping my shoulder with the other.

"We need that stuff," he said. "We are running low. None of the other boys have been in since it got light. You are the first of them."

He sucked in his breath and blew it out in a lengthy gust. "I always worry," he declared, "that they all will make good strikes and then no one will bother to hunt my precious little microbes."

"Not much chance of that," I said.

Katie made her appearance. She was a rugged old fossil, with the pinched, bleak face of nurses who have been too long on duty, who have absorbed too great a penchant for authority, have become passionately devoted to their profession of caring for the sick.

Doc handed her the bag.

"Run a test and weigh it up," he said. "I'm glad that some came in."

Katie took the bag. She turned a bleak look on me.

"Why did you take so long?" she asked, as if it were all my fault. "We're running short of it."

She went back down the corridor.

"Come on," invited Doc. "Crawl out of the armor and let us have a drink. You'll have to
wait until Katie has it figured up."

"I'd better keep the suit," I said. "I would stink like hell."

"You can even have a bath," Doc offered.

"I'd better keep the suit."

"If it's the smell, I've worked in hospitals all my life . . ."

"I'll be home in a little while," I told him. "I'll take the suit off then. But I could stand the drink."

Doc led the way into his office. It was small, but it was a comfortable-looking place. It's hard to make a room, any room, on the Moon look comfortable. It's hard to soften metal walls and floors and ceilings. You can paste up pictures on the walls, you can cover them with drapes, you can even paint them in pastels—the steel will still show through. You can see and feel and taste it. You never can forget the coldness and the hardness of it. And you never quite forget why it is steel instead of something else.

The illusion of comfort in Doc's office came from the soft, deep furniture with which he'd filled the room. There were chairs and lounges that, when you sat in them, all but swallowed you.

Doc opened up a cupboard and got out a bottle and some glasses. He even had some ice. I knew it would be good stuff. There's no poor liquor on the Moon—or anywhere else in space. The freight charges are so high that there isn't any sense in trying to save a dollar or two on a fifth.

"A good trip?" asked Doc.

"I picked up a fair amount of lichens. Nothing else."

"I live in mortal dread," said Doc, "that the day will come when there will be no more. We have tried to grow them under artificial conditions—artificial, but theoretically ideal—and they simply will not grow. We have tried to transplant them to places of our own choosing right here on the Moon and we've never been successful. We've sent them to Earth and they have no luck at all. It appears they cannot tolerate even the faintest shred of atmosphere."

He went on fixing up the drinks.

"There may be other places on the Moon where they can be found," I said.

Doc shook his head. "The only place they ever have been found is in the Tycho region."

Susie had come in with me and now she perched on top of the whiskey bottle. I don't know if she was a potential toper, but she got an awful kick out of liquor bottles.

"Cunning little cuss," Doc said, nodding his head at her. He handed me the drink. I took a taste of it. It was exactly
what I needed. It cut the non-existent dust out of my throat, it took the slimy feeling right out of my mouth. I took a good gulp of it.

"The two of them seem to go together, Doc—the hound dogs and the lichens. You don’t find one unless you find the other. There are always a few hound dogs hanging around a bunch of lichens. Like butterflies hang around a row of flowers. That little Susie there is the best little lichen hunter I have ever seen."

I took another long swallow and thought about how the hound dogs and the lichens and the microbes were all bound up together. It sure was a screwy thing. The hound dogs found the lichens and the lichens had the microbes and it was, of course, the microbes Man actually was hunting. It was the microbes that he used.

But that wasn’t it—that wasn’t all of it.

"Doc," I said, "you and I—we’re good friends, aren’t we?"

"Why, I guess we are," said Doc. "Yes, my boy, I’d say there was no question of it."

"Well, I have a funny feeling. Two funny feelings, really. The first of them is that sometimes Susie tries to talk to me."

"Nothing too funny about that," said Doc. "We don’t know a thing about her or any of her tribe. She could be intelligent. I would make a guess she was. She seems to be pure energy, although no one knows for sure. There is nothing that says that to be intelligent you’ve got to be made of hide and bone and muscle."

"And there are other times," I said, "when it seems to me she might be studying me. Not me alone, you understand, but the human race. Maybe, I tell myself, that’s why she picked me up—so she could study me."

Doc lowered himself ponderously into a chair so that he sat facing me.

"You wouldn’t have told this to anyone but a real good friend," he said.

I shook my head. I wondered why I’d told even him. I had never breathed it to a soul before. "Anyone else might think I was nuts," I said.

"Not that," he told me. "There is no one, absolutely no one, who knows about the Moon. We’ve just scratched the surface of it."

"I remember when I was a boy people used to wonder why we should bother going to the Moon. There was nothing there, they said. Nothing that was worth the going. They said that even if there was it would cost too much to ship it back. They said the Moon was just another chunk of Earth, but a mighty poor chunk, without any life and without any
atmosphere and without much of anything. Who ever would have thought, of all things, that in this utterly worthless place we should have found one of the things for which man had searched so long—a cure for mental illness."

I nodded. If Doc wanted to talk, I was perfectly willing to let him talk. I didn't have a thing to do except to get back to Amelia, who was stuck out in the wilderness with a busted panel. And I was all beat out. All I wanted to do was just sit here. I took another hefty drink. Doc reached out and filled the glass. I didn't try to stop him.

"We need more space in this sanitarium," said Doc, "and money is no problem. We could find the cash to enlarge it three times over, but what is the sense of it. We barely get enough of the lichens to handle the cases that we have."

"Raise the price," I told him. "The boys will hunt the harder. They'll give up this foolishness of looking for uranium and diamonds and other junk like that."

Doc looked at me sharply. "I suppose you're joking. I am worried, Chris."

"There'll be other places found where the lichens grow," I said. "There are only five settlements on the Moon so far. Three here and two up at the North Pole. By and large, the Moon's not been explored. There have been some low-level camera runs, of course, and a few land traverses, but there are many places Man has never seen. There are huge areas where he's never set his foot."

Doc shook his head. "No, I don't believe it. There's something funny about the lichen situation. I've thought about it a lot and it has haunted me. There is no apparent reason why the lichens should grow in the Tycho region only, unless . . . ."

"Unless what?" I asked, then I didn't wait for him to answer the question.

"Unless there's something in Tycho," I said. "Unless the lichens originated in Tycho and are spreading out from it."

Doc sat there, staring at me, not taking his eyes off me.

"What's in Tycho, Chris? You prowl around a lot out there. Have you seen anything?"

"Never close enough," I told him.

"Someday," said Doc, "someone will find out. Someone with lots of guts. Someday someone will say to hell with all the superstitions and go down and have a look."

Katie came in just then with a slip of paper and handed it to Doc. She sneered at me and left. Doc looked at the paper. "It figures out to a hundred seventy-
five,” he said. “Is that all right with you?”

“Anything you say,” I told him.

You could say this for Doc—he was a square-shooter. You never had to question what he told you. He paid you every cent that was coming to you.

He dug his wallet out of his hip pocket and counted out the bills. He handed them across.

“Finish up your drink,” he said, “and have another one.”

“Can’t take the time. I’ve got to hurry. Lots of things to do.”

“You’re going out again?”

I nodded.

“You’ll keep a watch for lichens?”

“Sure. I always do. I could get a lot for you if I only could stay out. This business of not being able to keep them for more than a hundred hours or so makes it a little rough.”

“I know,” said Doc. “And if I could only bottle up the stuff and ship it back to Earth. Maybe someone some day will figure out a way. I’ve got sixty patients here—that’s all the room I’ve got, that’s all the lichens that I have. There are reservations for three years ahead. People who are waiting to come out to the Moon so that we can cure them.”

“Maybe someone can synthesize...”

He laughed a little harshly. “Have you ever seen a diagram of some of the molecules involved?”

“No,” I said, “I never have.”

“It can’t be done,” said Doc. I tucked the bills into the pocket of my suit and set the glass on his desk.

I stood up. “Thanks for the drink,” I said.

Susie came from wherever she had been roosting and whizzed around my head a couple of times. She shot out a bunch of sparks.

I said good-bye to Doc and went out the lock and got into the rig.

The spaceship I had seen coming in was sitting on the field and the field crew was hauling in the freight she carried. Apparently the passengers already had been taken off.

I kicked the turbine into life and headed for Sloppy Joe’s—which definitely is not what you might think it is, a little hamburger and chili joint. It’s the biggest and almost the only business house in Coonskin. It has been around as long as Coonskin has. Joe started out in business when the spaceport was built. He housed and fed the construction crews and because they loved the man himself, because they wanted to make the Moon seem as much like Main Street as was possible, they called the place he kept for them Sloppy Joe’s. And
It's stayed that way ever since. I pulled up in front of Joe's and parked the rig and went into the place.

It was like coming home. In fact, it was my home. There were a dozen or so of us who kept regular rooms at Joe's and we spent all our time there when we weren't roaming. For Joe's is quite a place by now. It's a sort of combination hotel-bar-bank-general store.

I came into the lobby and headed for the bar. Not so much because I needed a drink as I wanted to see who might be around.

As it turned out, there was hardly anybody. There was Tubby behind the bar and there was this other fellow, standing at the bar and drinking.

"Hi, Chris," said Tubby. "Here's someone wants to see you."

The man turned around. He was a big man and a rough-looking customer, with shoulders that were so heavy they bent forward, as if at any moment they might fall off of him. He had great jowls with gray whiskers—not a beard, but just unshaven whiskers—and his eyes were blue as big-lake ice.

"You Jackson?" he demanded. I admitted that I was.

"He came in on the ship less than an hour ago," said Tubby. "My name is Chandler Brill," the big man said. "I'm from Johns Hopkins back on Earth. I'm your new boss, but we'll get along all right."

He stuck out a hand that was bigger than mine even with my space glove on.

We shook. And there were cold shivers crawling up my spine.

"You mean that you bought out . . ."

"No, not that," said Brill. "I rented you and your outfit from the folks in Millville. I don't mind telling you they set a good, high figure."

He reached into his pocket and handed me an envelope. "Here's a letter from them."

I took it and doubled it up and stuck it in my pocket.

I told him: "I imagine you'll want a little time to get shook down before going out."

"Not at all," said Brill. "I can leave as soon as you are ready."

"What will we be looking for?"

"Oh, different things. I'm a scientist of sorts."

"Here's your drink," Tubby said to me.

I moved up to the bar and picked up the drink and there were a million wheels, all moving madly, buzzing in my head.

I had to get this guy side-tracked somehow. I couldn't fool around with him and leave Amelia stranded out there with
a busted rig. No matter how crazy she might be, she was depending on me. And there was the matter, too, of the foray into Tycho. It was something that twenty hours before I would have sworn I'd never be fool enough, or have the guts to do. But Doc had said that someday someone would say to hell with all the silly superstitions and all the crazy stories. Although they weren't silly and they weren't crazy; a lot of men had disappeared into the maw of Tycho.

"You got a lot of gear?" I asked of Brill.

"Almost none at all," he told me. "I've roughed it all over Earth. I know how to get along."

I nodded. "You'll do all right," I said.

I'd had a wild idea for a moment of discouraging him by a beef about a lot of gear, telling him that we couldn't take it, that we didn't have the room. But I could see that tactics of that sort wouldn't work on him. He didn't look like any scientist I had ever seen; he didn't even especially look like he had any sense at all. He looked just like a roughneck.

"How come," I asked, "that Mel Adams didn't send me a radiogram?"

"Well," said Brill, "I was coming out immediately. Left as soon as I closed the deal with them. Adams gave me the letter, let me carry it. He's a thrifty man."

"Yeah, I know," I said.

"He didn't see the need of radioing. Said you'd probably be Out Back."

"They'd have radioed me the message from the port. I could have gotten back in time to meet you."

"Ah, well," said Brill, "let's not quibble now. Nothing has been hurt. How about us having something to eat?"

"I have to take a bath and get into some clothes," I told him. "Soon as I do that, I'll come down."

"I'll be waiting for you," said Brill.

"Tubby," I said, "give me that bottle over there."

Tubby handed me the bottle and I took it by the neck and started for the door.

"Hey," yelled Tubby, "you forgot the glass."

"I won't need no glass," I told him.

If ever a man had an excuse to get roaring, sodden drunk, I told myself, that man was me.

III

I FILLED the bathtub almost to the top. Here in Cooskin we don't need to worry much about the water. We've got plenty of it. There are cubic miles of ice located under Pictet
and we have a mine that taps it. That’s one of the reasons. Coonskin grew up in Pictet instead of somewhere else. One of the earliest traverse parties ran a drill down into a crevasse underneath the north wall and hit this mass of ice.

Of course, Out Back you’ve got to be careful of your water, for you can’t carry too much of it, but here in Coonskin you can simply swallow in it.

So I crawled out of my suit and hung it in the room’s escape port and cracked the outer lock so that the suit could get aired out. Not aired out, really—spaced out. Then I filled the tub with water and got a bar of soap and put the bottle down beside the tub within easy reach and settled down to soak.

Four days in a spacesuit can get you pretty high. You can’t live with yourself. You’re a stinking mess.

I lay there soaking, looking up at the ceiling and the ceiling was grey steel, like everything in Coonskin. And I thought what a rotten way to live, without a breath of fresh air, without a blade of grass, with no color, with no rosy dawn and no flaming sunset, without any rain or dew—without a single thing to make life a little better than a bare existence.

To brighten up the outlook just a bit, I hoisted up the bottle and had a healthy slug. But I decided that maybe, after all, I’d not get stinking drunk. There was too much to do and no time to do it in.

Susie came and sat on the hot water tap. I don’t suppose she sat. It just looked like she was sitting. And don’t ask me why I call her she. I don’t suppose she actually is a she. A contraption like Susie isn’t anything at all. It is just an it.

I offered her a drink and she bent into a shape like a question mark, with one end of her still on the tap and her nose stuck in the bottle, just like a damn cork. Then she shot a shower of sparks into the bottle and pulled herself back into a lump of brilliance squatting on the tap. For a minute, before the sparks died out, that bottle was the prettiest thing you ever laid your eyes on. I was almost scared to drink out of it, but the sparks didn’t seem to hurt the liquor any.

Then I remembered something that I should have done before, so I got out of the tub and went to the phone and called Herbie Grayle.

Herbie was the fellow I brought in the agates for. He worked down at Coonskin Central and they let him have a corner of the shop for his lapidary outfit. He has a diamond saw and trimmer and a polisher and
grinders and buffers and all the other stuff. He could take a piece of rock and make it into something that would knock your eyes out.

Herbie lived in a trailer that he had parked under an overhang, one of the safest places in all of Coonskin, and every week or so he had some of the boys over for a hand or two of poker. Herbie is a bachelor—I guess he's the only bachelor in Coonskin who lives in a trailer. All the other trailer people are married and some of them even have a kid or two.

Talk about a lousy place to raise a batch of kids!

Herbie was at home.

"Favor to ask of you," I told him.

"Go ahead," he said.

"I have a fellow downstairs the syndicate sent out. I've got to haul him around Out Back for a day or two."

"Tourist?"

"No. A scientist, he says."

"I suppose you'll want my trailer."

"If you don't mind," I said. "You could stay here in my room until I got back. It's paid for whether I use it or not."

"You might as well take the trailer," Herbie said. "Everybody borrows it when they have to haul some outsider into the wilderness."

"Thanks, Herbie," I said.

"Don't mention it," said Herbie.

"It gets a little crowded," I said. "Two men in a cab."

And I was figuring how I could park Brill somewhere in the trailer and tell him I was going off for an hour or two. There wasn't much that he could do about it if I didn't come back for a day or two and I could always cook up some sort of story about the bad luck I had had. He might not believe me, but that was not the point. All I needed was a cover for Coonskin Central. It might scare him spotted, but it wouldn't hurt him any. There'd be plenty of food and air and water and if something really happened and I wasn't coming back, Central would start out to hunt us and they would find the trailer.

"When will you want the trailer, Chris?" asked Herbie.

"I don't want to hurry you."

"Any time," said Herbie.

"Let's say twelve hours. I want to get some sleep."

"I'll pack what I need and bring it over. I'll leave the rest just as it is."

"Thanks, Herbie."

"No need," said Herbie. "You've brought me lots of rocks."

I hung up and started back to the tub. Passing the dresser I saw the letter I'd pulled out of
the pocket of my suit and thrown there.
I picked it up and got back into the tub. I began to soak again and I opened up the letter.
It said:

Dear Chris: We do not wish to make it appear that we are interfering in your work by accepting Dr. Brill's offer to employ you. But in view of the fact that your prospecting, to the moment, has not met with the spectacular results which you had hoped, all of us felt you might welcome this opportunity to earn some extra money. We have investigated Dr. Brill and can tell you that he is a professor at John Hopkins and highly regarded in scientific circles. Let me assure you that all of us still have faith in you and know that in time your venture will meet with all hoped-for success.

Best regards, Melvin Adams

I dropped the letter on the floor and lay there in the tub and was just a little sick—for I read between the lines of that letter, friendly on its surface, the first seeds of doubt among the men of Millville.

And I knew that somehow or other I must show results and the time was not too long.
I was as neatly trapped as a man had ever been.
There was no dodging now.

I had to go to Tycho. I had to take the chance that there was treasure there and that I'd get back alive.

Even if I wanted to chicken out, I could not afford to now. For in another month or two the syndicate would start edging out and the creditors would start moving in and I'd lose the Moon forever.

I could see myself, a glamorous failure, trudging down the streets of Millville, glad to take any job I could—another man who'd not made it on the Moon.
I got out of the tub and got into some clothes.

I began laying out a timetable. I would eat and have a talk with Brill, then I'd get some sleep. After that I'd file my travel plans. Then I'd hook up the trailer and dump my scientist into it and we would be off. There was no time to waste.

I might have some trouble with the travel plans, for I would have to list the outer slopes of Tycho. That way I could make a final report from the very rim and after that it would be twenty hours before Coonskin Central would think of me again.

And in twenty hours Amelia and I would have found what we were after or, just as likely, like the others, we'd not be coming back.
I took a final drink and went
downstairs, with Susie fluttering before me.

Brill was waiting for me and we went into the dining room and found a table. Susie roosted on the sugar bowl.

Brill made a motion toward her. "Quite a pal you have."

"Susie hunts the lichens for me," I told him. "When she finds them she does a sort of dance and I go and pick them off the rocks."

"Any special training?"

"None at all. The hound dogs have some strange affiliation with the lichens. Where you find the hound dogs—the wild hound dogs, that is—you're sure to find the lichens."

"But this Susie of yours. Did you buy her or . . . ."

"No, she just picked me up. First trip out. She tagged along. She's been with me ever since then."

"And the other prospectors? Do they also have . . . ."

"Every one of them. In this area. This is, you know, the only place on the Moon where any life has been discovered."

"That's why I'm here," said Brill. "I want you to take me where I can observe and study both the lichens and the hound dogs."

"The slopes of Tycho."

He nodded idly. "The bartender was telling me some hair-
raising tales of Tycho. He figures that it's haunted."

"That's the crater itself," I told him. "You're safe out on the slopes."

He glanced at me sharply. "You believe that stuff?" he asked.

"Sure I do," I said.

After we finished eating and had said goodnight, I went in search of Sloppy Joe. I found him in his office, a most untidy place. The man was not so neat himself. He had egg from two months before still upon his necktie.

Yes, he told me, some money had come in. The syndicate just hours before had deposited by radio ten thousand dollars to my account.

"Payment for services you are to render to one Chandler Brill," he said. "I understand the gent is already in the house."

I said that I had met him.

"For that kind of money," said Sloppy Joe, "I hope you take excellent care of him."

I promised that I would.

I ordered a bunch of oxygen and quite a hunk of water and some other things, not forgetting the control panel for Amelia's rig. Sloppy Joe thought that was a great extravagance and tried to argue me out of buying it, but I told him I'd worried a lot about something happening to my panel. I said at any time a
meteorite could knock it out of kilter and he laughed his fool head off. I told him I'd heard of it happening once. Up at the North Pole, I said. And the fellow had to walk forty miles and he was lucky to be that close. Walking, I can tell you, is no picnic even in the lesser gravity. Joe said that walking in was all damn foolishness; all you had to do was sit it out and the rescue crew would get you. I pointed out to him they fined you a thousand clams for getting in a jam so that you needed rescue. He said yes, that was true; he guessed a thousand bucks was good to middling pay for walking forty miles. He said that right away he'd have all the stuff delivered and stowed in Herbie's trailer.

He hauled a bottle out and we had a couple. Then I said goodnight to him and staggered off to bed.

IV

I came down across the hogsback and I saw the shadow had crept across the depression a short distance since I had left the place less than eighteen hours before. I looked across to the opposite hogsback and I could see the wheel marks where I had come down to check on Amelia's rig.

So I was certain that I was in the right place and that is always something you must be absolutely sure of. The moonscape has a lot of landmarks that you can't mistake, but there likewise are a lot of places that look exactly like a lot of other places. This is because there are so few natural features on the Moon. There are no trees, no streams, no vegetation as there is on Earth, and from this lack of features you lose certain dimensions for identifying places.

But this time I was sure. This was my own backyard. This one I could feel my way around in without even seeing it. And there were the wheel marks to cinch the matter absolutely.

I swung up the depression and any minute I expected to see a slight reflection from Amelia's rig. It was in the shadow because I had pushed it there and the creeping of the shadow had since then put it even farther back from the sunlight line. But even so the edge of shadow is not entirely black; there is enough reflection from the sunlit surfaces to give it a sort of twilight effect for some distance back from the fringes of it.

But I caught no glint of metal—not a thing at all. Just the hazy twilight that shaded into blackness with the jagged outline of the hogsback like the bristling hump of some prehistoric monster.
I drove past the place I was sure Amelia's rig must be and there was no sign of it. I nosed into the shadow and turned on my searchlight and the cone of brightness showed me nothing but the dreariness of pea-sized rubble and the flats of rock dust and the little boiling areas where the dust, electrified by the in-pouring solar radiation, hopped and jumped and skipped like a frying pan of fleas.

Undimmed and undiffused by any atmosphere, the beam stabbed straight and true, turning the dark to brightness, clear to the hogsback's base. In that brilliance a rabbit couldn't have kept from being seen. I swiveled the light back and forth and there was nothing there.

I sat there hunched in the seat and the fact soaked in that Amelia wasn't there. It was hard to believe, and yet, somehow, it was no surprise. I sat there, sweating with fear that jingled through me, yet cold with bitter rage.

And this was it, I thought. This relieved me of all responsibility. If she wanted to take it on the lam as soon as I turned my back, that was up to her.

Now I could go back to where I'd left Brill and the trailer and tell him I'd figured out an easy route to Tycho and we could be on our way.

He had been a little huffy and slightly difficult when I had told him he'd have to stay with the trailer while I scouted out the land. It was a lie, of course, and he seemed to know it was, but he finally agreed. I pointed out to him there were a lot of places you couldn't take a trailer and that we'd save a lot of time and possible misadventure if I took a look ahead.

So I had finally ditched him and had come on ahead to put the new control panel into Amelia's rig.

And now Amelia had gone off and left me and she could go to hell.

I switched off the searchlight and swung the rig around and went slowly down the edge of shadow toward the south end of the hogsback.

I was sore at Amelia. I had a right to be. The little fool had jury-rigged the panel and had lit out for Tycho after I had warned her that it was what her life was worth to travel jury-rigged.

I reached the end of the hogsback and stopped the rig and sat there thinking. I knew just where she was. I knew what route she'd travel. There was only one decent route by which one could reach Tycho from this place.

And I couldn't let her do it. I couldn't live with myself if I let her do it. And I remembered, as
well, the banker and the Barker and drugstore operator sitting back there in Millville, getting ready to jerk the rug right out from under me.

I started up the rig and swung it toward the southwest and poured on all the speed I could. I was pretty certain I could catch the little fool before she reached Tycho's rim. She couldn't have too great a start on me; it would have taken quite a while to get the panel rigged and she'd have to have some sleep.

I was right about that. I caught up with her inside of ten miles, at the foot of a massive cliff that reared up out of a system of tangled craterlets just at the bottom of the huge upthrust of land that rose to Tycho's rim.

She had dug a hole into the cliff wall and was taking stuff out of the hole. She had cylinders of oxygen stacked up and was wrestling with a tin of water when I came storming around a curve and came up beside her rig.

From the way she dropped the water tin and jerked up her head, I could see that she was startled. She could not have heard me coming, for there's no sound on the Moon, and the ground was too rugged for her to have caught sight of me.

I stopped the rig and got out of it as swiftly as I could. I walked up to her and took in the situation.

"A cache," I said.

Her voice on the radio was rather small and frightened when she answered.

"My brother," she said. "He built it up in several trips. For going into Tycho."

"And I suppose," I said, "there's a panel replacement there as well as all this other stuff."

She said, defensively: "It's working all right."

"Lady," I said, "where you are going there might not be time to jigger it again if it went out on you."

She got sore at me. "I was giving you an out," she yelled at me. "There is nothing that says you have to go along with me."

"And you've got over being scared?"

"Well, perhaps not entirely. But what has that to do with it?"

I went back to the rig and got the panel.

"Now let's get going on this," I told her, "and no more foolishness. I've got trouble enough without more shenanigans from you."

I told her about Brill and how we'd have to sneak away and leave him on the slope, all wrapped up in his hound dog and lichen chasing, while the
two of us made our dash for Tycho.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Why don't you just bow out. You could lose your license for a stunt like this."

"Not if we pull this Tycho business off."

We got the panel into her rig. I saw she had done a good job in patching up the visor.

"You're sure about Tycho?" I demanded.

"My brother found the body. And there was a diary."

"What did the diary say?"

"Their radios went out while they were still in space. They still could use them, but no one apparently was receiving them. So they landed and tried to fix the radios, but it was no good. They either weren't getting through or there was something that was stopping their receiving. After a time they got scared and tried to take off and the rocket motors wouldn't work. Then something awful happened and . . ."

"What?"

"The diary didn't say. The man just wrote: 'I have to get out of here. I can't stand it any longer.' That was all there was to it."

"He went up the wall somewhere," I said. "He was running straight to death and he must have known it."

I wondered what he had been running from, but I didn't say it.

"So the spaceships still are there," I said, "and all those other men."

She looked at me and there was fright brimming in her eyes. "I don't know," she said.

We pulled out the old panel and got the new one bolted into place. I helped her get the oxygen and water stowed away. Some of it we had to lash in place on top the rig. There wasn't room inside.

"You can finish the rest of it?" I asked.

"Without a bit of trouble. I know these circuits inside out."

"O.K., then," I told her, "when you get it all hooked up, take off. Get over the rim, but not too far. Sit there and wait for me. And maybe you should try to get a little sleep. It'll be a long, hard drive down into the crater."

She stuck out a hand and we shook on it.

"No more tricks," I said.

"No more tricks. I'll be waiting, just below the rim."

I crawled out of her rig and got into my own. I waved at her and she waved back, then I headed out of there; hurrying as fast as I dared back to the trailer and to Brill. I'd been gone for quite a while and he might be getting nervous.
He must have been watching for me and have spotted me from a long ways off, for he had the coffee cooking and a bottle of brandy set out on the table when I crawled into the trailer.

"You were gone a while," he said.

"Had to do a lot of back tracking. Ran into a couple of dead ends."

"But you found a way."

I nodded.

He poured us cups of coffee and sloshed in liberal slugs of brandy.

"There has been something I've been wanting to talk to you about," he said.

And here it came, I thought. He was going to tell me that I was up to something and he knew it. He was all set to give me a real rough time.

"Shoot," I said, as off-hand as I could.

"You strike me as a man who's not too jittery," he said.

"You're jittery all the time," I said. "Everybody is. You never know, out here on the Moon . . ."

"What I mean is you seem to have some bravery."

"I'm not a coward. There are no cowards on the Moon."

"And a bit unscrupulous."

"Well, now that you mention it . . ."

"Not above the making of an extra dollar."

"Any time," I told him.

He picked up his coffee cup and drank the most of what was in it at one fell swoop. He put it down again.

"How much would it need," he asked, "to persuade you to take me into Tycho?"

I choked on my coffee and slopped it all over the table top.

"You want to go into Tycho?"

"For a long time," said Brill, "I've had a sort of theory."

"Go ahead," I told him.

"Well, it's something you may have wondered at yourself. The lichens and the hounds . . ."

He quit and I sat looking at him.

"I'll make it worth your while," he said. "The syndicate need never know about it. This is something just between the two of us."

I pushed the coffee cup away and laid my arms down on the table and put my head down on them and I laughed. I thought I never would stop laughing.

V

YOU stand up on the rim and look down and there is Tycho spread out like a map before you, wild and savage, raw and cold and hard, like the entryway to Hell. The floor is pitted with little craters that, in some places, are so close together that they overlap. There are rugged upheavals and the soft, dream-like
plains that shimmer with the dancing dust and the great jagged central mountain throwing a lop-sided shadow that is black as ink.

You look down and see the way that you must go to reach the crater floor and you would swear it was impossible except for the fact you know it can be done, since it has been done before. You see the tracks of the vehicles that have preceded you, cutting across the tiny talus slopes, and they are the same as when they had been made twenty years ago except for the tiny pockmarks the meteorites have made, with here and there a broom-like smoothing out job done by the dancing dust motes, hopping about like jumping beans under the excitation of the solar wind.

And where these other rigs have gone you can be fairly sure that you can go as well, for the trail will be the same. Twenty years is no more than a second on the Moon, for there is no wind and weather and the erosion is minute—the erosion of the meteorites, of the solar wind, of the tiny hammerings of the heat and cold that may sliver from a rock flake of debris once every hundred years.

There were three of us, I thought, who were going down there and each for a different reason, although Amelia and I, perhaps, had something in common.

Brill was going because he had the wild idea that down there in the crater he would find the answer to the lichens and the hounds—the only native life so far found upon the Moon. And perhaps his idea was not entirely wild, for it was only in the Tycho region that one found the lichens and the hounds. It was entirely possible their origin was in Tycho and that those found outside the crater simply had slopped over.

Amelia was going down because she thought there was treasure to be found there—but even more than that she was an extension of a brother who could not carry on his quest, a brother for whom she needed money so he could go back to Earth for treatment of radiation sickness.

And I? I sought the treasure, too. But something more than treasure, although I could not at the moment put my finger on the nature of it.

And in going, all three of us were in defiance of the law.

Just a few minutes ago I had made my radio report back to Coonskin Central and now we had twenty hours before they could expect us to report again. And in those twenty hours, I wondered what would happen to us.
I craned my head around and saw Amelia’s rig behind us.
I said to Brill: “Well, here we go, God help us.”
I put in the clutch and the rig moved forward slowly, nosing down, rocking to the unevenness of the trail.
It was tricky driving. The curves and switchbacks were steep and tight and at times the trail was little wider than the rig itself. Time after time the pressure of the outer wheels crumbled the edge of the trackway and sent fine dust and clods trickling down the slope below.
I clung to the wheel and my palms were sweating and I began a grim and bitter mental race with time. A thousand feet, I estimated, and eleven more to go. And then two thousand feet and not more than ten remained. It was a silly thing and I fought against it. I tried to stop the mental calculation. But it was no good.
We wound slowly down, trying not to look below us, trying not to think of what would happen if we should slide or skid. And within my mind a terrible fantasy built up. What would happen to us if somewhere the trail should happen to be broken? There is little change upon the Moon, but it’s not impossible. What would we do if suddenly before us we found a gap in the trail that we could not cross?
We’d be trapped without a single prayer. I sweated as I thought of trying to back up the trail to the rim again.

We were halfway down when Brill jogged my elbow.
“What?” I asked, exasperated at his bothering me.
“There,” he said, excited, pointing.
I didn’t look immediately. I flashed my stop light to warn Amelia’s rig behind me. I cut the power and put light, even pressure on the brakes. The rig came to a halt. I glanced around. Amelia’s rig had stopped, fifty feet behind, and I could see her face peering out at us.
“There,” insisted Brill. “Over there, just beyond the mountain.”
I looked and saw it.
“What is it?” Brill demanded.
“A cloud? A light?”
It could have been either one. But there are no clouds upon the Moon. Neither are there lights, unless they’re man-made lights.
This thing was big—it had to be, to be seen at all—for it was at the far end of the crater, beyond the central mountain. It was a fiery thing that rolled against the distant peaks. It would look momentarily like fleecy clouds, then it would twinkle and would flash and then suddenly grow dark and then would flash again, like a mon-
storous diamond that had caught a ray of light.

"They were right," said Brill, the breath whistling sharply in his teeth. "It is no fairy tale. There is really something there."

"This is the first time I have seen it."

"But you see it now."

"Yes," I said, "I see it."

And I was cold all over—cold with a greater fear than the fear of going down the rim.

"How far away?" asked Brill.

I shook my head: "Pretty far," I told him, "It looks to be against the farther wall. Fifty miles or more."

I looked around and waved to Amelia and pointed and I saw her looking for what I pointed at. At first she didn't see it, then suddenly she did, for her hands went up to cup her face in a gesture close to terror.

We sat there watching.

It—whatever it might be—did not move. It stayed where it was. It throbbed and flashed and darkened.

"A signal," said Brill.

"What is it signaling to?"

"I wouldn't know," said Brill.

I released the brakes and let in the clutch and we moved forward once again.

It took hours, it seemed to me. When we reached the crater floor, I was limp and sore from nervous tension. Big booby? Sure I am. So would be anyone.

I wheeled the rig around and craned my neck up at the crater wall and paid a silent tribute to the courage of that first man who had mapped out the trail.

"The cloud," said Brill, "went away a little while ago. I didn't mention it. I didn't want to bother you."

I got up and went to the refrigerator and took out the water bottle. I drank first, then handed it to Brill. It was rude, undoubtedly, but I needed water worse than he did.

He took only a swallow or two, then handed it back.

I liked the way he did it. Not all Earth lubbers know that when you are Out Back you don't guzzle water. You always drink a little less than you really need.

I snapped down my helmet and crawled out the hatch. A minute after I dropped out, Amelia came crawling from her rig.

"What was it, Chris?" she asked.

She gestured with her arm.

"I don't know," I said.

Brill plopped from the hatch like something spit out by a slot machine. You have to get the knack of it—there are so many things on the Moon you have to get the knack of.

He got to his feet and went through the absurd motions of dusting himself off. Where he had lit there wasn't any dust.

THE TROUBLE WITH TYCHO
But off to the right was a monstrous talus slide, the dust as fine as flour—pure rock dust flaked off and shriven off and pounded off the rocks above over the course of many million years.

Brill came up to us.

His big, hearty booming voice came thundering on our radios:

“Well, we made it. What do we do now?”

The high rocks above the talus slope were stained here and there with dark splashes of the lichens and a few hound dogs fluttered before the faces of the rock.

Susie perched on my shoulder, sparkling. Amelia’s hound came over and the two of them played ring around the rosy.

I gestured toward the rocks.

“There you are,” I said to Brill.

“There’ll be a lot of others,” Amelia said impatiently.

“You have any idea what we should do next?” I asked.

“There’s the old observatory site around here somewhere. If we could locate that.”

I nodded. “They’d have put in some stakes. And there might be tracks. We could follow those.”

“You mean,” said Brill, “the tracks of the men who turned up missing.”

“That is right,” I told him.

“But you two are looking for those ships.”

“I have a hunch the tracks would lead straight to them.”

“And then we disappear as well.”

“Maybe,” I said.

“And along the way,” said Brill, “I study hounds and lichens.”

“That’s what you came here for.”

“Oh, yes, of course,” said Brill. We got back into our rigs and cruised in a semi-circle and a little distance out we found tracks going west, close against the wall—not a lot of tracks, just tracks here and there where there happened to be dust.

We followed the tracks.

We came at last to the observatory site. There were a lot of tracks. There were stakes driven in the ground with the red flags hanging limply. There were stacks of supplies. There were scattered instruments.

The site lay in a bay carved into the wall, with great black cliffs rising straight up from the plain. It was an eerie place. It set your teeth on edge. There are a lot of places on the Moon that by their sheer stark loneliness set your teeth on edge.

And leading southward across the crater floor were many tracks, all headed purposefully toward the central mountain.

We swung our rigs around and took out along the tracks. We made good time, the two rigs running abreast across the flat floor of the crater. There
were places where we had to swing around minor craterlets. We hit one crevasse that forced us to take a wide detour.

I set a somewhat faster pace than usual, but we had lost a lot of time in coming down the rim and we had to make it up. It was well past the middle of the lunar afternoon and our time was running short. We had to find what we were looking for before night came on. And there was another thing that scared me silly when I thought about it—following the treacherous trail up to the rim after it got dark. It had been all damn foolishness, I told myself, to start out as late as this. We should have waited until morning so that we’d have fourteen Earth days of light to carry out our venture. But our hand had been forced by Amelia’s situation. She was illegal as all hell and even if I could have found a place to hide her out in Coonskin, the situation would very likely have gotten stickier. For Coonskin Central, sooner or later—probably even now—would have found that she’d slipped through their clutches and would be hunting her.

We went rolling across the flat, with the great walls and the jagged peaks of the crater wall every way you looked, with the sun beating down and blinding bright even through the filters of the visiplate, with the cluck and chuckle of the radiation counter beating out a warning undertone, with Susie jigging up and down atop the radio and shooting out small and discrete showers of sparks. The land and the time stretched out forever and there was no end to anything, but an eternity of blinding light and darkling shadow and the utter sense of lifelessness and the great sterility.

Brill broke the spell. He grabbed me by the shoulder.

“Over there!” he shouted. “Over there!”

I saw it immediately he pointed and slammed on the brakes. Amelia, slightly behind us, came skidding to our side.

It lay out there, lonely in the dust, a sprawling thing and limp, with the sun sparkling on the helmet and one arm outstretched.

I shut off the turbines and scrambled for the hatch and even as I did I knew there was no need of haste. For the thing that lay out there had been there these many years.

VI

HE HAD died face downward and in the last moments of his life he had found the time and strength to reach out his arm and with a finger for a pencil, write the message in the dust.
And if he had been lucky the message would have stayed there, fresh and legible as the day he'd written, for half eternity. But the dancing dust motes, stirred by the breathing wrath of the distant sun, had almost erased his work.

Almost
Not quite.
For two words remained:
NO DIAMONDS
And a little way beneath the words, as if it were a part of another sentence, were three letters, not a word:
TER
And that was all there was.
"Poor devil," Brill said, looking at him.

I went down on one knee and reached out my hands to touch him and Amelia said: "Leave him there. Exactly as he is."

And I saw that she was right. There was nothing we could do. There was nothing he would have wanted us to do.

He was dead. There was no need to look upon his face, dried and dessicated, mummified by the aridness that in a little time would have sucked up every drop of moisture, even through the protection of the suit.

"He must have been one of the rescue party." I said. "One of those who went out to find the missing survey party."

For otherwise someone would have found and moved him and it was evident that he had lain there undisturbed since that hour when he had stumbled and been unable to get up. Or, perhaps more truly, since that hour when he had given up and refused to face any longer the pitiless thing that fought him. He had written out his message and then had lain there, in the great silence and the vast uncaring, waiting for the end.

I got up and moved into the shadow of the rigs, out of the terrible heat. The others joined me and we stood there, looking at him.

"That's a strange message," Brill observed, "for a dying man to write. No diamonds. When you are facing death you think of other things than diamonds."

"It may have been a warning," Amelia said. "A warning to others who might have heard a rumor. A warning that there were no diamonds. No use of going further, for there are no diamonds."

I shook my head, perplexed. "There has never been a rumor such as that," I said. "I have never heard it and I've heard every rumor, I am sure, that ever was in Coonskin. I've heard all sorts of rumors. But never one like that. Never any rumor of diamonds to be found in Tycho."

"Even if there were," said
Brill, "how could he be sure? He could not have explored all of Tycho. He wouldn't have the time."

"How do we know?" I asked. "There is no way of knowing how long he might have been here."

"And the rest of it," Amelia whispered. "Those three other letters..."

"After," said Brill. "Or water. Or matter. They could be almost anything. It's a common ending for a lot of words."

"Or a beginning," I said. "It could have been terrain."

"I don't think," said Brill, "he would have used a word like that. He would have used simple words. He'd have striven to be simple and direct. He knew that he was dying. He knew he had no time and probably little strength. And he may have been half crazy."

I walked out of the shade, back to the suited corpse again, and bent down, studying the dust where the message had been written. But there was nothing to be seen, nothing to be learned. There was not the faintest trace of other lettering. The eraser had wiped clean.

And it might as well, I thought a little bitterly, have wiped it clean entirely for all the good it did us. It was infuriating when you thought about it.

There had been a message here, an important message. Or at least a message a dying man had believed to have enough importance to be written out in hope it might help another man in another day.

In that message, it seemed to me, rested a certain symbolism of man's ever-springing optimism, of his terrible certainty, of his arrogant sense of continuity—that even on the edge of death he should attempt to communicate, even in a place like this, even in the desolation and the nakedness of a basic and primal hostility that waited patiently to suck the life from him, confident and sure that in the day to come some other man would read what he had written, contemptuous even then of the thing that was slowly killing him, knowing that other men would conquer over it.

I turned around and walked back toward the rig.

Amelia and Brill were staring at the sky.

I walked up beside them.

"They're at it again," said Brill.

The cloud was there again, I saw, rolling and flashing in the sky. Like a light house, like a signal, like a lamp set in a window.

And it was creepy. It was worse even than the silence, or the whiteness and the black-

THE TROUBLE WITH TYCHO

45
ness; worse than the great uncaring.

I wondered what Brill had meant by "they." With what agency or force did he equate the cloud? Or was he only trying to make the horror more familiar by personalizing it?

It was on the point of my tongue to ask him and then I didn’t ask him. I don’t know why I didn’t. It was almost as if it would have been like reaching down into the soul of him with an unclean hand and fishing for a part of him no man was meant to see.

I stood for a moment with the others, watching the flashing and the rolling in the sky, then I turned away.

“We’ll grab a bite to eat,” I said, “and get a few hours sleep, then we’ll hit the road again.”

And this was it, I thought. This was the final lap.

VII

THE walls reared up a thousand feet or more to frame the gateway and the tracks led through the gateway. There were many tracks now and in the dust and softer rubble they had fashioned ruts. Here all the many vehicles which had rolled toward oblivion had converged to go into the funnel of the gateway.

I pulled the rig up to a halt and waited for Amelia to pull up beside us.

You could almost smell a trap. But that, I told myself, was completely foolish, for there was nothing on the Moon to trap you. Nothing but the Moon itself, that fantastic chunk of outre real estate. Although there were the hound dogs and the lichens, but the lichens were only a peculiar sort of plants that were lousy with a peculiar kind of microbes and the hounds were—what? Chunks of living energy? Thoughtful will-o-wisps? Sentient Roman candles? God knows what they were, or what purpose they might have. Or why they lived or how. Or why one of them should attach itself to a living being, like a faithful pet.

I looked at the walls again and they were dark, since they lay in shadow, and they went up and up like carven monoliths, and far above, on their summits, I could catch the glitter of the sunlight glancing off their tops.

I looked across at Amelia and she made a motion, waving her hand forward to let me know it was all right with her—that we should go ahead.

I put the rig in gear and crept slowly forward between the two rock walls. It was a sterile place, simply the walls coming down on either side, with the rubble in between.

The corridor went straight
ahead and I wondered what geo-
logic highjinks must have been
performed to bring it into being,
to split the cliffs and carve this
passageway. On Earth it could
have been cut by water, but at
no time in its history had the
Moon ever had the water that
would have been necessary to
cut out such a canyon. It might
have been a lunar quake or, once
again, it might have been some
fantastic happenstance that
came about when the monstrous
meteor which had punched out
Tycho had impacted on the sur-
face.

The pathway curved gently to
the right, then abruptly to the
left and as I made the left hand
turn, the fierce light of the sun
struck full into our faces. After
the dark, even with the filters
slid in place, the light was a
blinding shock and it was a little
time before I could make out
where we were.

Then I saw that we were in
what might have been another
crater—although the surround-
ing walls seemed to be too
straight for it to be a crater.
There was no slope at all, just
the walls, rising stark and per-
pendicular from a floor almost as
smooth as a living room. And
rising from the smoothness of
the floor, the strange, typical
Moon formation—the crazy, jag-
ged peaklets that looked like a
melted candle, the tiny crater-
lets, the obscene-looking mounds
and the criss-cross of tiny cre-
vasses. The walls ran in a semi-
circle, backed against the natural
crater wall itself, towering far
above the straighter walls, but
sloped instead of straight. And
I knew, looking at it, that this
was the southern slope of Tycho,
that we had come all the way
across the crater.

But that wasn't all.

There, in the center of the
area, sat two spaceships—red
bodies with gray domes, sprad-
dling on four landing gears. And
scattered all about them were
moon rigs, gleaming in the glare
of sun.

And other things—other hudd-
dled bundles lying helter-skelter.

But the spaceships and the
rigs and the huddled bundles did
not immediately register upon
my brain as actual things. Rath-
er, the thought that came crash-
ing down was that Amelia had
been right. There had never been
a time, I suppose, up to this very
moment, when I actually had
been convinced we would find the
spaceships of the lost Third
Lunar expedition. I had, actually,
scarcely thought of it; I had
not debated it; I had neither ac-
ted nor rejected it. It had
been a pleasant El Dorado; it
had been a magnificent will-o-
wisp to chase across the out-
lawed floor of Tycho.

And I wondered as I sat there,
staring at the ships, if that, after all, had been the reason I had come—if this whole crazy expedition, on my part, had been no more than a gesture of rebellion against the Moon itself. One could come to resent the Moon—one could come to hate the Moon without really knowing it.

I pulled ahead and as I did I realized, for the first time—although the knowledge must have struck me instantly I saw them—that the huddled shapes were spacesuits. Here, after many years, were all the men who had been lost in Tycho.

These men and two others—the man who had scrawled the message out on the crater floor and the man who had been found by Amelia’s brother on the outer slope.

There was danger here. There was evidence of death and danger there before our eyes. And there was the sense of danger and the breath of danger in the very place itself.

With an involuntary cry of warning, I twisted on the wheel to swing the machine around, to head back through the passage-way between the walls, to get out of there as fast as the rig would take me.

And even as I did there was a flash of fire—so rapid that one could little more than sense it, so intense that it was momentarily blinding—and the rig went dead.

Brill had fallen backward off his seat and now he sat grotesquely on the floor, with one arm across his face to shut out the flare that was gone entirely now. Smoke streamed out of the instrument board and there was the acrid smell of burned installation and of melted metal.

Susie was fluttering excitedly in the center of the cabin.

“Quick!” I yelled. “Outside!”

I hauled Brill off the floor and slapped his helmet down, pushed him toward the hatch. He scurried blindly into it and I followed close behind.

Amelia’s rig stood twenty feet away and I raced toward it, yelling for Brill to follow me.

But it was no use.

Amelia was crawling from the hatch and through the visi-plate I could see the wisps of smoke rising from the panel—the brand-new panel that we’d installed not too many hours before.

We stood in stricken silence, the three of us together.

We were stranded here, on the farthest side of Tycho’s crater, with no conceivable way of getting out.

Unless we tried walking it.

And we’d seen, all of us had seen, out on the crater’s floor, what had happened to a man who tried walking out.
“Look,” said Brill, pointing upward.

We looked.

The cloud was in the sky again—the cloud that we had seen off and on all across the crater.

It was no cloud at all.

It was millions upon millions of the hound dogs, dancing all together.

VIII

They had landed, I thought, and it had been fine.

Earth had been hanging there, just above the horizon, as it was hanging now. And they had done a great thing. They were second on the Moon. For the First Lunar expedition had been the only one so far to land and they’d stayed only for a week. And the Second expedition had gone to pot in a spectacular, blazing glory when it was only halfway there.

But the men of the Third had come to set up a base, they had come to stay. In a month or so another expedition would come plunging down out of the sky, carrying more supplies and further personnel.

The Third had come to stay and they had stayed in all grim reality. For they still were here.

In that moment of their pride, a terrible thing had happened. The electrical circuits of their ships had flared and smoked and there had been miles of molten, twisted wires in the innards of these wonderful machines which had brought them here and would never run again short of complete rewiring. And they didn’t have the know-how and they didn’t have the wire and they didn’t have the time.

Their ships were grounded and their radios were dead and they might have tried to reach Earth with small auxiliary sets, for we had found the sets, but it was no good. So they were isolated men—shipwrecked on a cosmic desert island and by simply looking up they could see their planet and their home in the sky above them. And they would have known that they could never reach it.

With two expeditions gone, with only one success, Earth had been cautious about sending out another. It had been almost ten years before another expedition had gone out, equipped with what were then considered very foolproof ships. And they had not been foolproof, but they had been better. It was from this Fourth expedition that the colonization of the Moon had finally dated.

And what had it been that had washed out the circuits, not only of the ships, but of the moon rigs of those others who had been lured here—and last of all, ourselves?
It made no sense at all and the Moon had, in all the times before, made sense. Cruel it might be, barren, lonesome, hard—but it had made an uncaring sort of sense. It had no dirty tricks hidden up its sleeve, it had no sly and clever ambush—it was just a hard old girl to get along with, but entirely honest.

I got up from where I had been sitting in the shade of one of the rigs. It was late afternoon and the blaze of the sun was hot. A man had to get into the shade every now and then.

Soon, I knew, we had to work out a plan of action. We couldn't wait much longer. We had checked all the possibilities and not a one paid out. All the wiring in the ships was gone and in the rigs as well. There was no hope of getting wire enough to patch up our own rigs. And even if we had, there was the very present question of how much good it might accomplish us. For whatever had burned out the circuits in the first place, could burn them out again.

And here we stood, surrounded by all sorts of vehicles and not a single one among them that would turn a wheel.

We had found other things, of course.

The walls of the crater were draped and hung with lichens. There were more lichens here than I ever had imagined anyone would ever find. There were enough of them to run Doc’s sanitarium for a thousand years or so, even if he threw a bunch of wings on it and took in more patients.

There were papers in the ship—the entire history of the expedition—as well as instruments and all sorts of other high-priced junk.

There was a fortune here, in salvage and in lichens, if one could get it out. But at the moment we’d be lucky to get out with our skins intact.

And there were dead men all around—the very ancient dead—most decently entombed in the coffins of their suits. But, somehow or other, quite impersonal. For there was no violence, nor any sign of it, and the agony was hidden by the bulky suits and the filter plates. They had died, it seemed on the face of it, with a quiet Roman dignity that fitted in most admirably with the austere circumstances.

And that, I knew, was hogwash, but I inquired no further. It was less disturbing not to.

And there were the hound dogs, swarming all around, bright, shining little idiots that were quite unhelpful.

Brill came around one of the spaceships and walked over to me. He stopped in front of me and we stood facing one another.
"We'll have to make a move before too long," he said. "We can't just stay here and..."

He made a sweeping motion with his hand.

I knew what he meant. He didn't have to tell me. The man was terribly on edge. He was all upset. But so were Amelia and I.

"In just a while," I told him. "It looks as if we walk. We'll wait until the sun gets lower. You saw what happened to that guy out in the crater. He tried it in the daytime."

"But the dark..."

"Not as dark as you think. There'll be Earthlight and it's a good deal brighter than the best moonlight on Earth. And it will be cool. It will even be cold. But we have heaters in our suits. You can fight the cold better than the heat."

"Jackson, tell me. What are our chances?"

"It's seventy miles," I said. "And the climb out of the crater. That will be a rough one."

He shook his head, discouraged.

"We'll get some sleep," I told him. "We'll start out fresh. We'll have to carry as much oxygen as we can to start with. But we'll discard the tanks as we go along. That will lighten up the load."

"Water?"

"You can carry only so much of it in a suit. And you can't replenish it. But we'll be traveling cold. We won't need as much as if we tried it in the heat."

He looked at me long and hard, with a glitter in his eyes. "You don't think that we will make it."

"It's not been done," I said. "Not seventy miles of walking in a spacesuit."

"Maybe someone will pick us up. They know by now we're missing. They'll be out looking. They'll know where we went. They'll spot the trailer on the rim."

"That is right."

"But you aren't counting on it."

I shook my head.

"How much longer?"

"Ten or twelve hours. We want to let it begin to cool off. There'll be time to get some sleep. There'll be time for you to take a good look at the lichens."

"I've looked at them," he said. "And the hound dogs. Jackson, was there ever a time when you were utterly baffled? When nothing made any sense at all?"

"Lots of times. This setup, for example."

"This," said Brill, "is where it all started—the hound dogs and the lichens. I am sure of it. This is home ground for them. But why? How is this one place any different than any other place upon the Moon?"
"I don't think that it is," I said. "Take a look at these walls."

"What about the walls?"

"They aren't natural. They are straight. They are symmetrical. They seem to have a function. The Moon is haphazard, but these walls are not..."

"You mean someone built these walls?"

"Maybe."

He nodded idly and moved closer to me. His voice dropped almost to a conspiratorial level—as if he were afraid someone might listen in.

"The lichens could be what's left of the kitchen garden. All that was left. All that survived."

"You've been thinking the same thing."

"Someone or something from outside," he said. "Maybe a million years ago."

"And the hounds?"

"Lord, how should I know? Pets, maybe. A few pets were left behind and they multiplied."

"Or watchers."

He looked at me with baffled worry in his eyes. "It sounds so logical," he said. "But, of course, it's speculation."

"Naturally," I said.

"There's one thing that bothers me," he said and you could see that he was worried in a deeply academic way.

"There's a lot that worries me," I told him.

"It's the electrical failure," he said. "The failure is not random."

"Huh?"

"Well, the circuits in the rigs went out, but not those in our suits. The circuits in the ships out there went blooey, but not the circuits in some auxiliary radios. The ones they used to try to signal Earth. The failure is selective. It's not something that blankets in all circuits."

"You mean intelligence."

"That is what I mean," said Brill.

I felt a chill wind blowing and there's no wind upon the Moon.

For if there were intelligence it was an intelligence that wanted to keep us here, wanted us to stay and die, just like all these others had done.

"It doesn't stand to reason," said Brill, "that this life is native to the Moon. If life had risen on the Moon it would have risen in more than one place. It does not make sense that there is only one place on its entire surface where life is possible."

"What about those pre-life molecules?"

"Yes, of course, they found them. But in every case that was all they found. The molecules fell into a dead-end. They never did develop. The Moon was sterile even in its infancy. It offered no encouragement to life. It..."
The shout came loud and clear. It was Amelia calling.

"Chris, come quick! Chris! Chris!"

She was excited. Not frightened, but excited.

I swung around and there she was, just out from the farther wall.

I ran and Brill pounced at my heels and I saw it even before I reached Amelia.

It stood in a little rock niche carved out from the wall and it shone with a million secret fires that lanced purest light.

It was boulder size—a very massive boulder—and there was no mistaking what it was. "A diamond!" Amelia sobbed. "The man out there was wrong."

And she was entirely right. The man out there was wrong.

For there stood the biggest diamond that ever had been found. Tons and tons of diamond!

But there was something else that was very wrong.

For the diamond was cut and faceted and polished and the living light of it flowed from every carven face.

And another thing.

We had covered the area a dozen times. We had walked around the walls. We had inspected the ships and had a look at all the rigs, hoping in a futile sort of way that we might find from them a clue that might be of help to us.

And we had not seen the diamond until this very moment and it was not the sort of thing that could very well be missed.

There was something rotten here—and something very sneaky. As if the diamond might be a very special bait for some diabolic trap.

Brill stepped forward and I grabbed him by the arm.

"Stay back, you fool!" I told him.

For suddenly I knew what the dead man out on the crater floor had written. There had been enough space between the words for another letter.

NOT DIAMONDS is what he’d really written rather than NO DIAMONDS. The little dancing dust motes had wiped out the letter T.

And even as we stood and watched, the diamond came apart.

Interlocking fist-size crystals peeled away and floated free in space. Slowly, methodically, almost mathematically, crystals peeled away until there was no diamond, but just a cloud of crystals floating there before our eyes, bumping gently together and each one of them a blaze of light that almost put out your eyes.
We backed away from them and they floated slowly along the wall until they came to the passageway that led outside to the crater floor. And there they hung, like a door, like a curtain, quivering and waiting. You could feel them watching.

And that was why, I knew, no one had escaped from here—no one but the man we'd found and the other found by Amelia's brother.

"Well," I said, "they've really got us now."

I should not have said it. I don't know why I said it. But it seemed so logical and true I could not help the saying. The words suddenly were there, formed inside my brain, and they popped out of my mouth.

And at the sound of them, Brill screamed and ran—running desperately, head down, boots kicking up great clots of rubble, shoulders hunched, as if he were a football player who meant to crack the line. Straight for the passageway he went, heading out for freedom, breaking from the trap in a sheer rush of insane desperation.

Two crystals spun out from the curtain and were twin streaks of flashing light as they bulleted for Brill. They hit and ricocheted, spiraling upward, flashing as they spun, and Brill was stumbling. He hit the ground and crawled ahead a ways, then fell into a heap and slumped into a stillness.

The curtain shimmered and a cloud of hounds came down, like a cloud of vultures, and settled on the man lying on the ground, settling so thickly that he was lost from sight and all that remained to see was a million million sparks that danced and scintillated.

I turned away and bumped into Amelia.

Her eyes were large and frightened and her face was deathly pale.

"God save us now," she said.

IX

So there were three of them, whatever they might be: the diamond and the lichens and the hounds.

Amelia said: "I got you into this."

I said: "I wasn't hard to get. I almost jumped at it."

And that was true. I had. It was a chance to really lay my hands on something; it was the chance to clean up big. And those chances didn't come too often; you grabbed them when they came.

And more than that. It was an answer to the men sitting in the Millville barber shop, snapping their suspenders. And it was Brill asking how much it would take for me to take him into
Tycho when I’d been scheming all the while to run from him to Tycho. And it had been insurance against walking down the streets of Millville, glad to take any job that anyone might offer.

Nor was that all of it, either, I told myself, being really honest. It had been, as well, an excuse to come stumbling into Tycho. To come and see the place that was talked about in whispers. For Tycho was a haunted house and for certain kinds of people haunted houses have a fatal fascination. I guess I was that kind of person.

The cabin of the rig was hot, but the long shadow from the wall would reach it in a while and then it would cool off—and it was a comfort, it was almost a necessity, to get the helmet off. A man can go raving crazy if he’s caged in it too long.

“We really aren’t going to get out of it,” Amelia said. “You don’t really think we are.”

“I haven’t given up,” I said. “Once you give up, you’re dead. There may be a way we haven’t thought of yet.”

“I threw away the old panel,” Amelia said, “I should have hung onto it. But there is so little room.”

“It would have done no good,” I told her. “It’s not just the panel. It is all the wiring. Just the panel by itself would have done no good. And even if we had it now and could get it in and had all the other wiring, there’s not a thing to stop them from blowing it again.”

To stop them? To stop who or what?

The diamond, more than likely. And the diamond still was out there. I could see it out there. It had gone back together and was a boulder once again. It sat there proud and beautiful and just slightly vulgar for its very bigness. It was sitting in the entrance to the passageway, almost filling it. It was sitting there and watching. It was the garrison. It was the garrison left behind to guard this bleak and minor outpost of some empire that a human being, in his provinciality, could not even guess at. It was the ancient legion that sat atop the wall, forgotten in the drift of cosmic affairs, but remaining loyal and steadfast.

Although maybe not forgotten, for there could be no knowing how many other garrisons stood guard in other places as inhospitable as this.

And I knew, even as I thought it, that I was guilty of too-human thinking—for while the Moon was in all conscience inhospitable to humans, it might seem quite homelike to another being. To a crystal being, like the diamond. To an energy being, like
the hounds. Even to the queer symbiotic being, composed of plant and bacteria, like the lichens.

Earth might be a planet which would seem most inhospitable to such as these. Air and water might be very poison to them.

"I am sorry, Chris," Amelia said.

"Sorry?"

"Sorry that we aren't going back. We could have had a drink or two together, we could have gone to dinner, perhaps we even could have..."

"Yes," I said, "I think we could have."

We looked at one another solemnly.

"Kiss me, Chris," she said.

I did. It was a rather awkward business in a spacesuit, but very satisfactory.

"You've been an all right guy," she said.

"Thanks," I told her. "Thank you very much."

Brill's suited body still lay just inside the gateway. There had been no reason why we should have moved it. It was in good company. After the hounds had taken leave, I'd had a look at him. The crystals had hit his helmet and two neat holes had been punched into the heavy glass. Little radiating fracture lines ran out from each of them. And those holes had been enough. The oxygen had poured out and Brill had quickly died. His face was not a pretty thing to look at.

And why had Brill run, I wondered. What had panicked him? He was not a man to panic, and yet perhaps he was. More than likely that quiet, academic manner was no better than a pose to hide the fear that was building up in him. And when he saw the last route of escape being finally plugged, he had made his break. It had been a foolish thing to do. No Moonman would have done it. But Brill was not a Moon-man; he was fresh from Earth. And just the Moon itself is enough to panic someone who is not acclimated to it.

There was something I had thought just a minute before, something that had gone rattling through my skull that I should have caught a hold on.

Something about the Moon being home to a certain breed and the Earth a home to yet another breed.

I sat and thought on it, not nearly as excited as I should have been, and it was a gamble. It was a crazy sort of gamble. It could turn out, if it failed, to be a very deadly gamble. But we were dead in any event if the diamond held the gateway and a failing gamble would only make it quicker. And we had no time
to lose. If we were going to get out of here, we must be leaving soon.

I went to the cupboard and hunted through a drawer until I found an old can-opener and I put it in my pocket.

"Come on, Amelia," I said. "We are getting out of here."

She gave me a funny look, but she didn’t argue. She didn’t want to know how we were getting out or anything like that.

She started for the hatch and I followed her.

Amelia’s rig still had tanks of oxygen and cans of water lashed down on the outer deck. We got down four tanks and rigged them with ropes so we could grab them up and sling them from our shoulders.

We carried them as close to the gateway as we dared, not wanting to rouse the watching diamond. But we needn’t have worried any. All it did was squat there and watch us with its thousand glittering eyes.

We went back and broke out fresh tanks and replaced those on our suits so we could start out—if we started out—with a full supply.

Then we got down the water tins and I got out the can opener and went after them. A space-suit is an awkward thing at best. It was never meant to operate an opener on a tin.

But finally I wrangled the top off two of them. I spilled a little water, but not very much. It slopped out of the cans and spilled onto the ground. It soaked into the ground and left a wet spot there and it broke my heart, almost, for it was an awful sight. Water is something you don’t spill out in the wilderness.

I straightened up from the second can and put the opener back into my pocket.

"Chris," Amelia said, "what is it all about?"

"Two barrels," I said. "A double-barreled shotgun. We have just two chances."

"Oxygen and water."

"That is exactly it. One or the other of them might scare it off a bit so we can make a dash."

I picked up a tank of oxygen and a tin of water. Amelia took the other tin.

We walked up close this time and the diamond sat there, staring at us—or I suppose that it was staring at us—maybe even wondering what we might be up to. But it wasn’t worried. It had no need to worry. This was not the first time it had dealt with humans and it was not afraid of them. They were soft and weak and very-very stupid and there was nothing they could do to hurt the diamond any.

I put my can of water down on the ground and hitched the oxygen tank around. I got my
feet set hard against the ground and I grasped the valve and pointed the connection nozzle directly at the diamond. Then I twisted the valve as hard as I could twist it and the tank bucked in my arm and slammed against my shoulder as the oxygen poured out.

Nothing happened for a moment. The gush of gas stirred some dust to life and raised a tiny cloud, but the diamond did not move. Then, slowly, almost insolently, it began to come apart. For it had had enough of it. This tiny, squalid human could not blow into its face. It would teach it not to do so.

"Amelia!" I shouted.

Amelia was ready and she let the diamond have five gallons of good wet water right smack in its face.

A second dragged out to half eternity and then the diamond steamed. It smoked and ran and blurred. It began to melt. White salts ran down its sides. It began to slump into a dreadful shapelessness.

I dropped the oxygen tank and it writhed away, the last of the gas inside it propelling it along the ground on an erratic course. I grabbed up my can of water, but I didn’t throw it. I halted it even as I began to throw it. For there wasn’t any need.

The diamond was a heap of powdery substance that steamed a little, settling in upon itself.

Our second barrel had paid off where the first had failed. Oxygen was as nothing to this alien being, but water had been deadly.

Exorcised, I said, talking to myself.

Exorcised by water, and not even holy water.

Sent back into nothingness by an alien and a hostile and a very deadly substance that another race could not live without.

And that, I told myself, was the gulf that lay between us and these other things—that our very common needs should be unknown to either of the other.

I glanced back over my shoulder and the jaggedness of the crater’s rim was already cutting into the shimmer of the sun.

"Amelia," I said, "it is time for us to go."

We picked up the tanks and heaved them on our shoulders and went plodding down the passageway and out into the crater.

Far ahead we saw the whiteness of the farther rim and it was a long way off.

Dark was coming down and soon it would be cooler and then it would be cold. But the good old Earth would light us on our way.

And we had found our treasure. There were millions back
there for us—if we could make it out to Coonskin.

We plodded on, side by side, making fairly good time. A spacesuit is a miserable thing to walk in, but once you hit your stride you can do a fair job of getting over ground. Especially on a body like the Moon, where the lesser gravity gives you something of an edge.

“Chris,” Amelia said, “that’s what the other word meant.”

“What other word?”

“The word the man wrote in the dust. There was just part of it.”

“TER,” I said.

“Don’t you see. He had written water.”

“Maybe so,” I said.

Although she was mistaken, I was sure. It could have been anything at all. It needn’t have been WATER.

I wished she hadn’t mentioned it. I didn’t like to think about it. It was too personal.

I broke my stride and swung around to have a final look at the beetling walls behind which had been hidden the mystery of Tycho.

And as I looked at them, I saw something else.

Streaming out above them, in a painted streamer that hung against the sky, following on our trail, came a cloud of hound dogs.

And I noticed something else. Susie was no longer with us nor was Amelia’s hound. They had deserted us and now the entire pack of them was baying at our heels.

I dug a hole in the talus slope and dragged Amelia into it. Using my hands, I covered her with dust, all except her head. There still was heat below the top layer of the dust, left over from the pounding sunlight of the lunar day—and the dust as well would act as insulation.

Now the Moon was cold. The sun had been gone for hours and the heat, except for the little trapped within the piles of dust, accumulated at the bottoms of steep slopes, had fled into outer space. The heaters in our suits were unable to hold off the cold entirely. It was all right as long as one was walking, for then the increased body heat, held in by the suit, became a warming factor. But it would have been suicide to stop and rest without the added insulation and the trapped heat of the dust.

I patted down the dust and rose unsteadily to my feet and every muscle screamed. It had been that way for hours, for we had not dared to stop until we reached this place where we would find the massive piles of dust.

Inch by inch I straightened
until I stood erect. Then I wheeled awkwardly around and glanced back the way we’d come and there lay all the plains of Tycho—the whole fifty miles of them. And we had come that way without a second’s sleep. We’d made two stops to rest before the nighttime cold clamped down, but those two stops had been the only breaks we’d had. And it seemed impossible when I thought back on it and I knew the only reason we had been able to had been because the going had been good. The crater floor was smooth; there were crater-lets that must be walked around and the humps and mounds and fantastic candles that one had to dodge, but the floor itself was smooth. It was not the hell-broth tangle that one found in much of the wilderness Out Back.

The hounds still hung above us in a glittering cloud. They had paced us all the way. It was as if some guardian entity was hanging there above us.

I bent above Amelia’s helmet and I could see that she was sleeping. And that was fine, because she needed sleep. Out on her feet for the last five miles or more, she had made it this far only by the last thin edge of courage. And a lot of heckling by me. I couldn’t blame her, I told myself, if she never spoke to me again—the way I’d talked to her.

I got down on my knees and began to dig a hole I could crawl into myself. There I could rest and the heat would keep me warm, but I must not go to sleep. I had to stay awake, for there was a chance that if we stayed too long, we would stay forever. Eventually the heat would seep out from the dust and the cold would drive down in and when that happened it would be death to stay there.

I dug the hole and crawled into it, then pawed the dust back on top of me. I lay there, staring at the cliffs above us.

Twelve thousand feet, I thought. And when we made that twelve thousand feet, our worries would be over. For the trailer would be there and we could get into it and finally be safe.

There might be a rescue party, too, but that didn’t really matter, for the trailer was enough.

I wondered vaguely why the rescue party (for surely there had been one out for hours) had not come down into the crater. And I realized there were two perfectly good reasons for their not doing so.

They would have seen the tracks going down into the crater, but they would not have been able to know that they were new tracks. There is no way on the Moon to tell new tracks from old—they both are just as fresh.
By the time the rescue party had come out, a few meteorites would have fallen and punched their tiny craters in the tracks we’d made, a few patches of dust would have done their little dance and blotted out a tiny patch of track. And after that had happened there would have been no way to distinguish our tracks from the tracks of the rescue party which had gone out twenty years before and never had come back.

And, likewise, the rescue party would have said among themselves: “Chris Jackson is an old hand. He’d never be damn fool enough to go blundering into Tycho.”

So they’d not come into the crater, but had scattered to hunt the outer slopes.

I lay there and I caught myself a dozen times on the verge of sleep and fought my way back to wakefulness.

The hounds were circling above me like a wheel of light, like a flight of buzzards, and it seemed to me that they were lower now than they had been before, as if they might be cautiously spiraling downward to have a closer look.

I watched them and the wheel of sparkling light had a terrible fascination and I felt the fog of sleep slipping up on me through the fog of fascination, so I jerked my eyes away. And when I looked again the cloud of them was closer, much closer—almost on top of me.

One of them came down and roosted on the face-plate of my helmet, right before my eyes, and I knew that it was Susie. Don’t ask me how or why I knew—I just knew that it was Susie. And she stayed there, dancing as if she might be happy that she’d found me once again and the others closed down on me until I could no longer pick out Susie, but only a universe of sparkling things that seemed to fill my very brain and being.

One sane thought intruded on my mind: This was the way they had closed in on Brill at the moment of his dying.

And I wasn’t dead!

I wasn’t even close to dead! I was going to crawl out of this bed of dust in just a little while and wake Amelia and then the two of us, together, would climb twelve thousand feet to safety.

Twelve thousand feet. It sounded short, after fifty miles, but I didn’t kid myself. That twelve thousand feet could be almost as tough as the fifty miles.

And we’d never make it. For the first time I admitted to myself that we’d never make it. I might just as well go to sleep right now, for we would never make it.
But Susie was out there somewhere, tapping on the glass front of my helmet—or I thought that she was tapping. And she was trying to talk to me, as she'd tried so many times before.

And something talked to me—maybe not Susie, but something that was out there. It talked in a thousand tongues and a million dialects, as if a crowd were talking to one person, speaking all at once. And speaking different things.

I knew it was for real. I wasn't dreaming, nor was I imagining, and I wasn't crazy. An old Moon-hand like me never does go crazy. If I'd been going to go crazy, I'd done it long before.

"Hiya, pal," said the thing that was talking to me.

Then another one of them sang me a lullaby.

And another one came up and took me by the hand and we walked along together beside a funny river, for the river was bright blue liquid oxygen and our feet went crunch as we walked along and when I looked down I saw that we were walking on something that looked like a carpet of those kinds of balls you hang on Christmas trees.

Then another came up and grabbed me and took me somewhere else, and this place seemed more like home than a bright blue river, but the houses were all funny and the trees were out of shape and there were bugs the size of horses.

Someone talked to me in mathematics and, queer enough, I understood him, and another talked in the sound of tinkling crystals and I understood him too and I heard a lot of other voices that were sitting there and yarning and there wasn't a cracker barrel nor a pot-bellied stove, but there should have been. For they were telling stories and while the details fuzzed on me, I could gain the drift of them and they all were stories of long ago and far away—unimaginably far away.

But in the middle of it a voice said to me: "Chris, snap out of it. You have to get to Coonskin. You have to tell them what this is all about."

And it was not the words, but the voice itself that snapped me out of it. For I recognized the voice. It was Brill who was talking to me, dead back there, fifty miles away.

I don't know how I got out of the dust so fast, but all at once I was on my feet and flapping my arms at a bunch of swirling hounds, like a man will swat at bees. They were whirling around, as if they were astonished that I didn't want them there. It took a while, but I finally drove them off. They went out of there like a flock of fireflies
and formed in the cloud above me and everything was normal.

I hauled Amelia from the dust and stood her on her feet and shook her.

"Get awake," I told her. "Take a drink of water. We're getting out of here."

"Just a little while," she said. "Just a little longer."

"Nothing doing, doll," I told her.

I got her headed for the trail and I kept her going and we started up that last twelve thousand feet.

I was scared. I was scared down to my heels. For I have no time for ghosts and that is what the hound dogs were. Just a gang of ghosts.

I didn't have a body. I just had a pair of legs that ached and every time one of them moved it had to lift a boot that had grown to weigh about a thousand pounds. But the legs did not belong to me. They were a part of me no longer. The me of me stood off a ways and it didn't care what happened to the legs and that way it kept them going.

We clawed our way up the trail. We walked when we could and the places that we couldn't walk we went on hands and knees.

But we never stopped. We did some slipping back at times, but we kept on going up.

For I had the crazy idea that if we could reach the rim, the hounds would go away and bother us no longer.

Amelia sobbed part of the time, but I made her keep on going. She wanted to stop to rest, but I wouldn't let her do it. When she fell down, I picked her up and set her on her feet and shoved her from behind.

I know she hated me. She told me that she did.

It was damn undignified, but we went on up the trail.

I lost all track of time. I lost all sense of distance. The trail was something that went up and up forever.

So I was surprised—not happy or relieved or triumphant—but utterly surprised when the trail pinched out before us and the land, instead of going up, went down.

A faint memory came to me that this had been our goal, that this finally was the place we had been headed for, that we had won our way to safety.

Amelia had crumpled to the ground and I stood swaying there, with her huddled at my feet, and I hoped I had the strength to drag her to the trailer.

And there was something wrong, something deathly wrong. But for a little time it did not soak into me. My brain was so fogged with weariness that it
did not penetrate at once, and finally it did.

There wasn’t any trailer!

I stood, staring at the place where we had parked it and I knew I could not mistake the place. Someone had hitched it up and hauled it back to Coonskin.

This, I knew, was the end of it. It had been a lot of foolishness and utterly wasted effort for us to climb the trail. We might just as well have stayed down there, warm in our beds of dust, and gone peacefully to sleep.

For even if we could manage all the miles to Coonskin, our oxygen would not last.

I knew that we were beat.

I knew this time for sure.

I sat down stiffly on the ground beside Amelia.

I reached out a hand and patted her on the shoulder.

"I am sorry, lass," I said. "The trailer isn’t here. It isn’t working out."

She raised herself and crept over to me. I reached out an arm and dragged her close. She put her arms around me. It’s not as romantic as it sounds. A spacesuit simply isn’t something to do any necking in.

"I don’t care," she said.

And I didn’t either. Life, it seemed to me, was something not worth one’s while to keep. Not if it meant another step, if it cost another minute without sleep, not if it exacted another fraction of one’s energy.

I looked up at the sky and the hounds were there, waiting to come down.

"All right, you bastards," I told them. "We are ready now. Come and get us."

For it might not be so bad. There’d be a lot of company and a lot to talk about, there’d be a lot of yarns to spin. And more than likely a lot of people who’d be downright interesting. You might even get to like it—this business of the essence of you, the life of you, the soul of you, call it what you might, becoming encapsulated and enshrined, perhaps forever, in some sort of being that was pure energy.

It was not the Christian pattern; it wasn’t even heathen; it was not the pattern of any Earthly thinking, but there it hung above us, an undoubted alien fact.

And among that host up there would be some Earthmen good and true—Brill and the members of the Third Lunar expedition and the surveying crew and those members of the rescue party who went out to hunt the surveying crew.

And who were the others? From what far stars? And to what purpose here?

The merry men of the universe? The hordes of outer
space? The gentlemen adventurers of the galaxy?

And not above recruiting. Not above grabbing off another being when the chance presented. For it was entirely clear that they had trapped the lunar expedition, that they had lured the surveying crew, that they had led the rescue party on. And they had, as well, kept their hideout well concealed from any passing ship, for a thin cloud of them, hovering above the hideout, would have blanked out the seeing without a doubt.

They were the ones, I thought. They were the intelligences which were behind it all. The diamond had been no more than a convenient adjunct, snatched perhaps for its usefulness from some unguessed planet on an unseen star. And the lichens—could the lichens be the trap that they had set for men, for the men who hunted them, knowing that sooner or later some of them would come seeking the lichens' source and become another victim.

"Robin Hood," I said. "What were you saying, Chris?"

"Just thinking. An old story I read when I was young."

The cloud was settling down and there was no need, I told myself, for further speculation. In just a while all the questions could be asked and all the answers told.

I tightened my arm around Amelia and she murmured something at me that I didn't catch. And all the time the hounds were settling like a golden shower.

They had almost reached us when a brilliant light sprang out and caught us in its center, a blazing, blinding light that came from down the slope.

I scrambled to my feet and behind the light I saw the dark shape of a rig, crunching up the slope.

I dragged Amelia up.

"Someone came for us!" I shouted.

But the shout wasn't a great deal better than a raspy, worn out whisper.

The rig swung broadside to us and we staggered toward the hatch. I helped boost Amelia in and waited while she clawed her way inside.

I glanced upward as I waited and saw that the hounds were climbing slowly upward.

I waved a hand at them.

"Another time," I told them.

Then I clambered through the hatch.

I crawled out on the floor and got to my knees. I snapped my helmet back and drew in a breath of fresh air that felt so good it almost strangled me.

And there was Doc Withers, twice as big as life, leaning on
the control panel and happy as a fool.

"You!" I blurted.

He grinned like a drunken pixie.

"Did you find them?" he demanded. "Did you find the lichens?"

"Tons of them," I said. "More than you can ever use."

"The others said you'd never go near Tycho. They said you were too smart to. But I knew you had. I knew, when I talked with you the other day, that you'd go hunting them."

"Look, Doc," I gasped. "We weren't . . ."

"I stayed and waited here for you," said Doc, "while the others went out on the slope. But finally it got so late I thought you were-

n't coming. So I headed on back home. Then my conscience got to bothering me. What if I left just half an hour too soon, I asked myself? What if Chris showed up ten minutes after I had left? So I turned around and came back to see if you were here."

"Thank you, Doc," I said.

"And," said Doc, with an archness that ill-befitted him, "who might the lady be?"

I looked at Amelia. She had her helmet off and I saw, for the first time, I think, how beautiful she was.

"Perhaps," I told him, "the richest person on the Moon this minute. The bravest. And the sweetest."

Amelia smiled at me.

THE END

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He wanted to look at his wife again.  
To do so, he went to the edge of the galaxy.  
But it wasn't his fault that she  
was jealous of his . . .

Seeing Eye

By A. BERTRAM CHANDLER

H E DID not need the Skipper's voice, blaring through the speaker on the bulkhead of his cabin, to tell him what was happening. He knew it all so well; the slow descent through the atmosphere, the controlled slide down the long, telescoping column of incandescent gases, the occasional brief bursts from the steering jets to correct pitch and yaw. He could hear it all, could feel it all—the thunder of the rockets, the high whine of the gyroscopes, the sobbing of the pumps. He could hear it all and could feel it all; in his mind's eye he could see it all—the great, gleaming needle that was the ship, the huddle of buildings in the desert, directly beneath her, that was the spaceport, the officers at their stations in control room and engine room, the passengers in their cabins, strapped in their acceleration couches.

Abruptly, the bellowing voice of the rockets was stilled and, less than a second later, there was the slight jar of landing. The ship rocked slightly, her structure complaining as the three vanes that were also her
landing gear took the weight of her. "You may leave your couches," said the voice from the speaker. "You may leave your couches. The vessel is now berthed at Port Woomera. Passengers will muster in the Main Lounge, to pass Immigration and Customs, in ten minutes."

*Home is the spaceman, he thought, home from the stars. But I'm a passenger now. I'm not a spaceman any longer...*

He heard the door of his cabin open. He smelled the faint odor of Vegan tobacco. He knew that only one of the ship's officers—Carter, the Third Mate—smoked cigarettes made from that overly pungent, by Terran tastes, leaf.

He said, "Thanks, Carter, but I can manage the safety belts."

"How did you know it was me, Willis?" asked the Third, frankly curious.

"It's obvious. If somebody comes in smelling of smouldering old socks—who else can it be?"

"I came to tell you," said the Third, "that the Customs and Immigration wallahs are going to push you through first. They'll be along to your cabin very shortly."

I can manage to get to the Lounge under my own steam."

"Of course you can. But you're one of the family. There's no reason why you shouldn't get preferential treatment."

"I was one of the family," said Willis.

"You still are. Once a spaceman, always a spaceman. Besides, Mrs. Willis is waiting for you. As soon as the Immigration people have decided that you're a fit and proper person to be allowed to mingle with Earth's millions, she'll be right with you. She's aboard now, as a matter of fact, in the Old Man's room."

Sudden fear was a queasy emptiness in Willis' stomach. He ran his hands over his face. His sensitive fingertips told him that the plastic surgeons in Port Southern, on Austral, had made a good job, told him that his features were as they always had been. But he couldn't be sure. Never, in the old days, had there been any occasion for him to familiarize himself with the feel of his face. Any necessary inspection had been accomplished with the aid of a mirror.

"Mr. Willis?" asked a vaguely familiar voice.

"Gavagan," said Willis, after a pause. "Chief of Customs..."

"That's right. You're looking well, Willis."

And why did he have to ask my name? wondered Willis. Am I changed so much? He shrugged mentally, thinking, *It was probably no more than a conversational gambit.*

"Let's have a look at you,
Willis.” That was Hall, the Port Doctor. “You’re sound enough in wind and limb, anyhow. If you can satisfy friend Gavagan that you haven’t a trunkful of narcotics you can rush off home as soon as you like.”

“I’ve already chalked his baggage,” said Gavagan.

“Dr. Hall,” Willis said, “I know you’re busy, but I’d like another opinion . . .”

“I’m not a specialist, Willis.”

“But you know of specialists. You might be able to recommend one. They told me on Austral that there was no hope at all, that too much had been destroyed for a graft to be successful. They did a graft, of course, but it was only for cosmetic purposes . . . But there’s not the medical science on Austral that there is on Earth . . .”

“I’m sorry,” said Hall, meaning it. “I’m sorry. I’ve read the reports on your case—and the only way to give you your sight back would be to graft on a complete new head. There was too much damage. You’re lucky to be as fit as you are now.”

“So it’s quite hopeless?” asked Willis.

“Quite hopeless.”

“As long as I know,” said the blind man.

Anne came in. The light footsteps along the alleyway had been unmistakably hers, and the rustle of her summery garments, and the subtle suggestion of perfume. Willis tried to picture the grace that was peculiarly hers as she moved, almost succeeded. Almost. He tried to visualize the fine features under the bronze sheen of her hair, the wide mouth. The harder he tried, the more blurred the picture became.

“Johnnie,” she said.

“Anne,” he said.

It was easier to see her, in his mind’s eyes, when she was in his arms. His mouth was on hers. He felt the wetness of her face, on his face, and wondered which of them it was that was crying. He thought bitterly, They can give me back my tear ducts, but not my sight.

She pulled away from him at last.

“Let me look at you,” she said.

“I wish I could look at you.”

“I’m sorry, darling. That was thoughtless of me.”

“Please,” he told her, “don’t try to be thoughtful. Please just say and do all the things you always said and did.”

“All right. But you look good, darling. I was rather frightened, you know . . .”

“What of? Johnnie Willis, the human hamburger? All the same, I’m glad to hear that the quacks made a good job.”

“A very good job. If anything, they’ve rather improved upon the original.”
“Except in one very important respect.”

“Bitterness won’t help, Johnnie. You—we—have to live with this. We have to accept it. And it could have been so very much worse in so many ways.”

He put out his hand, gently stroked her face. He could almost see her as she stood there before him. Almost. But the gulf between almost and entirely is deeper than that between the island universes.

“I’ll say my goodbyes,” he told her, “and then we’ll get the hell off this rustbucket. It’s time I was home.”

“It’s time we were home,” she said.

Home, after the swift passage in the chartered stratojet, was a queer combination of the achingly familiar and the horribly unfamiliar. There was the breeze through the open window of the apartment, the summer breeze that carried the scent of parkland and sea, the sounds of the traffic in the harbor. There were all the familiar scents and sounds—but to Willis the window was no more, and no less, than a square of darkness set in all-pervading darkness. There were the bookshelves and the big, all-purpose TV—but surely, in the old days, they had not possessed the malicious ability to project painfully hard and sharp edges in the way of the passerby. There were the pictures on the walls that he could feel any time that he cared to extend his hands—but it was useless. He pined for the oddly four-dimensional quality of the two Linde mann abstracts, for the bleak beauty of the Lunar landscape by Buring.

There was the meal that Anne prepared for him. It was good, flavorsome after the monotony of hospital and ship’s cooking, but it was not as good as it should have been. “Make food look appetizing,” Anne had always said, “and it is appetizing.” Not being able to see what he was eating, not being able to appreciate the gleam and glitter of silver and china and crystal, the dark glow of the wine in the goblets, robbed the repast of much of its savor.

Then, afterwards, there was love in the dark—and that was the worst of all. Anne was beautiful, and he had always enjoyed her beauty, had always enjoyed visual satisfaction as well as physical release. Breasts and shoulders and thighs, the satin smoothness of a woman’s skin, were there still—but he wanted to see them and knew that he would never see them again. Much of the life and color had gone out of their lovelmaking, and both of them knew it. Even so, he told himself, he
was lucky. He could easily have been dead. He could have been maimed in some way beyond the skill of the plastic surgeons to repair. He was lucky to have been deprived of only one of his senses—but why did it have to be the most important one of all? There was no answer.

He was, he often told himself, lucky.

He was alive, he was healthy, he was not alone. He and Anne, although far from rich, were far from being poor. She worked—as did most spacemen’s wives—holding a junior editorship in one of the women’s magazines. Then there was the not ungenerous pension from the Interstellar Transport Commission. In addition, Willis cultivated his talent as a story teller. Anne was able to obtain for him one of the expensive speakwriters at trade price and so, every day after she had left for the office, he would sit on the balcony in the sunshine, dictating into the machine. He drew heavily upon his own experience, of course, but his stories were none the worse for that. Once he had succeeded in convincing himself that astronautical technicalities must not be allowed to get in the way of the plot, they started to sell. The planetbound—and they, after all, are the majority of mankind—are always willing to read of adventures among the stars.

For the first few weeks after his homecoming he and Anne did not entertain, neither did they accept invitations. He had to become used, he told her, to the strange world of which he was now a citizen. He had to be sure that he would not disgrace himself by some clumsiness, spilled food or upset liquor. He had to be able to accept his disability to such an extent that he could bear the commiserations of the tactless.

Gradually he came out of his shell. He met all the old friends and made new ones—although most of these latter were old friends of his wife. He prided himself on being able to pour a round of drinks for the guests without spilling a drop, of being able to load tapes into the all-purpose TV without fumbling. He developed a sixth sense that told him when ashtrays were required. He played the part of the host, Anne told him more than once, far better than he had done before his affliction.

Some of the new friends he liked, some he did not. Regarding one of them he was unable to make up his mind. Anne called him one afternoon, interrupting him at his work, in mid-sentence. “Johnnie,” she said, “I’ll be bringing a friend home for
drinks and dinner. Bill Travers. He’s on the staff of the *Galactic Geographic Magazine*.”

“Yes,” said Willis unenthusiastically.

“Bill may be able to help you,” Anne told him.

“I can’t write articles,” said Willis. “Straight fiction is my line.”

“I didn’t mean it that way.”

“Then what way did you mean it?”

“You’ll find out. See that the flat’s more or less tidy by the time I get home. Make sure that there’s some beer in the fridge. See you.”

“See you,” replied Willis.

He went back to the speak-writer, completed his quota of words for the day, then put the cover on the machine and stacked the pages of manuscript in the top drawer of his desk. He then emptied ashtrays and tidied up in general, after which he had a shower and changed into the lemon yellow shirt and dark gray shorts that he knew Anne liked. He made sure that there was ample beer in the refrigerator. He was sorry that he was not able to relax with a book after the completion of the chores, but he was making slow progress in the learning of the Braille alphabet. Not that it would be of much value to him when he had mastered it, he thought sadly. Cases of total blindness were so rare these days that most of the books printed in Braille were at least a century old.

He heard the approaching drone of Anne’s aircar, heard and felt the slight shock as she set the machine down on the flat roof of the apartment house. He heard her coming down the stairs from the roof—the apartment was on the top floor and it was quicker to use the stairway than to wait for the elevator—and heard the footsteps of the stranger who accompanied her. He had the door open for them just as Anne was reaching into her purse for the key. He stood aside for them, then followed them into the sitting room.

“John,” said Anne, “this is Bill Travers.”

“It’s good to meet you, John,” said Travers. His handclasp was firm, perhaps a little too firm. His voice was like his handclasp. He exuded an air of rugged masculinity that was just a little phoney.

“Take the weight off your feet,” Willis told him. “Drink?”

“Beer if I may. Cold.”

“And for me,” said Anne. “And then you two can talk while I have my shower.”

Willis brought in the glasses and the bottles, poured. While Anne was there the talk was commonplace; after she had
gone Travers said, “You manage well, John.”

Tactless man, thought Willis. He said, “I’m glad you think so.”
“How did it happen?” asked the other.

“What’s the big idea?” flared the ex-spaceman. “Am I supposed to be providing material for an article in your magazine? If so—I’m not.”

Travers chuckled, a sympathetic chuckle. “No, Johnnie. It’s just that I think I may be able to help you. I’d like to know more about the accident first.”

“I’ve been to the best specialists on Earth,” Willis told him. “They say that it’s hopeless. I’m resigned to that now. Let’s drop the subject, shall we?”

“Not yet. How did it happen?”
“Surely Anne told you.”

“She did—but it’s a rare woman who can get astronautical technicalities correct. Even spacewomen—pursers and catering officers and such. The Galactic Geographic, as you know, prints a large number of first-hand accounts of this, that and the other—and any contributed by the fair sex have to be very carefully edited.”

“I still don’t see what concern my trouble is of yours.”

“But it is of yours, John.”

“All right,” said Willis abruptly. “I was Chief Officer of Alpha Scorpii. We were coming in towards Austral—still a fair way off, but close enough in to demand the presence of a senior officer in Control at all times. Usual drill inside a planetary system—Mannschenn Drive off, approach under reaction drive. Radar showed meteorites on a reciprocal trajectory—as usual it was too late to do anything about it. Not that it worried me much—the meteor shield had been renewed last time at Port Woomera. The trouble was that the meteorites were contraterene matter . . .”

“And then?”

“It should be obvious. Have you ever had your head pushed into an atomic furnace? No? Well, I have.”

“I understand,” said Travers carefully, “that a portion of the brain itself was destroyed . . .”

“Yes. Had there been no damage to the brain these fine new eyes out of the bank of the Port Southern Hospital would be useful as well as ornamental. As it is . . .”

“How about the psi center?”

“That, they tell me, is intact. It has to be. A blind man needs a certain amount of ESP to get around. For example, you’re just getting ready to rattle your glass to tell me that it’s empty.”

“Convincing enough.” There was a pause. “Did you ever hear of a world called Bronsonia?”

“No.”

“I didn’t think that you would
have. It’s one of the Lost Colonies. Originally discovered by Captain Bronson of the **Lode runner**, one of the many gauss-jammers that got themselves lost in the bad old days of the Ehrenhaft Drive. Rediscovered a month or so back by Commodore Dalzell of the Survey Service.”

“Interesting. What did he find? Savages living in mud huts, or a technological civilization?”

“Neither. Just a nice, stable, agricultural economy. Science, including the medical sciences, almost dead. Such refinements as plastic surgery a lost art. And yet, if one ignores the cosmetic aspects, in quite a few cases no need for plastic surgery.”

“What do you mean?”

“Blindness is very common among the Bronsonians; for some reason they are prone to cataract. But they don’t run screaming to the nearest hospital to have the defective organs renewed; there aren’t any hospitals to run screaming to, anyhow. But they get by . . .”

*How?*

“Bronsonia boasts some rather odd indigenous life forms. There is the marsh lion, for example. It’s not very like a lion, but those first colonists had to call it something. The male of the species is quite a hefty brute, as its name implies. The female is not. It’s about the size of a Terran cat, or even smaller . . .”

“Odd, all right. But you find the same set-up on Earth, as well as on plenty of other planets. There are some varieties of fish, the males of which are mere parasites upon the females . . .” Willis paused. “Even so, to have the female smaller than the male, much smaller than the male, is odd . . .”

“They manage. In any case, even though they are mammals of sorts, they lay eggs, which are hatched in a special pouch in the male’s body. It’s the male who suckles the young, too . . .”

“As you say, odd.”

“The oddest part is yet to come. The male is blind, and deaf. For all I know, it has no sense of smell, either. The female is its eyes, its ears. There’s a telepathic hook-up between male and female . . .” Willis heard the faint sound as Travers sipped his drink before breaking off at what seemed to be a tangent. “You’ve heard, of course, of the seeing eye dogs that blind people used to use years ago . . .”

“I have. And of late I’ve been very sorry that the larger, more intelligent breeds of dog were ever allowed to die out on Earth.”

“You needn’t be any longer. A female marsh lion—one can hardly call so small a creature a lioness—is far better.”

“Perhaps it would be,” said
Willis, "if I could ever afford to have one shipped to Earth. But freight rates are prohibitive, especially to and from planets off the regular routes."

"It wouldn't be any use having one shipped to Earth," Travers told him. "You must go to Bronsonia. You will have to find the marsh cat—I think that's what they call them—that will be yours. As I understand it, there has to be empathy between master and . . . and servant? I suppose that's as good a way of putting it as any."

"You're sure of all this?" demanded Willis sharply.

"Of course, I'm sure. We've had access to Commodore Dalzell's reports. Most of what I've told you will be coming out in next month's issue of the magazine, anyhow."

Willis listened to the shower that was still running in the bathroom. The sound reminded him of all that he was not seeing, of all that he would never see again, unless . . .

He said, "If I double my output, if I continue to sell in the same markets that I'm selling in now . . . In a year we should have enough saved . . ."

Travers laughed. He said, "Oh, you'll pay for your passage to Bronsonia, Willis, make no mistake about that. But as far as the actual financial side of it is concerned, Galactic Geographic will foot the bill. You'll write a series of articles for us when you get back—we've already thought of the title. *Through Alien Eyes*. How does that sound?"

"And you're serious?"

"Of course, I'm serious. We do you a good turn. You do us one. It's as simple as that."

"You've told Anne all this?"

"Yes."

Willis was sorry. He would have liked to have been able to tell her himself.

The voyage out to Bronsonia was long and not particularly pleasant. Willis said good-bye to Anne at Port Woomera, then boarded the Commission's *Beta Ursae Majoris*, Earth to Caribbea direct. It was some years since he had served in a *Beta* Class vessel and it was not until the ship was only a week out from her destination that he was able to find his way around without assistance. There was a week's wait on Caribbea—during which time Willis tried to construct visual pictures from the sounds and smells of that exotic planet—and then passage to Nova Caledon in *Creole Queen*. *Creole Queen* had been, before the change of ownership, a *Delta* Class tramp. Willis knew very little of the *Delta* Class ships and, in any case, internal lay-out had been altered by her
new owners. He stayed in his cabin most of the way to Elsinore, in the Shakespearian Sector.

He spent two days on Elsinore, hardly setting foot outside the Spacemen’s Hostel at Port Fortinbras. On the second day he was introduced to the Captain of the Survey Ship Quest and walked with him, with an assurance that he did not feel, over the blast scarred concrete of the apron to the little vessel. Once in the airlock he had to abandon his false air of assurance. This class of ship was completely strange to him.

He slept for most of the trip to Bronsonia. Looking back on it all, he realized that this was a device to make time pass faster. Deprived of the blessing of sight and with all the Survey Service officers fully occupied with their duties, it was all that he could do.

He was awake, however, when the landing was made. His ears told him what was happening; his ears and every vibration-sensitive nerve of his body. And yet there were gaps in his knowledge. He did not know what sort of world it was toward which Quest was falling. He could not visualize the spaceport—if there was a spaceport—or its surroundings. It was a fall into the utterly unknown—and for the first time since his almost fatal accident he felt the beginnings of panic. He sighed loudly with relief when, shortly after the abrupt cessation of the noise and vibration of the rocket drive, there was the familiar jar that told of a safe landing.

An officer came to his cabin, helped him with the rather unfamiliar buckles of the Survey Service pattern safety belts, guided him along the short alleyway to the axial shaft, into the little elevator cage. In the after airlock another officer, introducing himself as one of the medical officers attached to Base, was waiting for him.

He walked with the doctor over a springy surface. Grass, he thought, grass, or something like it. The acrid scent of charred vegetation confirmed his first opinion. And then there was the smell of cooking, the smell of men living together in a confined space, the bustle of an orderly encampment.

“Here we are,” said his guide. “This hut is yours for your stay here.”

“Thanks.”

“Are you sure you can manage?”

“Of course.” Willis paced slowly and carefully over the wooden floor. “Bunk ... Chair ... Table ... And behind this door?”

“Your own toilet facilities.”

“You’re doing me proud. Yes,
I'll manage all right. Don't worry."

"You'll be managing better in a few weeks."

"A few weeks?"

"Weren't you told? First of all you have to find just the marsh cat for your requirements. There has to be empathy between master and servant. Then there is a training period, so that the two of you can work together. It's all very well owning a detached pair of eyes as long as those eyes are obedient to your command; if they go running off by themselves it can be awkward."

"So I should imagine. But what's the drill?"

"The marsh cats are captured when young. So, for that matter, are their twin brothers—but they finish up in the cooking pot. The marsh cats are kept in captivity, but they are not ill-treated. If anything, they're pampered. Then anybody in need of a pair of eyes, or a pair of ears, goes into the enclosure. He knows when he's found the right cat."

"How does he know?"

"If you're blind, you handle the things. I've tried to get the Bronsonians to tell me what happens then, but it seems to be a subject that they aren't keen on talking about. They're a rather puritanical people...?"

"How does that come into it?"

"I don't know. I'm relying on you to tell us."

"I'll do that," promised Willis. He kept his promise, but felt absurdly embarrassed while he was doing so.

The next morning he rode in one of the Survey Service air-cars to the nearest town. He was mystified by the uneven surface over which he and the young doctor walked after the machine had landed. "Cobblestones," explained his guide. "They're very primitive here."

"And that squeaking sound?"

"A four-wheeled cart, drawn by an animal that looks rather like a small Terran elephant."

"I'd say that the standard of sanitation isn't very high here."

"It's not," agreed the doctor. "Funny sort of English the Bronsonians speak..."

"They think the same about us. After all, they've been out of touch for generations and have evolved their own dialect. Here we are."

"Here" was a doorway through which they passed into a big room. Willis could feel that the walls were distant, that the ceiling was high. "Here" was a place alive with soft, rustling movement, a place with straw underfoot through which things scampered and crept. "Here" was a place that smelled of cat, although not unpleasantly so.
"Be this the blind man?" asked a harsh voice.
"Yes," said the doctor.
"He do not look blind."
"He is. He was badly burned, but the plastic surgeons made a good job of his face."
"And he still be blind . . . Be you sure he be blind?"
"Of course."

There was some sort of scuffle, the noise of which puzzled Willis. He heard the doctor snarl, "Put that knife away, you fool!"
He heard the other chuckle, "Aye, he be blind. Be you ready to pay?"
"Of course. Here's the warrant. Present it to our PX and they'll give you goods to the value of five hundred dollars."

Willis heard paper rustle, then he heard the keeper of the cats whistle softly. He heard the scurryings and scamperings as the little animals ran towards them. Suddenly, without warning, something was thrust into his hands, something alive, something disgustingly naked that wriggled.

"Be this the one?" demanded the keeper.
"No," gasped Willis, almost retching.

The thing in his hands was cold, slimy, repulsive. It was snatched from him before he could drop it and another was given to him to handle.

"Be this the one?"

It wasn't, although it was not as bad as the first had been. The texture of its skin was rough and it was unpleasantly hot.

"Be this the one?"

Willis lost count of the number of marsh cats that he handled. And then . . . And then there was the rightness. It was then he realized that the empathy of which the doctor had talked was of a sexual nature. The little creature between his hands seemed to glow under his touch, and its skin was the skin of a woman, a beloved woman, cool and yet warm, satin-smooth, enticing . . .

"I think this one is right," he said shakily.

"How do you know?" demanded the doctor eagerly.
"I . . . I'll tell you later . . . ."
Then, suddenly and for seconds only, there was vision. It was his own face, but subtly distorted, idealized and yet with an odd suggestion of the animal. It was his own face, filling almost all the field of view, and behind it a suggestion of rough wooden walls.

"I honestly believe that the damn' thing's fallen in love with you," said the doctor, "the way that it's looking at you! It certainly looks that way."

"I can see," murmured Willis.
"I can see . . ." Then— "But it's dark again."
"It be light very soon," promised the keeper.

Willis left Bronsonia before he had attained complete mastery of his seeing eye. To have waited would have meant missing the next sailing of Quest and a delay of several months before her return. Even so, he now had sight, erratic though it was at first.

It was all a question of control. The marsh cat had to become accustomed to the telepathic commands of her master, had to accept the fact that Men use their eyes for other purposes than to lead them to food and water, away from danger. The marsh cat had to become used to riding on his shoulder and staying there until released. Hardest of all, perhaps, was training it in the visual mechanics of reading and writing.

Had it been less intelligent it would have been easier. The unthinking dog is far easier to train than the cat, which not only thinks but which asks itself, *Why the hell should I do thus and so and so?* Willis thought that the intelligence of his seeing eye approximated that of the Terran cat. (In that he was wrong.)

Willis left Bronsonia in Quest and by the time that the Survey Ship berthed at Port Fortinbras his symbiotic relationship was progressing well. He had become used to the slightly odd color scheme of the Universe as seen through his servant's eyes, to the subtly queer perspective. He had fallen into the routine necessary to the well-being of the little creature—the feeding (it was omniverous) the daily bath, the at least once daily caress. He was rather embarrassed when he realized that this part of it gave pleasure to both the beings concerned.

He became accustomed to the appearance of the animal; he saw it now and again in mirrors. It was more like a plump, hairless cat than anything else, but it was not repulsive, any more than a woman is repulsive when divested of her clothing.

During his week's stay on Elsinore he hired an aircar, was pleased to discover that although the proprietor of the agency looked with curiosity at his strange pet he did not guess that his customer was blind. Of course, Willis told himself, he was not blind. Not any longer.

By day he occupied himself flying about the planet with which, in the past, he had formed only a nodding acquaintance. By night—the Spacemen's Hostel boasted a first-class library—he read, and read. There was so much catching up to do. (Perhaps all this reading was a mistake.)

He was lucky enough to obtain
a direct passage from Elsinore to Earth—one of the Trans-Galactic Clippers, inbound from a tour of the Rim Worlds, put into Fort Fortinbras and had a few vacant cabins offering. Willis, who had always enjoyed his service in passenger vessels, was rather looking forward to the voyage. It was so long since he had seen any really chic women; those on Bronsonia had been little better than savages, the female population of Elsinore seemed to be composed of suburban housewives.

And yet...

_They’ll look better when we’re a week out_, he told himself. _They always do._

This time they didn’t.

_But there’s Anne to look forward to_, he consoled himself.

Anne met him at Port Woomera.

Anne was... Anne.

Or was she?

Was there ever, in the past, that suggestion of... of tartiness in her dress, her make-up? Were her legs really too thin, her bust too obtrusive? And the expression of distaste when she withdrew from his ardent embrace at the foot of the ramp... had that ever happened?

“Anne!” he said, hurt.

“What is that thing?” she demanded.

“Anne—meet Angeline. That’s what I call her. She’s my new eyes.”

“I’m glad,” she said, without enthusiasm.

“I haven’t kissed you for a long time,” he said, his hands on her shoulders.

“I’m afraid it will have to wait. I’m not doing it with that animal watching.”

“But it’s what she’s for, darling. I want to see you when I kiss you.”

“It’s out of the question,” she said. Then—“Hadn’t you better see about getting your baggage on the stratojet for Sydney?”

“I’d rather hoped that the _Galactic Geographic_ would be laying on a chartered job.”

“Fancy yourself, don’t you? After all, they paid your fares out to Bronsonia and back. Come to that, they’re taking a rather dim view of your booking passage with TG; they had everything organized for you to travel in the Commission’s ships. You get a reduction there, as an ex-officer of the concern.”

“That would have meant at least six weeks’ delay,” he said stiffly.

“What of it? There are the ‘W’s coming down the chute now; you’d better do something about your bits and pieces.”

Rather resentfully, Willis did. Stiffly he escorted his wife aboard the waiting stratojet. Sulkily, the swift flight east
across the continent was accomplished. Still more sulkily—Anne refused to let him touch the controls—was the short flight from the airport, across the city, made in Anne’s aircar.

It would be better back in the apartment, thought Willis. He enjoyed the first few minutes of being home, the sight of the familiar lares et penates that he had thought that he would never see again. They looked a little different, subtly distorted, but he would get used to that in time. He could see them, that was all that really mattered to him.

Later, he followed Anne into the bedroom.

“That thing is not coming in here,” she said.

“But, darling, I want to see . . .”

“I’m sorry. I’m broadminded, but I’ve no intention either of undressing or making love in public.”

“But . . .”

“You heard me.”

The worst of it was that Angeline, shut out of the bedroom, for some reason stared throughout at the bleakly cold Lunar landscape. It rather spoiled things.

The next morning Anne had to go to work.

“I’d rather hoped . . .” said Willis.

“Somebody in this house has to earn a living,” she told him.

“Oh, well, I can get back into
harness myself. I'd better ring that friend of yours, Bill Trav-ers. I want to thank him, and I want to find out what Galactic Geographic wants in the way of an article."

"You'll have to wait," she said. "Bill's on Venus just now, covering the Liberation Festival." She went on, "I should have been there myself. My own rag was sending me. When I got your spacegram from Elsinore I had to cancel the arrangements."

"I'm sorry," he said, not altogether sincerely.

"See you," she said.

"See you," he said.

"Keep away from me!" she flared. "I'll not kiss you while you have that thing on your shoulder."

Willis thought, hard, Angeline, go into the other room.

He gave Anne her morning good-bye kiss—and he saw, once again, the bleakness of the Burning moonscape.

When she was gone he called Angeline back again. He went on to the balcony, took the cover off the speakwriter. He thought, I'll be able to trade this in now, for a typewriter and some extra beer money. On the other hand, I've gotten into the way of using it . . . He found paper and carbons. He sat in his chair, looked at the blank sheet in the machine. He thought, My Eyes Have Four Legs . . . Seeing Life With Angeline . . .

Both titles were too cute. He needed a smoke while he thought of something better. He felt in the pockets of shirt and shorts, remembered that he had left his cigarettes in the bedroom. He half got up, then decided to be lazy.

Angeline, he commanded, fetch my cigarettes from the bedroom.

It was a weird sensation. It was as though he was skimming along almost at floor level—and then, when Angeline jumped on to the bed, there was a brief sensation of flying. He saw the cigarettes on the bedside table, saw the packet grasped in the two little paws.

"Thank you," he said aloud when it was put into his hands. Then, as Angeline clambered back on to his shoulder, he remembered that she did not like tobacco smoke. All right, he thought, I can manage without you for a while. You can explore.

At first he was not distracted by the scenes that flashed before his vision as Angeline scurried from room to room. The elusive title for the article was still elusive. And then he began to pay attention. Angeline had pulled a magazine from the rack in the lounge, was turning over the pages. He thought, She's looking at the pictures . . . But it was
not an illustrated magazine. He wondered, _Just how intelligent is she? And how much has she learned?_ He laughed aloud. She had dropped the magazine, had scurried once again into the bedroom.

_Hell! he thought. I'll have to tell her to keep out of Anne's private drawers!_ He watched, not without appreciation, the spectacle of flimsy underwear being held up and examined. He saw the Space Letter that had been hidden by the undergarments being opened by the tiny paws.

He read: "Anne, darling, what a pity that your old man had to come home so soon—especially after I'd pulled so many strings to get him out of the way on Bronsonia! Things were really far better for us when he was a spaceman... And we were both of us looking forward to this holiday together on Venus... I quite realize, darling, your feelings in the matter, that you cannot desert a blind man. But, after all, he's not blind any longer—and who has he to thank for that?"

Willis stumbled to his feet, groped his way into the bedroom. That letter would not be real until he held it in his hands—and, perversely, he wanted to hold it in his hands. The letter? No. Angeline. He wanted to hold the little devil from an alien world in his hands, wanted to choke the life from her.

He staggered as the walls and floor swung and shifted rapidly before his vision, realized that Angeline had run past him, had scurried into the kitchen. He felt some of her terror, the terror of somebody who had gone too far and knows it.

He realized that she had jumped on to the sink, was fumbling with the little hatch of the garbage disposal chute. It was a way of escape. She did not know that the escape would be permanent and irrevocable.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Stop!"

She had the metal door open, and she was through. He saw, with her, the blackness of the sides of the chute as she fell. He saw—and it was the last that either of them saw—the searing flames into which she plunged.

**THE END**
What value has a promise when you make it to the Father of Evil? To slay him, I could promise anything—and still be free of sin. Indeed, his death would make me holier.
MY LEG itched. The knitting fracture beneath the cast was letting me know in no uncertain terms that a simple fracture is simple in name only. There is nothing like a nagging, unscratchable itch. It doesn't really hurt, but after awhile it can become unadulterated torture, and all you can do is grin and
bear it. Ultimately you stop grinning.

To make matters worse, I had Wolverton for company. Zard knows, I despised the man enough before I saw him and contact had only served to change my dislike to active loathing.

He sat across from me, draped bonelessly in the contoured comfort of a Varkhide chair fashioned for him by one of his Halsite retainers—a tall, angular man of indeterminate age, sandy-haired, lean-cheeked, beak-nosed, with piercing yellow eyes that flashed golden under tufted brows. His face was leathery and hatched with innumerable fine wrinkles, but his eyes and voice were young.

To give the devil his due, he had a wonderful voice—cajoling, persuasive, domineering and demanding. He could use it with all the skill and passionate conviction of a Bearer of the Word. His tongue was a weapon—a club and a rapier—and I had been pounded and pierced with it for nearly two weeks. I hated it, but I had to listen for I was literally a captive audience.

“As I was saying last time,” Wolverton continued, “rabbits have nothing on the human race. Given a halfway favorable opportunity and sufficient time, humanity can make a planet look like the Australian bush. Men don’t understand it until it’s too late—and then, stifled by their own swarm, they either degenerate or strike out to find a new world where a man can breathe. Always they go in pairs—male and female—and pretty soon another world becomes another rabbit warren.”

“What’s a rabbit?” I asked.

Wolverton looked at me and laughed. “It’s obvious you’ve never been on the Inner Worlds, have you?”


“Thought so. You wouldn’t be asking about rabbits if you had. The early colonists took them along as food animals,—and it’s touch and go whether men or rabbits are the dominant species on some planets.”

He didn’t explain any further, but I got the general idea.

“But that isn’t the point,” Wolverton went on, his voice mellow and persuasive. “Rabbits maintain a fairly balanced ecology because they’re more subject to natural forces which we humans ignore or circumvent. We change environment to meet our needs—and in those rare instances where environment changes us, we adapt to it and change ourselves. Take Samar for example, normally a human being is monogamous either by nature or by law—but what
happens when women outnumber men?"

I stiffened. I had heard of Samar from traders and from the Word itself. "Samar," I said, "is a disgrace—a sink of iniquity—a foul blot upon the face—"

"Oh stop it," he said wearily. "You can’t blame environmental forces. Nor can you blame men for adapting to them. Sure, you can point with holy horror at Samarian social customs, but even so, they aren’t as bad as your ancestors’. They don’t murder excess girls."

"They should," I retorted brutally. "The old days were harsh, but they were necessary. One man must cleave to one mate. The Word demands it. Polygamy must be stamped out at the source if Faith is to survive.

"But it did no good population-wise," Wolverton said. "You’re now exceeding safe growth limits for your territories. That’s why you want mine."

"Lies," I muttered. "Not at all. And you know it. Your people already want my land. Soon you will need it. And in a few centuries, you won’t be able to exist without it!! His voice was flat with certainty.

"Lies," I said, but my voice wasn’t as certain as his. I had seen the crowding in the towns and fields of Promised Land, and we did need Wolverton’s Holding to absorb good farmers who had no land to farm. Wolverton was right about that. We had lived up our naturally tillable acreage and reclamation projects were slow to provide needed soil. Deviants were already appearing who defied the Word by advocating birth control. Yet the Word said, "Be fruitful and replenish the land."

"Back in the Dark Ages on a planet known as Earth," Wolverton went on inexorably, "a man named Malthus predicted our birth rate would fight a losing battle with famine. So far we have managed to avoid it by laws, by finding new frontiers, and by improving food technology. But laws and technology can only retard the growth, and frontiers are getting even harder to find. Time is catching up with us."

"I don’t see—", I said. Wolverton looked at me grimly. "I know you don’t," he said. "I haven’t made the slightest impression."

"You’ve made an impression, all right," I assured him with equal grimness.

He shrugged. "There are all kinds of impressions," he commented wryly, "and not all of them are good."

"Yours has not been," I said boldly. "I place my trust in Zard, not in the voice of Evil."

"That blank, sanctimonious
stare!” he said acridly. “You Wordsers—gah! You’re so filled with catechism and cant that you won’t see a fact if it hits you in the face. Of all the possibilities on this benighted planet, the one with all the proper qualities turns out to be mentally defective.” He glared at me. “I don’t know why I waste my time. Ordinarily I’d condition you and let it go at that.”

“But you won’t,” I said confidently.

He winced and I smiled. It wasn’t often that I won an advantage over him, and the taste of it was sweet in my mouth.

“The power of Faith,” I said sententiously, “is the greatest force in the universe. It even restrains you.”

He looked at me with the pitying contempt an adult has for a not-too-bright child. “What you need is an education,” he said slowly. “You’ve never had a chance.”

I groaned inwardly. Always he tried to shake my faith—but he had failed before and would fail again for my course was unalterably clear. “Avoid the smooth tongue of Evil lest ye lose your immortal soul. For the Evil will come to judgment—and the tortures of Hell are everlasting.” So said Zard in the days of his Teaching—and so we all believed. The Word of Zard was more than a symbol. It was a way of life, and Promised Land had bloomed and flowered under it.

Admittedly I was ignorant of the heathenish jargon Wolverton advanced. I knew nothing of nucleonics, spaceways, genetic factors, chromosome patterns, economics or sociology. Nor did I care. Our people had known it once but they had passed it by as childish—as men put aside the games of children. For us there was the Word. For did not Zard write in letters of fire upon the riven rock, “Be steadfast in thy faith. Fix thine eyes upon the joys of heaven and abjure Evil. For the Faithful Man is a bright beam in the Almighty’s eye and naught shall harm him who walks the fourfold path of Righteousness. Zard’s words were comfort. Wolverton’s were pain. I was thrice thankful I had learned the Word. It was so much a part of me that not even Wolverton could shake my belief. I was strong—in faith and in will. For I was an Adept—next only to a Bearer of the Word.

Wolverton with his machines could contain my powers—but that was all. He could not capture my soul. And that was what he wanted. My body was useless to him. He had many bodies of flesh and metal to serve him, but none had my powers to seek into the hearts of men, to know their inmost thoughts, to bring things
to me by the power Zard had given. To kill, if need be.

It was because of my powers that I was here, nursing a broken leg, helpless in the house of the Father of Evil, a prisoner of a primitive idol worshipper who exalted his machines above the Word.

Wolverton eyed me speculatively. “If you would get the idea through your thick head that you are eventually going to join me—that you are not going to leave here until you do—that you are going to see things as they really are and not as you wish they were—we’d both have an easier time and I wouldn’t be forced to keep a Halsite watching you, or waste power blanketing this place with ultra frequencies. But if I have to take ten years to pick the scales off your eyes one by one, I’ll still do it and count it time well spent. You see, you are unique. There’s no one quite like you anywhere in the known Universe—and what’s more, you are necessary.”

I laughed at him and rejoiced in the black anger which came to his face. Then the lines smoothed and the hard glitter vanished from his golden eyes—and again I was afraid. Not for myself, but for my soul.

“Well, let’s try again,” Wolverton said with forced cheerfulness.

I tried to find his true meaning—but he was blank—a smooth, cold-hard surface which I could not penetrate. Not like the others. They were soft and fuzzy. Their pictures were not clear—distorted—wavering—unreal, but that was due to Wolverton’s machines. I could not communicate with them, but I couldn’t even reach Wolverton. And as usual, my failure increased my determination. He was inhuman, a soulless monster, blacker than the Pit of Night. The Bearers were right. Promised Land would never be safe until we were finally rid of him. Wolverton must die.

But Wolverton was not dead. He survived and prospered. His Halsite mercenaries guarded his island Holding—and the broad reaches of his lands, innocent of the plow, were as lush and untamed as they had been in the days of the first-comers.

The followers of the Word could gain no foothold on his lands—for behind Wolverton was the might of his machines, which men could neither influence nor withstand. Wolverton’s ancestor had found this world, and therefore the Holding was his—half a million square miles of island kingdom that cried in darkness for the Word. The fierce Halsites Wolverton employed and the hidden telltales scattered through his lands inevitably found trespassers and most
of these were promptly and urgently returned to Promised Land. But not all. Adept who tried to kill him never returned.

It was infuriating. It was a disgrace to our world. It was intolerable. And so it was that I had volunteered to kill Wolverton with an ancient weapon of horrid power, and in the bright cleansing flame of the explosion purge our world forever of the face of Evil.

But Evil, it seemed, was not defenseless. High as I was—I was seen from below and a flaming lance of power reached up from the forest to touch me, —and I fell. In shameful cowardice I dropped the Weapon without setting the detonator.

Hurtling down to certain death, I berated myself and swore a mighty oath on Zard’s bones never again to give way to weakness of the flesh if I were permitted to survive. For it was borne upon me as I fell toward the rocky ground below that I had never really expected to die despite my proud boasts of sacrifice.

And Zard heard my prayer and was merciful—yet tempered his mercy with a stern reminder of his power. For although I recovered enough control to break the force of my descent, I did not escape completely. I did not die on the cruel rocks, but as punishment for my sins of pride and cowardice, my right leg was snapped between ankle and knee—a reminder that while Zard was merciful, he was also just and meted out punishment when it was deserved.

A Halsite found me an hour later—faint and weak with pain and shock. I could not reach him as he advanced upon me warily. But his fierce crest flattened back upon his head when he saw my helplessness and his yellow fangs bared in a travesty of a human grin as he came forward with gliding steps, lifted me in his huge arms, and ran with cat-like leaps down the mountainside. My weight was nothing to him, nor was the pain of my broken leg. At the third dizzy leap and jarring landing, I fainted and knew no more until I opened my eyes and saw Wolverton.

I was lying on a couch in a small inner courtyard. Around me towered his fabulous stronghold—a mighty pile of metal and stone anchored to the top of a hill, bristling with structures of metal and weird spiderwork fabrications that rotated endlessly on gimbals. My head was filled with buzzings and dizzy pinwheels of color as he bent over me and examined my torn and dirty sacramental robe. “Hmm— an Adept,” he said—“Wonder what you’re adept at?”. He

92

AMAZING STORIES
chuckled. “You’re lucky that my boy obeyed orders and brought you in. You had no business over my land. And judging from that bomb you were towing, you were loaded for bear.”

I looked at him curiously. “What’s a bear?” I asked.

“It’s a—” he stopped abruptly and scowled. “You’re pulling my leg,” he accused.

“I am not!” I said firmly. “I haven’t touched your leg, although you have broken mine.”

He winced. “I asked for that,” he said. “I mean, you were carrying an Atomic.”

I nodded. “I was,” I said calmly, “and if it hadn’t been for that Halsite—”

“You wouldn’t have done anything except destroy yourself,” he interrupted. “This place is shielded like a Base Fortress. But I didn’t want you dead,” he chuckled. “You’re more useful alive.”

I choked back a gasp of pain.

He noticed it. “Well,” he said, “let’s have a look at you.” He gestured at the Halsite. The humanoid produced a long knife, and slit through my tight underdrawers, exposing my leg from ankle to thigh. The shame of it was almost more than I could bear. Wolverton looked, whistled through his teeth, and turned to the Halsite.

“Fetch doctor,” he said.

The humanoid grinned, flapped his ears in acknowledgment, and disappeared into the dark interior of the pile with a catlike bound.

And presently he came back with the doctor. She was an apostate, the barred, tattooed circle of the Faith still visible on her right wrist—a natural blonde—big-boned and graceful—carrying a small medikit. She set it down, opened it, took out a fluorprobe and examined my leg, ignoring my ritual gesture of abomination.

Her diagnosis was swift and impersonal. “Transverse fracture of the tibia and fibula,” she said. “No complications. Probably it will be difficult to set since the leg muscles are so well developed, but it should heal within two weeks under stimulay.”

I was embarrassed. To be examined by a female, and an apostate at that, was bad enough, but to hear the diagnosis spoken so plainly was unbearable.

I retched violently—and it wasn’t entirely a ritual spasm.

Wolverton chuckled as he turned to the doctor. “This one’s a real hardshell,” he said. “Better check for psi potential when you get back to the infirmary—we don’t want to get caught with our pants down like we did last time.” He laughed—a high-pitched cackle that grated on my
nerves and turned to face me. "Don’t worry," he went on. "You will get used to doc. You’ll have to. She’s the only medic we have."

The doctor looked at me with complete distaste.

"Do your worst," I said bitterly. "After your unclean hands have touched me, I can stand anything."

"I’ll do my best—even for you!" the doctor said. She looked into my eyes until her own slid aside from the force of my superior will. "You probably can stand anything—and possibly even more," she admitted grudgingly. She gestured to the Halsite who picked me up as though I were a child and carried me into the building down corridors, past courtyards and fountains, to a small white room where he laid me on a table and held me while the doctor set my leg—ignoring my flinching revulsion to her touch.

So that was how I came to be seated in a wheelchair with a Halsite at my back, listening to Wolverton’s voice—the Voice of Evil. The Halsite who attended me scratched idly at an insect bite on one massive arm and eyed me speculatively. But I had seen quite a few Halsites these past two weeks and so I didn’t feel particularly disturbed. My itching leg occupied most of my attention.

Wolverton looked at me, sighed and shrugged his lean shoulders. "I wonder if you’re worth it," he speculated audibly. "Possibly it’d be better to wait until you’ve married and try again with your children." He rose to his feet. "But I can’t take the chance," he said. "Already it’s getting too late—in another generation there might be no opportunity to salvage the race. Can’t work with material like your society. There has to be some balance—and the old civilizations are going downhill. There just doesn’t seem to be anything now but nut cults and decadence. There’s no middle ground except for a few places—and those are damn near Maximum Survival Density." He capitalized the last three words verbally.

I don’t think he was really conscious of my presence at the moment, which was oddly annoying. For an instant he was miles away in a world of his own—a world which I did not understand. And for an equally brief instant I wished I could.

He walked out—leaving me alone with the Halsite.

"Take me outside," I said.

"Boss say no."

"Boss didn’t say no—he just told you to watch me. You can watch me just as well outside as in here."

"Boss say keep you in house,"
the Halsite repeated, grinning cheerfully as he talked, exposing his long, yellow canines.

"Are you afraid of me?" I asked with mild incredulity.


"You are afraid," I said, putting as much contempt into the words as I dared. "Afraid."

"E'Komo not afraid of any human."

"Of the Boss?" I asked insinuatingly.

"Even Boss—but he my chief. I put my hands in his and gave promise to be his man. Halsite no break word."

"Oh, well," I said, "you'll never convince me with all your talk that you're not afraid of Wolverton." I looked up at his broad, brutal face. He wasn't smart—and he was proud. For the past two weeks I had been feeling him out while my leg was rapidly mending under the doctor's expert care. I despised her, but she knew far more of medicine than did our best. At home, it would be a month away before I would be able to walk, but here I was almost well again. But it would do me no good as long as I was inside the house. Outside, the electronic field that blanked my strength might be weaker—and maybe if I could get far enough away I could escape. If I could once get away from Wolverton's influence he'd never catch me. I could return and tell the Bearers—

Just what could I tell them? The thought jolted my plans for escape to a dead halt.

What had I learned about our enemy? What were his weaknesses? How could he be attacked and destroyed? Sure, I knew his strength—but other ones than I had learned of that. And here I was in the very heart of Evil's power and I had learned exactly nothing that would help the Word prevail.

I could have kicked myself for being so stupid—for not leading Wolverton on. Surely Zard must think me a weak reed—a coward—or at best a fool. One cannot fight Evil by ignoring it. The Word came to me, "Smite Evil hip and thigh. Fight fire with fire—oppose craft to craft—strike down the evil doer with his own spear that the Word may triumph. For in my Kingdom honor waits for those who spread the Word—that the light of the spirit may be passed to other minds and the heathen rescued from the Pit." What a fool I was to apply the "Canticles of the Young" to Wolverton. It should have been the "Missionary Creed." Against Wolver-
ton, passive resistance could not win. It would take a sharp mind and resolute spirit to combat him. And it was time I displayed both.

Immersed in my thoughts I did not at first realize where the Halsite was taking me until a brilliant blaze of light struck my eyes. We were outside and the big fellow was pushing me rapidly down a smooth walk between rows of flowering shrubs.

“See—not afraid,” he said as he came to a branch in the walk. “I take you outside. Now we go back.”

I felt for him and he was all there—and with calculated force I struck! He crumpled, eyes rolling in their sockets, powerless to harm me as I stepped from the chair, limping a little from the weight of the brace on my leg. I looked down at the helpless Halsite for a long second, assimilating what I learned from him, and then I went over the fence and into the darkness of the forest beyond the grounds.

As the trees closed behind me I had a panicky feeling to fly and keep on flying until I was back home with my fellow Adepts in the cloister behind the great cathedral in Hosanna. I longed for the quiet and the comforting touches of my friends. Here I was alone in a savage land with the Father of Evil. The thought unnerved me. I was not used to Evil, and my cloistered days of study and practice as I mastered an Adept’s powers were poor experience to pit against such a one as Wolverton. And then I remembered my vow to Zard, and the Missionary Creed, and I knew I must go back and fight him on his own ground. I must appear weak and inept until I could find an opening through which to strike. Yet I must not appear too easy. Wolverton must be allowed to recapture me, but I must make an obvious effort to escape. A pure cleansing wave flowed through me and my spirit was eased and my soul comforted. Zard was with me, and I felt no fear. He was pointing out my course—the only one I could possibly take. Slowly I turned and moved deeper into the forest, using my Adept’s powers to confuse the trail.

Wolverton found me as I knew he would. I was aware of him even before he saw me. It surprised me that he had located me so quickly—but that was the only unusual thing about it. His airboat came slanting down toward my hiding place, but I did not move. He stepped out and came toward me, but I did not fly though every muscle in my body screamed for flight. When he was close enough I reached for him,
but my grip slipped harmlessly away. Still, this did not surprise me for I had not been able to touch him before—and was he not the Father of Evil? But when the glinting metal flashed violet in his hand and the stunning shock locked my muscles in rigid paralysis—I was afraid—but then it was too late—

I was again lying upon the narrow white table while the doctor massaged my stiff body. Slowly a feeling that was agony came back to my numbed body and I stirred weakly. "Fool," the doctor said. "Did you think to escape from him?" There was bitter acid in her voice, mixed with an odd note of admiration. "You had courage to try but you should have known you wouldn't succeed."

"I nearly did," I said, "and I would have if he had been slower to pursue. In the dark I could have avoided him."

"He would have found you though it had been as dark as the bottom of the Pit."

"I would have been gone."

She laughed. "You do not know him."

"I know he is the Father of Evil," I said.

"You are wrong—he is not that—he is merely different—older—wiser—but not evil."

It was my turn to laugh, and I did although it hurt my throat and made my chest ache. "It is you who are the fool," I said.

She shrugged. "It may be," she agreed, "but you will learn that Wolverton is master here, and what he wants he keeps. Nor will you escape again."

"Why not?"

"Try," she said. "He has turned the field off."

I tried—and panic flooded me! I did not move—nor could I feel the slightest trace of the doctor although I tried to reach her with all my strength. Then I screamed! And my screams were echoed by her laughter.

The spasm died quickly enough—for I am not a coward. It is the unknown which is frightening—the feeling of helplessness in the face of powers greater than one's own. But then I realized I had chosen this course—that it was not forced upon me, and that Zard was guiding my faltering steps.

"You are lying," I said with forced calmness. "The field is still on."

She looked at me with pitying contempt, rose quietly into the air and floated over my head! "So it's on, is it?" she asked.

My mouth dropped open in a gape of unmannerly surprise. "You're an Adept!" I gasped.

"I was. Now I'm a doctor."

"But why?—why haven't you reported back to Hosanna? You are free. What keeps you here?"
“I do not wish to leave,” the doctor said calmly.

“You’re conditioned!”

“You could call it that,” she agreed. “I prefer to think I have learned some sense, that I have forgotten the silly superstitions of my childhood when I came here to kill. Ten years ago I was like you, but now—”

“Now,” I said bitterly, “you are a minion of Evil.”

The doctor’s laugh was merry and unforced. “Every year they get worse!” she chuckled. “I see what Wolverton means when he says there’s no hope for this world.” She floated quietly back to the floor.

I felt crushed and angry at the same time. Who was she to laugh at the Word? Once again I tried to rise. With all my strength I tried, but again I didn’t move. There was something warm encircling my neck. I raised a hand to it and touched smooth metal—a close fitting ring about my throat.

“Yes,” the doctor said, answering my unspoken question. “That is what restrains you. And it will stay on until he removes it. Nothing can cut that ring.” She smiled ruefully. “I wore one once—for nearly five years—”.

She kept on talking, something about taking time for the electronics section to develop a waveform that would cancel my powers—which was why I had lived under the field—and why I had a chance to try to escape, but I didn’t really hear her. I hadn’t figured on this development. It shocked me into utter numbness.

It was two days later before I could rise. The braces were gone from my leg and I was whole again. Whole, but helpless.

Unmolested, I walked through Wolverton’s stronghold. I passed the Halsite whom I had struck down. He looked at me and grinned. There was no malice in him.

“You fool me,” he said cheerfully. “I not very smart—but next time you try I run you down—bring you back. You no do that thing twice.”

“If you can catch me,” I answered.

“I catch, all right. You wear ring now. You no get away.”

I sighed. He was right.

Later that day I saw Leslie—the Adept who tried to reach Wolverton last year. I waved to him, but he did not notice me. He was reading a book, and the glass wall that separated us prevented me from speaking to him. A silver ring gleamed around his neck—he too was a prisoner, and from the looks of it he, too, was learning forbidden things. I wondered at the unholy spell of Wolverton. What was the devilish power he had over the minds of men that made even an Adept ignore Zard’s teachings? There
was a tense earnestness to Leslie's bent figure, a driving air of concentration he had never shown when learning the writings of Zard. He was absorbed—fascinated—and looking at him I again felt the icy hand of terror grip my mind.

I shrugged it off. So far there had been no invasion of my thoughts. My beliefs were still mine, and although my body was trapped, my spirit was free. And if I could not reach him with my mind, there was always a weapon to rely upon—something that would fit my hand—something blunt to smash—something sharp to drive through skin and flesh into his blackened heart.

But despite my freedom I was watched by seen and unseen eyes. No weapon I could find remained long in my hand. It was the ultimate frustration. And finally I gave it up. I would have to mark the location of weapons and hide my time until Wolverton was close enough to one which I could seize and slay him before his minions could prevent me. Slowly I learned cunning—to dissemble—to hide my intent—to wait.

And while I waited Wolverton talked to me, and I listened, fascinated by the evil of the man. For not only did he mock the Word, he despised It, calling It a superstition-tainted mass of primitive Mumbo Jumbo—whatever that might be. But except for this flouting of the Word, Wolverton was not so evil as I thought. There was a gentleness about him that was strange. My own people had little of this. After all, Promised Land was not an easy world to tame, and our rise to greatness had been the product of unending struggle against an unfriendly if not inimical environment. But in the end, the Word and those who believed in It, were triumphant. Did we not tame and rule three-quarters of this world? Were we not the Chosen? Often I had to go back to basics after a talk with Wolverton. He disarmed me with his friendly voice and with his logic. It was getting harder to resist him—and I understood now how the others had fallen. Wolverton, if he tried, could charm the birds from the trees, make black look white, evil virtuous, and righteousness unrighteous. He was truly a terrible man and I looked forward to his daily visits with mingled dread and anticipation. There was something toward which he was leading me and I dreaded the revelation even while I enjoyed the trip.

We—or rather Wolverton—talked of philosophy—of science—of history—of distant worlds which he had visited with such disarming charm that I learned despite my obstinacy. Soon I be-
gan to know them—Earth—green Earth, the home-world of the race with her impossible blue skies and seas, gray clouds, white snows, fierce arid deserts, tall mountains and greenly verdant valleys. From her vast forests to her broad plains and great cities, Earth was a thing of loveliness. I could feel Wolverton’s passion when he spoke of it—nor was I surprised when he at last confessed that he was born there.

And I learned of Mars—rust red and rugged—harsh and cold—where men lived under domes and husbanded the scanty air and water with miser’s care.

And Proxima—first star colony of Earth—a gentle world of soft pastels and grays—a barren world which men reclaimed and made beautiful, drawing from their skill and science to mold the primitive life forms into things of beauty and utility.

And golden Fanar—ripen and lovely with its humanoids and developing civilization that blossomed to full flower when men came and lent their skills and science to their cousins.

And Kungtze—delicate fairyland of violet skies and soft rounded hills like virgin bosoms waiting to be kissed.

And Samar—not the Samar I knew, but a land of seas and islands, tall ships and gracious living.

And Halsey—harsh—forested and forbidding—a world that distrusted and did not welcome man—a world peopled by savage humanoids who united only in the face of danger.

And more—many more.

I learned of them all in the days of their youth—together with the struggles and pain that went into their taming. Wolverton’s words were wings that sent my spirit soaring. His tales—filled with courage and adventure, of blood and treachery, of honor and fair dealing, made me proud of my race. We were not perfect, we men—but there was within us the seed of greatness that would perhaps flower into the true bloom. It made me proud to learn the past glories of our race. Almost I could feel that Wolverton was a brother in the great brotherhood of man.

And then he killed the dream—brought it crashing to the ground in a brutal series of horridly frank solidograph projections. These were real people that bled and died and performed unspeakable brutalities upon each other and upon the worlds where they lived.

“On the average,” Wolverton said bitterly, “it takes five to six thousand years, but we have been in space longer than that, and some societies last longer than others, but the end is always inevitable.”
He showed me all—a solid month of it.

Earth: A world of legalized cannibalism where men were bred for food—a world of wrecked glory swiftly returning to jungle and desert.

Mars: Redying in slow bitter agony as technology failed under the pressure of excessive population, with legal infanticide, eugenics laws, and tyranny.

Proxima: Bloody and torn—waging suicidal war whose ultimate end would be virtual annihilation of all life.

Fanar: Dead and radioactive.

Kungtze: A huge, monolithic state that owned and controlled everything down to the last living unit, where the population swarmed and jostled in huge collectives that were neither cities nor farms, but something of both—where everything was used even down to the dead bodies of those too old to work, slain by the state to make room for others.

Samar: A matriarchate ruled by the few—filled by the many, where women outnumbered men twenty to one, and the men ruled by the sly and subtle tyranny of sex, and where—despite the disparity of sexes—people swarmed and teemed, and struggled for possession of a place to live and the partial possession of a man.

Halsey: Harsh, forested, and forbidding—a world that distrusted and did not welcome man—a world peopled by savage humanoids who united only in the face of danger. They were united now—armed and ready to resist invasion.

And there were more.

I was sick—sick at the folly of man, who threw away so much for so little. "Whose fault?" I asked. "Why did these things happen?"

"It was no one's fault," Wolverton said, sadly. "It was everyone's. In opening new worlds, people are needed, so they have large families. The tradition becomes established and when at last the world is comfortably filled—instead of stopping—holding the line and consolidating what they have won—people go right on the same old way, producing more and more of their kind until finally the world grows too small. Then they quarrel, fight, and die until they are so reduced that they can start the
vicious cycle over again—and in the process civilization becomes barbarism and culture becomes chaos. If the world is lucky, it survives to rise again as Earth will do. If it is unlucky it ends like Fanar.

“And that is where you come in. You and the others like you, but you in particular. For you possess in a tremendous degree the ability to convince. I could feel it in you despite my shields. It influenced E’Komo despite his loyalty. It made Doctor Sara waver despite her dedication. I have watched and waited for you for generations—for over two thousand years. For here in this enclave I knew you must some day arrive. Your origin, frankly spiritual and mystic—your development so ruthlessly selective starting with ritual sacrifice of excess—and less desirable—maidens at puberty—your insistence upon developing the spiritual rather than the mechanistic side of culture—all these were bound to develop psi factors. And they have! It is here, I think, where man’s salvation lies. Here is the brake on rising population—a person who can convince—who can inculcate into the very soul of men that three children are enough—or that two are enough—or whatever number is needed to stabilize the population of a planet.”

I didn’t really hear him. My mind had recoiled from what he had told me. Two thousand years, he had said. Two thousand years! And he was not old! Truly he was the Father of Evil, for only Evil and the soul are immortal! “You said two thousand years, didn’t you?”

Wolverton chuckled. “I should have added objective,” he said.

I didn’t understand.

“It’s a trick with time,” he explained. “Actually I suppose I’m about forty or forty-five. It’s not strange. Anyone with a lightspeed ship can do it as long as one stays in normal space time. Take a two-week trip subjective at Lume One and ten objective years go by just like that. It’s an old trick. The Timejumpers knew about it before hyperdrive was developed, but it’s been forgotten for centuries. Most of the time I’m not here. The Halaites take care of the Holding for me. I heard about you three years ago so I waited until you made your try for me. It was inevitable that you would. Your Bearers are always trying to get me inspired partly by religious and partly by economic reasons—and they pick the best of each year’s crop to try. As a result I get about three new recruits a year. The old ones pick them up and indoctrinate them. But we keep up the fiction of Wolverton being here. It’s good business.” Wolverton look-
ed at the dumbfounded expression on my face and laughed.

"So you don't understand," he said. "Well, you have plenty of time to learn after we treat about five rim worlds. We'll be practical about it and let you learn about lightspeed and time stasis the normal way—in a spaceship!"

"No," I said.

"But you can't turn me down," he protested. "I thought you understood. People need you—need you badly. Our others can modify a little but they can't convince. It takes a hundred of them to even begin to cover a world—and there aren't very many hopeful worlds left. We have to hold the line or humanity will breed itself into extinction."

"I am still your prisoner," I said, luxuriating in the first real weakness I had found in him. "You might as well know that I still oppose you. I don't believe you. You are Evil and Evil has a smooth tongue—Zard said it long ago, and it is still the truth."

Wolverton groaned.

"Nor will I help you!"

Anger flowed from him. "You stupid fool!" he blazed. "Do you think I'd ask you to do anything for me? His rage struck me like a blow. I'm telling you—not asking. You will do something for your race—something you can do, or so help me God, I'll condi-

tion everything out of you except your superstitious prejudices and maroon you on Samar!"

He meant what he said. His anger was a true anger—and he had spoken the Name we all knew yet did not speak aloud. And he was not struck down. I was confused and upset. I shivered with a fear that was as icy as the River of the Dead. There was something wrong here—something I could not understand. Then I saw the light.

"I will bargain with you," I said. Zard's plan was becoming clear. "I will join you in good faith."

"With what reservations?"

"None—I will swear this by Zard's bones."

He looked at me speculatively. "What is the nature of this bargain?"

"I will join you willingly if you leave this world."

He smiled. "Sorry, it's no go. It's too good a psi trap. And your race has a virtual monopoly on the supply. You presume too much on my claims about your value. You're not that valuable."

I sighed. This was not the way. Zard would have opened it if it were. I had weakened—but he had not retreated. I had shown a softness in my armor and had given him hope of conquering—and with that little opening what could he not do?

THE MISSIONARY 103
He needed but one break in my defenses—and I would be lost. Already I was dangerously weakened. Rapidly I repeated the catechism of Zard as he talked, and presently his voice faded and was gone as the ecstasy of spiritual union with the Word gripped me in firm protecting hands.

"Come with me," Wolverton said a week later. "I have something to show you."

Obediently I rose and followed him. A Halsite followed as we walked out into the sun. We had come a different way than before—a way I had never taken. Before me was a broad concrete plain studded with oddly curved walls. In the center of the area a tall, pinch-waisted, needle-nosed spaceship stood on its landing pads—pointing straight up to the sky. I looked at it with awe. It was bigger even than a trader and it looked oddly menacing yet beautiful.

"Yours?" I asked.

He nodded. "Mine. She's Earth-built—one of the last battle cruisers ever built in an Earth yard. Ships like this aren't made any more—even though she's four thousand objective years old. Come, let's look at her."

As we approached, I could see the ship was enormous. It rose over our heads like some great campanile tower, yet despite its size there was an air of subtle refinement about the mass, an impression almost of delicacy—as though it had been tenderly and carefully constructed by men who loved their work. Each part was beautifully finished and perfectly machined, and the diamond-hard non-corrosive metal gleamed in the golden sunlight. And despite its huge size and absurdly tiny jets, it looked fast!

"It's big enough to move an entire city!" I gasped.

"She has a crew of five—and capacity for fifty marines," Wolverton replied.

"All that size—but—"

"Most of it is taken up with weapons systems," he said. "I could utterly destroy a planet of this size with her weapons. She'll travel at Lume One as long as you care to drive her—or she'll go clear up to ultra band in hyperspace. She's the fastest, deadlest thing in this sector—beautiful—isn't she?" He talked as though the ship was a woman—a woman he loved.

"I wanted you to see her," he pointed at the ship, "so that you will know exactly what I mean when I offer you freedom such as you have never known. With this ship we can do anything—go anywhere. Time means nothing—hours in hyperspace—years in normal spacetime. I'm offering you the Universe if you join with
me to work and save—to keep men from following the old paths to racial destruction." His voice, eyes, and entire body were tense. Conviction flowed from him in smothering waves. I had never really felt the power of the man and I was shaken. Shaken and unsure. For the Word seemed oddly weak in the presence of this titanic ship and the equally titanic man who owned it. I could not explain the feelings that surged inside me—missionary to the human race—freedom from worldly bounds—greed for life and knowledge—weariness and surrender to Wolverton's endless urging—all were there, but there was more than that. I kept looking up at the ship, my head whirling from the dizzying sweep of her—her beauty and power filling my eyes. My heart soared with her soaring lines. I felt quite enthralled—uplifted—caught in a force greater than my will. Now—suddenly I knew why Wolverton spoke of the ship with such passion in his voice. It must have shown in my eyes for a great gladness lighted his. "I will join you," I said in a small voice—and inside me something died as soon as I had spoken. I had the hollow feeling I had lost my soul.

"I will not ask you to swear," he said with odd gentleness. "I have pushed you far enough. Let us go to the laboratory and re-

move that ring and restore your powers."

A voice inside me spoke sluggishly. "Fight fire with fire—craft with craft," it said. "Strike down the Evil doer with his own spear," but the voice was weak. I followed Wolverton and as I walked the voice became stronger. "And the Father of Evil took Zard to the top of Mount Karat, and from this high place he offered the world and eternal life if Zard would fall down and worship him. And Zard refused. I shook my head, I had promised—but what was a promise when it involved the Father of Evil. To slay him, one could promise anything, and yet receive absolution.

The ring was removed from my neck, and with its removal awareness flowed into me. I was whole again! I could see as only an Adept knew how to see. I turned to Wolverton with pleasure in my eyes, and as I looked at him I stiffened with shock!

*His barriers were down!!*

I could penetrate his mind as though it were thinnest air, and in my brain the voice rang out loud, clear, quick, eager, triumphant!

*Now—NOW!!—KILL!!*

I took his mind in mine, encompassing it. I held his life. One surge of power, one squeeze and he was dead. The Father of Evil
—helpless in the grasp of righteousness.

I paused, savoring my triumph searching for the evil I knew lay concealed beneath the surface web of flashing thoughts. I probed beneath them, brushing aside his feeble defenses—and stopped—appalled!

For there was no evil, no guile, no treachery—only a deep limpid pool of abiding faith and selfless love for mankind that transcended anything I had ever dreamed. There was anger, too, a clean bright anger at the stupidities and follies of mankind, impassioned yet impersonal, and oddly lacking in bitterness. He knew that I could snuff him out as easily as an acolyte sniffs a candle upon the Altar of Zard. Yet he neither shrunk nor feared. And I realized with numbing shock that he had placed himself in my hands, knowing what I was, and what I would do. Frantically I tried to withdraw, but I was immersed in love, drowned in it, absorbed in a warm golden glow that rushed along the power that connected us.

I shuddered. Father of Evil? If he was evil, then every responding fiber of my heart and mind was evil too, and I was damned beyond redemption. With a groan I wrenched myself free. I could not kill him. Nor could I longer stand the shattering concepts of his mind. And with stark realization I faced the elemental truth that it was I, not he, who was wrong!

He looked down at me as I stood shrunken and defeated before him, and his eyes were kind. “It was a chance I had to take,” he said softly. “And I was right. You were not conditioned beyond redemption.” He sighed and placed his hand on my shoulder. It was warm and gentle, and I did not shrink from his touch. “There are many worlds,” he murmured, “and it is getting late, and you are unique. Another like you might not appear again. The plan would be useless without you, yet without your complete cooperation it would fail. So I opened my mind, dropped the screen which shielded me.” He smiled wryly. “Desperate measures of a desperate man,” he said with a trace of the old masking cynicism.

But I knew him now and could see behind the mask. A strange wonder filled me. I had tried to apply the Missionary Creed, but it was he who was the missionary and I the convert. Slowly I knelt and placed my hands in his as I would to a Bearer of the Word. “Show me the way, Master, and I will follow,” I said.

He raised me to my feet. “No, Saul,” he said. “Not that way. In the struggle to come, you will be the leader. Like your namesake.”

THE END
A whole world is going to waste for the lack of courageous, creative imagination. Here is a blow-by-blow plan of how we can start now to make Venus fit for human habitation.

The road to space is paved with good inventions, and most of them are the ideas of science fiction writers. If there is any truth to the rumor that science has caught up with fiction, it certainly doesn’t apply to the conquest of space. In fact, if it weren’t for the ideas worked out by fiction writers, the current crop of so-called space scientists would be hard up for “new” developments to release to the press.

The underground dwellings being tentatively suggested by some scientists as suitable for life on the moon were worked out long ago by Campbell, Heinlein and others. The use of bubble-cities on Mars was already old hat when Arthur C. Clarke developed it to its limit. Space stations appeared in works of fiction before the turn of the century. Of course, the science-fact men have assimilated most of such ideas by now, though they don’t quite seem to be sure of what to do with them. But in at least one major aspect of space conquest, I have yet to find one scientist who has discovered the work done in fiction.

A whole world seems to be going to waste through neglect—and that happens to be the
most important world of all for colonization. That world, of course, is Venus.

If our grandchildren are ever to start colonizing any other world in the solar system, it will almost certainly have to be Venus. The moon is apparently nothing but barren rock. Mars is an arid world, lacking sufficient oxygen for men to live in the open. All the other planets beyond Mars are obviously totally useless for our kind of life. Yet on Venus, there must be millions of square miles of land which can be turned into suitable homesites for men to live normal, productive lives, if we have the wit to begin work on the project in the immediate future. Curiously, while Venus is a hundred times as far from us as the Moon, we can begin work there even before we can hope to land our first lunar explorers.

Probably it is natural that the first suggestion for what can be done on Venus came from a woman. Katherine MacLean, in "The Fittest," beat all the male writers to the idea. But then, Venus is a female planet, like earth, and maybe it takes a lady to understand the situation. Earth and Venus, of course, are named for goddesses, while the other seven planets are named after gods. This is appropriate, too; the only way to gain a foothold on the male planets is by a desperate fight with them. Venus, in spite of her present coy airs, needs only the proper peaceful wooing to make her settle down to give man a good home, as a dutiful wife should.

The planet is about the same size as earth, with a surface gravity that is just enough lighter to make living a bit easier. It's the nearest planet to us, and the orbits of Venus and Earth intersect much more frequently than those of Earth and Mars, making for shorter and more frequent trips. The day is pretty uncertain. We know the planet revolves, since otherwise the dark side would become so cold that all the atmosphere would freeze out there. We also know the period of revolution is longer than that of earth. It is probably somewhere between five and ten of our days in length. Awkward, but not a major problem to men, who have become independent of daylight anyhow.

**BREATHING ON VENUS**

The most important aspect of the planet, however, is that it has a deep, dense atmosphere. From what we can learn of the air of Venus, men couldn't breathe it now—but Katherine MacLean has suggested the
answer to this problem, and it's a beauty in case and simplicity.

There have been a lot of theories about that atmosphere in the past. Some kind of clouds veil the whole planet in a haze and keep us from seeing either the surface or even the lower layers of air. The first idea was that these clouds were of water vapor. This made us think that Venus might be a world of steaming swamps, as the earth was in the days of the dinosaurs. But readings of the light bounced from this haze as analyzed by the spectroscope gave a much less optimistic picture. No water vapor or oxygen were found; instead, there were indications of such poisonous gases as methane and formaldehyde. (Traces of those gases are also found in the very upper layers of earth's atmosphere, which might indicate that such readings for Venus simply didn't penetrate deeply enough into the haze.) This rather cheerless picture of a dry, dusty world lasted just long enough to discourage a lot of writers (and apparently most science-fact men) from considering the planet seriously.

Recently, the readings have been improved, and now show that there is a definite trace of water vapor. There is still no oxygen, but the chief gas seems to be carbon-dioxide. This means that men still couldn't breathe on the surface without a space suit, but it offers a lot of hope, nonetheless.

Plants can exist in such an atmosphere without trouble. In fact, they should thrive on it, since water and carbon-dioxide are the chief source of the material used to build their cells. Probably the first plants with green chlorophyll appeared on earth when our own atmosphere was made of just such a mixture of gases as we now find on Venus. Oxygen is far too active a gas to remain uncombined for any length of time. The green plants, however, broke down the carbon-dioxide and released some of the oxygen into the air. They did such a good job of this that one-fifth of our air is now oxygen, while less than one part in three thousand is carbon-dioxide. They literally gave us the air we breathe.

Hence, as MacLean suggested a dozen years ago, men can actually change the air of Venus to suit human needs before a single human being ever lands on the surface. We are already talking—perhaps a bit hopefully, but still with some certainty—of sending probes into Venus' atmosphere in the near future. Suppose, instead of sending only instruments, we include a few pounds of some kind of plant seed, such as spores?
SPORE TREATMENT

Some of the spores are so fine that a single pound should be enough to scatter across vast areas of the planet, carried for tremendous distances by the winds. These things are rugged; in fact, they can survive long periods of being cooled to the temperature of liquid air. The trip through space shouldn’t hurt them at all. (Arrhenius suggested that such spores might even be carried across space to other worlds by light pressure, though this theory is pretty well abandoned now.)

Once dropped into the air, they will settle slowly. Most will almost certainly perish, but those that live should soon cover the entire planet with a dense growth. Venus provides so much carbon-dioxide and sunlight that she should prove a perfect feasting ground for plants. As an added virtue, such plants don’t even need insects to pollenate them. Most of them are pretty small; but it should be remembered that the giant fronds and stalks that made up the forests of the carboniferous age were closely related to modern spore-bearing plants. A little selective breeding should do wonders before the spores are shipped across space.

On later trips, after the first plants have paved the way and the probes have given us more information, we can be more selective about what seeds to send. Grasses and clover—which fix nitrogen out of the air and enrich the ground—may go next. Eventually, even trees may be shipped across as seeds. To add the proper texture to the soil, we might send over earthworm eggs, since worms are the great natural cultivators.

Thus, in a short period of time, we could provide man with an atmosphere suitable for breathing. The first human settlers wouldn’t have to land on Venus until all this work was done.

Of course, science sees difficulties to all this. One of the jobs of science is to find trouble before it really turns up. To paraphrase Mark Twain, space travel has seen many troubles—most of which never happened. Usually, while one branch of science seems to be in trouble, some other branch—seemingly unrelated at times—will have the answer. It is the job of science fiction to skim around and dig up the answers from the odd places where they lie unknown.

The biggest problem with the adaptation of Venus seems to be the temperature there. According to the latest measurements made from earth, this is about 585°. That is too darned hot, even for plants. Even the
cooler polar areas of the planet wouldn’t get much below the temperature of boiling water if the equator reaches such a record heat. The longer day on Venus will also aggravate the situation, since it provides a long time under full sunlight for the heat to build up.

**HOW HOT IS HOT?**

Fortunately, there are plants on earth that can stand some pretty high temperatures. In Yellowstone National Park, a slime-mold manages to live happily in hot springs where the temperature rises to 190°. Such plants as this might well stand the temperatures to be found around the polar areas of Venus. And with such cells as a start, biologists might be able to breed other plants which would prove viable at extremely high temperatures.

But this may not even be necessary. The figure of 585° is fairly close to what one might expect if the amount of sunlight striking the planet is compared with that striking earth. This seems to help prove the results obtained by the measuring instruments. However, a similar calculation for Mars would place the surface temperature there some 200° below what it actually is, so there must be another factor involved. And, of course, there is. Any body which is warmed to a higher temperature will radiate far more of its heat off into space, thus cancelling out some of the effects of the increased intensity of sunlight on Venus.

Furthermore, measurements made of Venus from earth are notoriously unreliable. And for that matter, a measurement of Earth from Mars would probably yield a temperature of 170°; that happens to be the temperature found in a layer of the stratosphere, and it would probably blanket out any reflection or radiation of heat from the surface of our planet.

In all probability, the temperature of Venus at the equator must be slightly higher than that of boiling water. This is rough, but it means that the polar areas should be well within the limits plants can tolerate without trouble. Billions and billions of acres of the surface should prove to be suitable for our oxygen-releasing plants to do their work.

As the carbon-dioxide is withdrawn and oxygen replaces it, there will probably be a great increase in visibility. (This is caused by the fact that the water vapor will also tend to condense with the disappearance of the other gas, as I’ll get to later.) Now, for the first time, the probes sent from earth will be able to map and survey the

**HOMESTEADS ON VENUS**
planet. After that, it may be possible to land ships with men on the surface.

Almost certainly, at the beginning of man’s exploration of Venus, large areas of the planet will be too hot for comfortable existence. Perhaps only at the poles will there be any chance for men to move about safely on the surface. With the aid of artificially cooled shelters, further exploration and study can be done. But this would still hardly be the kind of world to justify putting up big homestead posters on earth to attract new settlers.

If such proves to be the case, there is still much that can be done. Nobody has to accept the natural temperature as the inevitable one. (This is also true on earth, where men can probably learn to regulate the temperature to prevent another ice age or too great a rise in temperature.)

THE SUN SCREEN

One theory for the occurrence of the ice ages on earth was that volcanic eruptions threw out great clouds of dust, which cut off the light of the sun. When Krakatoa blew up in the Pacific, measurements made in Europe showed a decline in sunlight reaching the ground for several years—a decline as great as 20%. This was from only a single gigantic volcanic eruption.

There has been enough study of the matter to give us a pretty clear idea of how large the particles should be to produce air suspension for long periods of time and still screen off the sunlight, reflecting it back into space where it can’t heat the planet.

Krakatoa probably threw up ten to fifteen cubic miles of such dust. That sounds like a tremendous amount of material, and it is most certainly not going to be ferried across space and spread from above. But there’s no reason why it can’t be created on the planet itself. Volcanoes can be located and triggered by hydrogen bombs. This is not an easy project, but it seems to be within the limits of possibility. Remember that the working crews will have air to breathe and plants grown right on the planet. Probably even suitable sites for ores for construction can be located. It will be a lot simpler than trying to get anything done on the moon or on Mars.

The bombs would have to be sunk in deep shafts. But this has some advantages. Most of the radioactive material produced by the explosion would be trapped far underground, where it would be harmless. The bomb isn’t intended to lift the huge
mass of material into the air, but simply to add a little extra push to the natural forces already there to be used. And we can be pretty sure that there must be some volcanic activity waiting there for us. Even such a dead world as the moon has recently revealed such unquestionable signs of volcanic activity that the original Russian announcement has been confirmed by astronomers all over the world.

It might even be possible to make such dust and send it up for scattering. (Perhaps such dust would be made of something like fused rock in which bubbles of hydrogen would be trapped, to lighten the particles until they might even rise by themselves. This is a normal enough advance in technology.) This would be a tremendous job, but it would be a cheap price to pay for a whole new world.

The decrease of 20% observed in the amount of sunlight reaching the surface after Krakatoa would release immense amounts of land for use within the zone of comfort. With this reduction in the total energy reaching through the atmosphere, the tropics would be hotter than earth, but not so hot that men couldn’t travel across them, while the rest of the planet would be within satisfactory limits. But of course, the dust could be made even thicker in the air, to shield off more light. Practically any temperature wanted could be contrived, even to a fair imitation of the climate of earth.

**HOTHOUSE IN THE SKY**

However, the release of such dust into the air might prove to be unnecessary. Possibly our old friends, the green plants, will do the whole job for us, including the lowering of the temperature to a point satisfactory for intense settling of the planet. This is a more desirable method.

The idea here goes back to the same speculation on the ice ages which provided the dust-shield plan. Svante Arrhenius was responsible for this, just as he was for the study of spores in space. He turned the problem inside out by assuming that earth’s normal temperature was that of the ice ages. In that case, what produced the periods of warmth, such as those of the age of dinosaurs and the current ending of the last age of glaciation so close behind us?

The solution he found lay in our old friend, the carbon-dioxide gas in the air. This has the characteristic of being transparent to the rays of ordinary light, such as the sunlight that strikes the earth. But it is opaque to the longer heat radiation which
is radiated from the ground back into space.

In this way, it behaves like a piece of wood, which will let short X-rays through easily, but which will block out the passage of the longer visible light. Most substances are more opaque to some radiation than to other wave lengths.

Arrhenius called this action of carbon-dioxide in the air a "hothouse" effect, since it acts exactly like the glass in a hothouse. Glass also lets light through, but reflects the heat radiation. In such a hothouse, the heat is trapped inside, while more light streams in to heat the ground further, thus permitting a temperature rise far above what would occur without the glass.

In the case of the carbon-dioxide, the effect is quite remarkable. There is only about 0.03% (three parts in ten thousand) of the gas in the air, but this tiny fraction is enough to increase the temperature by more than thirty degrees over what we would find without it. That's quite a change in climate.

Now remember that Venus currently has a carbon-dioxide percentage in the atmosphere which is hundreds of times as great as that on Earth. Obviously, the term "Hothouse Planet" applied to our sister world by many science fiction writers in the past must be a literal description of the situation. Light streams down from the sun, only 67 million miles away. It passes through the clouds and air of Venus and hits the surface, where it is converted into heat. Then a major portion of the heat radiation bouncing back toward space is reflected by the gas and kept from leaving.

The removal of most of this gas from the air of Venus would produce a lowering of the temperature that would be tremendous, though it is difficult to say exactly how great it would be. All we can say is that the removal of carbon-dioxide would change the weather forecasts to "cold and colder." As the temperature fell, the planets could move further and further towards the equator, thus speeding up the process of removing more gas from the air and exchanging it for oxygen.

There's a secondary effect of this which must not be overlooked. Carbon-dioxide isn't the only gas which acts in this hothouse-effect. Water vapor behaves in the same manner, though with somewhat lower efficiency.

**FINDING A BALANCE**

Since we know that the latest readings from reflections off the atmosphere of Venus indicate
both carbon-dioxide and water vapor, we now have the worst possible combination.

The plants won’t directly remove this water vapor, of course. The carbon removed is partly lost forever as the plants die and clump into peat bogs, beginning to turn into coal. The water is released, however. But indirectly, the plants will also change the amount of water vapor to be found in the air.

The amount of water in vaporous form which can be held by the atmosphere is related to the temperature. The higher the temperature, the more water vapor. This can be seen easily in a basement on any summer day. A cold pipe will begin to sweat; this simply means that the warm air laden with vapor is cooled on contact with the pipe and some of the vapor has to condense out as water. The same fact accounts for the ice that collects on refrigerator coils and explains the action of the popular electric dehumidifiers.

As the carbon-dioxide content comes down, the temperature is lowered. Then the air becomes supersaturated with the water-vapor, since it has more than it can hold. The water vapor has to condense and fall as rain. This, of course, lowers the temperature still further by decreasing the hothouse effect! And around and around she goes, until a balance point is reached.

This balance is established finally only when the percentage of carbon-dioxide in the air is so low that plants have a harder time getting enough of it to use in their growth. As they grow more slowly, either from reduced temperature or shortage of carbon-dioxide, they take less out of the air. On Earth, the balance is struck for our average temperature when the gas reaches a level of .03%, as mentioned before.

On Venus, the level for balance will probably be much lower. Since the planet receives more sunlight, a comfortable temperature could be reached only when both the level of water vapor and that of carbon-dioxide are far lower than on Earth. Also, because of the greater amount of sunlight, the plants might operate more energetically to capture the smaller percentage of the gas they need. Perhaps the level might fall to .01%. This would have some slight effect on the breathing of men, since our breathing is regulated by the percentage of carbon-dioxide in our lungs; but the effect would be slight, because most of the gas in our lungs is released from our blood rather than being dependent on the level in the air. So the difference between the new atmosphere of Venus and that of
Earth should present no real difficulties for us.

**FAIR AND COOLER?**

There is another effect which would somewhat counteract the removal of the carbon-dioxide. This would come from the thinning of the cloud mantle over Venus. At present, this is so complete, so high and so dense that nobody has positively seen any surface feature of the planet.

With the condensing of the water from the air, the cloud layer would become much more tenuous. This would change the power of the atmosphere to reflect away the light from the sun. At present, the cloud layer gleams with pure white in sunlight because of this high reflecting power. Once the clouds thin, more light must reach the surface.

Because of the complexities of the various factors and their reactions on each other, it is difficult to estimate just what change in temperature could be expected from the introduction of the plants to Venus. Even such things as the possibility of ice caps forming and reflecting light back toward space must be considered. But the total effect would be considerable.

It is possible that the change in the atmosphere alone would be enough to make much of Venus suitable for men to colonize, though the tropics would still probably be much too hot. Since Venus lies 25 million miles closer to the Sun than Earth, we can expect that even a somewhat different balance of water vapor and carbon-dioxide will not be quite enough to give us the same temperature and climate on both planets.

If the change is great enough—as it probably would be—to permit any sizable portion of the planet to be homesteaded, there would be no need for haste about further improvement. The problem would be one of ships to carry the men and equipment to begin the settling of the planet and release some of Earth's overpopulation pressure.

When the population did begin to swell beyond the convenient limits of the comfort zones, further work could be done. There is no reason why the idea of the dust shield could not be added to the changes produced by the plants. There would now be far less expense involved, since a population capable of manufacturing its own machines on Venus would be in existence, and no supplies would have to be ferried from Earth. With such a combination of ideas to draw upon, we should be able to “terraform” Venus almost completely.
Of course, the grandest idea of all—again from science fiction—would be to move the planet outwards from the sun into another orbit where the natural temperature would be lower. We might also speed up its rotation to give a shorter day, closer to that of Earth. Maybe if and when the photon rocket or some kind of antigravity can be developed, such tremendous feats as moving planets will be possible. But it will be a long time before science can hope to catch up with science fiction in this development.

However, science most certainly can catch up with science fiction in giving us a habitable Venus. We're almost capable of sending out the first rocket probes with spores aboard. With a whole planet up for claiming, there can be no excuse for delay.

THE END

COMING NEXT MONTH

It has been a while since a medical man created science-fiction out of his own specialty.

The November AMAZING features the first part of a three-installment serial—The Last Vial—which tells a gripping story of biology and war in the not-so-distant future. Its author is Dr. Sam McClatchie, M.D., who combines exciting story with accurate medical details. It will be a much-discussed novel.

James Blish returns with a story of a rescue mission to an alien world, And Some Were Savages. (The cover illustration for this story was done by the veteran artist, Emsh.

Lester del Rey explores polygamy and polyandry as the answers to the problem of overpopulation in another of his stimulating science-fact articles.

The November AMAZING, complete with other short stories and all our regular (and expanded) features will be on sale at your newsstand October 11.
Smithey drank hard when he drank, worked hard when he worked, thought hard when he thought — and all to drown out the one thing he couldn’t stand...

The Sound Of Screaming

By THEODORE L. THOMAS
The wardroom was crowded when Smithey drifted in. Some of the men played cards, some read, and some gathered near the bar and talked. Smithey, naturally, gyrated toward the bar and ordered a drink. While he waited he tried to thrust his feet into the stirrups at the base of the bar, but Kenyon had to help him. "Thanks, Steve," said Smithey.

Kenyon slapped him on the back and said, "Won't be much longer now. What have you got, another day or two?"

"Yes." Smithey's speech was slurred. "Another thirty-six hours and we'll be there and I'll have to sober up. Disgusting prospect."

The group at the bar was listening, and they smiled. Smithey was never known to draw a sober breath, except when working, and this time it had been six months between jobs. Smithey's face showed it. The eyes were puffy and red, and the face muscles sagged. His body, short, and very broad, looked soft and milky. Smithey seemed out of place among the lean, hair-trained men who made up the Data Gathering Section of the Extra-terrestrial Information Administration.

Across the room, at one of the card tables, Abe Rascoe raked in a double fistful of chips. It was his first trip out. The other members of the Section had made him feel so much at home that he made the mistake of assuming he was one of them. Rascoe looked across at Smithey's swaying figure at the bar. A slight sneer curled his lips and he said, "Why do we put up with a drunk like that in the Section?" Too young to be warned by the silence that followed his question, Rascoe said in a louder voice, "There's no place for a drunk around here. Why don't . . ."

If he had spoken softer, they might simply have interrupted him. But his voice was intended for Smithey's ears, and that was unpardonable. A man reached out, a sudden quick chop on the back of the neck, the sentence was never finished. Rascoe sat, stunned but conscious, as three of the card players casually lifted him from his chair and spun him out to the corridor and held him while he recovered from the blow. One of them said, "We will let the matter drop right here, Abe. But you understand that there will never be another remark about a drunk or anything like that." It was not a question. It was a statement.

Rascoe nodded, looking from one to another questioningly. One of them said, "Smithey is the best surveyor the Section has ever seen. There isn't a man alive who can keep up with him when he's working, and he's got the sound of screaming . . ."
to be either drunk or working. Let's drop it right there." They let him go and the four of them drifted back into the wardroom. It was as though nothing had happened. The room buzzed with normal conversation.

Kenyon said to Smithey, "All briefed on your next planet?"

Smithey nodded as he took a long swallow from the container.

"What's it like? Any special problems?"

Smithey shook his head, and the motion made his whole body shake back and forth.

Kenyon stared down at the top of the bar, and asked the next question without looking at Smithey. "Any natives?"

Smithey took a long pull from the container and said, "Yup."

Kenyon traced out a wet design on the bar, and said nothing.

Smithey turned to him. "S'all right, Steve. I got no intention of breaking the Administration's favorite, top dog, number one rule: thou shalt not interfere with the natives, no matter what. I don't hold any grudges. I'll steer clear of them, and if I can't, I'll mind my manners. Okay?"

Kenyon looked at him then, and smiled and said, "Right. If there's anything any of us can do, tell us."

Smithey finished the rest of the container and signalled for another one. He said, "There's nothing anybody can do, not any more."

Landfall on the planet Lipta took place without incident. The entire Section turned out to help Smithey unload and check his gear. The first item was Vehicle, Amphibious, Mapping and Surveying, M 96, abbreviated Vamas, and around it was placed all the auxiliary equipment. There was a small ceremony at the airlock as Smithey, amidst cheers and applause, took his last drink of whiskey and strode with shaking dignity down the ramp to the ground. It took a full day to tick off the items on the checklist, but it was finally done, and Smithey signed for all his equipment. He stood on a low hill and watched the ship take off a mile away. Then he turned to get to work, his step wobbling, his hands trembling, and his head beginning to ache.

There was a week of work to be done before he could start the map-making procedure. Gyroscopes needed calibration, electronic pendulums had to be zeroed, circuits had to be tuned. Smithey used what was left of the first day in packing and storing some of the equipment, placing miniature components in their tiny niches. After dark he tested his marker beam by making contact with the fast-reced-
ing ship. He could not eat food that first night, and his hands began to shake so violently he had to stop work. He lay down in the sack out in the open, but he could not sleep. He dozed and tossed and turned and fought off hideous nightmares. Frequently he got up and walked about for a few moments in the chill night air. His breath gurgled in his throat, but other than that he made no sound. He fought his battle in dogged silence.

He forced himself to eat some food at dawn, but he threw it up. He finished stowing the gear, and ate one swallow of food. He checked out the reactor motor of Vamas, and ate one swallow of food. All day he worked, checking and resting, and eating his occasional swallow of food. His head ached fearfully and there were times when his body tremors became wild gyrations. He did not sleep the second night, either, and on the third day there were times when he fell down from exhaustion. But larger quantities of food were staying on his stomach, and his muscles, aching and tired as they were, began to behave in a more normal fashion. The third night he lapsed into a deep and dreamless sleep, and when he awoke the headache was gone. He knew he was beginning to throw off the effects of the six-month bender.

Now that his mind and body were beginning to function, Smithey took up the delicate task of calibrating his surveying instruments. The vast plain on which he had been landed served as an excellent checking area. Smithey carefully donned his control belt with its intricate array of dials, knobs, and switches, and preliminarily ran Vamas back and forth over the terrain. He strapped onto his shoulders the transit helmet and laid out a rough equilateral triangle a mile on a side. It failed to close by thirty yards, and Smithey grinned at the error; it could have been worse. Standing at one spot he sent Vamos speeding far and wide to take a position, send up the level rod, jockey the target while he centered the cross-hairs on it, and then move on to a new position. His fingers began to regain their skill at playing over the controls on the belt.

Just before dusk he closed within a yard an irregular pentagram covering thirty-eight square miles. He nodded and said, “Good boy,” in the general direction of Vamas, and grinned again. It had not taken long to fall back into the pathetic fakery; surveyors always thought of Vamas as another person, a full-fledged member of a surveying team.

Smithey brought in Vamas
and sat down. His fingers played on the belt, and Vamas made camp, using its grasper bars clumsily, correcting some of its mistakes by means of its sensor units. Finally it was done. Smithey ate ravenously, and slept in the open as was his custom. At the first glimmerings of light he was up and eating another huge meal. The task of calibration grew ever more exacting as Smithey continued to tune Vamas’s instruments to well above first order accuracy. Vamas laid off a base line to an accuracy of 1 part in 35,000, and reduced the triangle closure to less than one second. In another three days Vamas was ready. Smithey turned on the multitude of tiny recording devices.

Smithey started his work, lean and weak, but clear-eyed and vigorous. The puffiness had already disappeared from around the eyes, and the friendly crinkles began to appear at the corners. He and Vamas moved off into a wide-ranging, zig-zag course calculated to cover an appreciable portion of the planet’s surface in a year’s time.

In three months he had completed more than one-quarter of the globe. He and Vamas swiftly crossed plains and low-flung mountains and high-lying plateaus. Sometimes they worked a few yards apart, sometimes miles. Smithey always set Vamas to move at a speed slightly greater than his own, and then he tried to keep up. It was a constant race, and Smithey did not mind that his friend always won. Smithey’s body turned to granite and piano wire. He worked from just prior to sun-up to shortly after dusk, then he fell into a deep dreamless sleep. He ate incredible quantities of food, living in part off the land, and every night—even in the rain—he slept outdoors. It was a good life, hard enough to keep him from thinking, except once in the fourth month when the routine was interrupted.

Vamas was at the other end of a twelve-mile leg. Smithey stood at the top of a gentle hill, sighting through the transit at the level rod. The recorder in the helmet took up the data, and Smithey turned to go down the far side of the hill. He saw the scenery at the foot of the hill. A creek meandering through a meadow, sloping banks lined with soft-waving trees, a sprinkling of purple flowers in the yellowish grass, and a small scimitar-shaped lake looking black under the ruffling touch of the wind. A hot wave of memories washed over Smithey. He staggered and tried to tear his eyes away from the scene. It was the same as that scene of long ago, so long ago on another
planet, another planet, an earlier time, yet so very vivid.

Dan and Miriam Smithey went for a stroll, as newlyweds will, and several other members of the Coordination Section of the Extraterrestrial Information Administration went with them. It was a care-free group, out to stretch their legs in the few hours remaining before the ship lifted again. A native encampment was nearby, and it seemed a good opportunity to watch the natives without risk of violating the Administration’s strict hands-off policy. The group walked to the top of a gentle hill and looked down. There was a creek meandering through a meadow, the banks lined with soft-waving trees. There was a sprinkling of purple flowers in the yellowish grass, and small scimitar-shaped lake looked black under the touch of the wind. The camp of the natives stood in the shade of the trees.

"Beautiful," said Miriam.

"It certainly is," said Smithey, and he put his arm around his wife’s waist. "You’ll like this life once you get used to it."

"C’mon," said one of the others. "No necking in the open. You may give the natives ideas, and we can’t have that now, can we?"

Dan and Miriam Smithey both laughed and snuggled for a mo-

ment and then stood apart, secure in their strength in each other. It was Miriam who saw the tiny splash at the edge of the lake, and who heard the strange mewing cry. She started to walk down, peering at the spot, while the others who had not heard looked the other way toward the camp. Miriam saw the child struggling in the water, uttering its high-pitched whine, swiftly growing weaker, and she ran down the hill to the lake.

The natives heard too, and streamed toward the lake. Smithey and his friends, wondering where the natives were going, saw too late that Miriam was already there. She waded into the water, pulled out the child, and plopped it into the arms of the first native to arrive. Smithey started to run down to her, but the others held him.

The native dropped the child and pressed a pointed wooden stick through its body, pulled out the stick and pushed it through again and again. Miriam screamed, and Smithey struggled to break away and go to her. Several others joined to hold him.

The natives surrounded Miriam, and being careful not to touch her, pushed their sticks in, over and over. There were five men on Smithey, and it was barely enough to hold him. When
the natives were through with Miriam they turned to the one who had touched the child. He died quietly. Then it was over.

Smithey clawed the ground, biting it, digging it. One of the men pumped a sedative into him, then another, and he passed into a staring coma. It was a week before they could be certain he heard them when they explained: to these natives the touch of a stranger contaminated the body, and the contamination spread to the soul unless the soul was immediately released.

Vamas, homing on the control belt in the absence of specific instructions, came upon Smithey writhing on the ground, biting it, digging it. Vamas stood by like a worried pup, followed closely as Smithey’s motions carried him slowly down the slope. Near the bottom Smithey brought himself under control. He sat up, shuddering, took off the helmet and wiped the sweat from his face. He fingered the belt, and Vamas came close. Smithey placed a hand on the dull steel side and said to Vamas, “It was so quick I wasn’t prepared for it. The same scene, identical.” He pulled himself to his feet and patted the steel. “S’all right, old boy. That won’t happen again in this lifetime, at least I hope not. Let’s get back to work.” And he swatted Vamas familiarly as it turned on its tracks to lay out the next leg.

It was good country. There was ample game, grass eaters mostly, so Smithey ate huge quantities of fresh meat. He stepped up an already strenuous pace in order to keep the image of Miriam deep in his mind where he could not see clearly. When Vamas ranged far from him Smithey covered ground with a distance-eating trot, and there were days when he ran all day. When Vamas and he traveled together, Smithey mounted to the top, and disdaining the seat, rode standing up at breakneck speeds, knees bent, body swaying, a wild and beautiful sight. He was deeply tanned, and his normally brown hair was long and flowing and bleached white by the sun.

Where there were grass eaters, there were carnivores, and Smithey kept alert. Once a shaggy, clawed creature had charged him, and he had had to kill it to save himself. The next time he was not as lucky.

He and Vamas were in a great river valley. The bottom land was black and rich and thick with vegetation, and the once-mighty river had now become a winding stream a hundred yards wide. Smithey noticed a village near a bend in the stream and decided to pass to the south of it. There was no pressing need to
avoid it, but Smithey felt that avoidance was easier than explaining the data that would appear on Vamas's recorders, or explaining why he had shut down the recorders.

Vamas and Smithey were fifty yards apart, racing through the low underbrush. Smithey swept past a low bush and ran right through the center of a group of cubs. The little animals scattered with yelps of alarm. The female, returning to the site as she heard approaching danger, arrived just as Smithey disturbed the cubs. With a low growl, she sprang at Smithey's throat.

He had no time to draw his pistol. He twisted and rolled away from her, but a claw touched him on the shoulder and drew blood. He continued rolling as he fell. She turned and sprang again. He pulled his pistol and the slug met her in midair and blew off the front portion of her chest. The animal was dead when she landed on Smithey, but the reflex action of the hind legs drove the claws deep into his legs and then downward toward his ankles. Twice the hind legs plunged, and then she lay still.

Smithey threw her to one side and sat up and looked at the blood spurting from his legs. He placed a hand between his thighs and pressed his legs against it to reduce the blood flow to his legs. With the other hand he called Vamas to him and guided the grasper bars. Vamas picked him up and gently placed him inside the cabin. Smithey sat on the floor with his legs stretched out in front of him. First he gulped several pills, then he probed down into the wounds to locate the ends of the arteries. He tapped them from the top, and then spread the inside walls of the wounds with the wound adhesive, pressing the edges back together as he worked. One of the longer cuts did not come out right; there was too much slack on one side when he reached the end; he went back and did it over again. It was slippery work, and fast as he was it took him half an hour. Finally he inserted the needle into his arm and started the plasma flowing. Only then did he allow himself to faint.

He was unconscious for ten minutes, and when he awoke his legs were beginning to stiffen. He hoisted himself to the seat atop Vamos and looked around. There would be no surveying for a few days, and Smithey did not like the thought of being inactive and sober. Then he remembered the village to the north. He considered. There might be enough to see at the village to keep his mind occupied, but there was a danger, too. The Administration was serious about
its hands-off policy, and it would not take much for it to decide that he had meddled. There was no way to conceal it, either. There was a little matter of his oral report, given while sensitive instruments measured his respiration, pulse, blood pressure, and skin condition. Smity sympathized with the use of the instruments, for they added priceless information as to how a human being reacted emotionally to situations on alien planets. But their scientific value did not at all detract from their efficiency as a lie detector. Vamas’s recording banks would be off, and that would have to be explained. A period of convalescence was certainly an adequate explanation, but still ... The thought of being alone and inactive came to the front of his mind, and it was decided. Vamas headed for the village.

They approached from the south. The uncultivated plain reached to within fifty yards of the back of a row of houses. A grassy strip separated the houses and the plain. A gravel road began at the strip and entered the village. Vamas headed for it.

They were seen as soon as they emerged from the low brush; Smity noted several heads at the back openings of the houses. As Vamas came near the gravel road, several natives appeared on foot, carrying in a casual manner what seemed to be cocked cross bows. Smity recognized the casualness; he himself had it in his readiness to roll off the seat into the protection of the cockpit. At the edge of the grassy strip Vamas stopped, and Smity sat motionless, too wise to make any gesture of friendliness until he knew how these people would interpret it. The natives stopped and stared. After almost a minute, one of them came slowly forward. Smity wanted to smile encouragement, but did not; it might be insulting. He noted that the cross bows were now held in a slightly more elevated position, the better to cover the man coming toward him. Smity did not move.

The man stopped and inspected Smity and Vamas, then laid the cross bow on the ground and held up both hands to show they were empty. This was what Smity had waited for, and he held up both his empty hands. The man nodded and smiled, and waved Smity to follow him into the village.

At the center of the village was an open grassy area planted with shrubs, with a brick-lined pool of cold water in the center. Ceramic mugs around the edge of the pool indicated that it was the village drinking place. The area was also the village meeting
place, for men, women, and children began to gather. Nothing was said; the gathering was silent. When the people were all there, an old man who had been one of the first to arrive stepped up to Vamas and began to speak in a guttural dialect. Smithey understood the basis of the language; his preparations for his work on the planet had included that much. He could barely get the drift of what the old man was saying, but it was certainly some kind of welcoming speech. These people had known of his presence on the planet, they had been informed that he did no harm and kept to himself, and they welcomed the friendly visitor.

Smithey replied as best he could, but they could not fully understand him until he painfully hoisted himself into a position where they could see his lacerated legs. Then they understood, and there was a sympathetic rubbing of legs and a sorrowful shaking of heads and the repetition of a word that sounded like gunder. One man stepped forward and showed Smithey a long scar on one of his own arms. They recognized the wounds, and knew the animal that had caused them. The old man talked again, and eventually made it clear to Smithey that they knew he had come to them to stay while he healed, and he was welcome. The old man dipped a cup of water and handed it to Smithey along with a piece of fruit. It was a ceremonial offering, and Smithey ate and drank all of it, hoping it was proper for him not to leave any. When he finished the crowd dispersed. The old man waved Smithey to follow him and led him to a house and pointed to the door. Carefully, Smithey explained that he would stay where he was, pointing to the bunk in Vamas. No indignation appeared on the old man’s face. Instead he smiled and led Smithey back to the square and pointed to a site where Vamas could park. Then he went off. The man with the long scar returned. He climbed up on Vamas and sat down in front of Smithey and gently arranged Smithey’s legs so there was no muscular tension in them. Then he began massaging the legs, carefully probing into the muscles with the fingertips, working softly from the inner and outer thigh at the same time. Smithey felt embarrassed at having a stranger massage his legs, but the embarrassment passed when the legs began to feel better. The man smiled as he felt Smithey relax, and Smithey smiled back. It was an odd kind of massage that seemed to draw the soreness from the muscles without disturbing the incisions.
The man finished and tapped Smithey on the shoulder and then left without saying a word.

The next two days passed swiftly for Smithey, despite the pain. There was no infection, his pills saw to that, but he refused to take any soporifics. He sat on Vamas and painfully did the things that had to be done. His ordeal was made easier by the villagers. About every three hours one of them came and massaged his legs. They all seemed to have the same pain-relieving touch, and they all smiled warmly at Smithey as they worked. Others took turns coming to talk to him, putting up with the frustrations of the language barrier, filling in the gaps with gestures. They were a gentle, friendly people. Smithey talked and gestured and watched from his position in the center of the village square.

The village represented a strange mixture of a hunting community and an agricultural community. To the north of the village were fields where tubers and grains were cultivated. A few corrals contained some food animals. But the bulk of the meat was brought in by hunters. The men went out into the forests and plains and hunted wild animals. Yet the community could support artisans, mostly ceramicists. These men made the housewares and the few metal implements in evidence. They also made the brick from which the houses were built, square, kiln-baked brick with a hollow core. Clothes were made from thin strips of leather.

Government was loose. Someone acted as chief until he wore out of it. Since there were no special privileges and no prestige associated with the position, it was not sought after. Families shared food and goods with each other, and custom controlled such events as birth, death, marriage, and childbirth. There was nothing in the culture of the village that was particularly alien to Smithey's background. They were a gentle, fragile people, slim of shoulder compared to Smithey's great breadth.

By the third day the soreness in Smithey's legs had eased, and he was doing well; the many massages had produced a remarkably speedy recovery. In the afternoon he stood up for a few moments. He twisted his torso and stretched his arms, and it felt good to pull the muscles. He did not sleep well that night. He was no longer exhausted from the effects of the wounds, and he had not had enough exercise. Images of Miriam began nagging at the corners of his mind, thrusting their way up into his consciousness. He fought against them but they persisted.
He got up and forced himself to walk a few steps around the outside of Vamas in the darkness. His legs hurt, but he welcomed the pain. He went back to bed and dozed, knowing he would soon have to be on his way. He tossed in his sleep and gritted his teeth against the sound of a woman’s scream. The sound left him limp, and he awoke again and sat up, still hearing the echoes of the scream. It was so real he pulled himself to the top of Vamas, and listened. At the far end of the village there was the sound of voices, some talking, some calling. Lamps appeared, and a small crowd gathered, and then a woman’s scream sounded again, piercing, probing into the blocked portion of Smithey’s mind. He prepared to move Vamas down to the disturbance to see what was happening, but the crowd began to disperse, the lamps went out, and there were no further sounds. He went back to his bunk and dozed until dawn.

He ate breakfast before the sun had cleared the horizon, and then he went out and tried walking around Vamas again. His legs seemed much better. He could feel that the more he worked his legs, the more they would loosen. Smithey made up his mind to leave the village that day. He would continue the survey slowly, gathering speed over the next weeks or two.

An air of suspense filled the village. People walked quickly from one house to another, and small groups gathered in the streets. As the sun slowly climbed higher, the tension grew. Smithey completed his check-out of Vamas, and hobbled to a group of villagers who were talking excitedly. They took little notice of Smithey, and he had to place a hand on the shoulder of one of them to command his complete attention. Smithey haltingly asked what was going on. The entire group then began to explain to him, all talking at once, and Smithey could understand none of it. He laughingly waved them quiet and signaled to one of them to explain. In time, and with many interruptions from the others, the story emerged.

Last night a fourteen-year-old boy had walked in his sleep. He had gone to the roof, still in his sleep, and his mother had followed, expecting him to awake at any moment. The boy had walked perilously close to the edge of the roof, and his mother—foolish creature—had pulled him to safety. Imagine? A person interfering in the life of an unmarried adult? Stepping in to change the course of events? She had been seen, and some of the punishment had been administered.
right then and there. But the rest of it was to come this morning, right now in fact.

Smithey tried to tell them he was leaving. They understood, but they were preoccupied. They all left to watch the punishment, for this was a rare event. Smithey shook his head, but he knew it was none of his affair. He knew enough of their customs to know he would do no harm by leaving now without saying anything more. He turned and walked south, out of the village to pick up his survey. He left the gravel road and crossed the grassy strip that separated the village from the plain. And it was at the edge of the plain that he heard the woman again, just as he had last night. It struck deep into his mind and opened up all the old memories again.

Smithey stopped walking, and his knees slowly sagged. He fought the overwhelming tide of thought on his knees in the grass, hearing the sounds, knowing them for what they were, but unable to separate them from the other screams stored at the bottom of his mind. And as he fought with himself his hands strayed to the belt and unknowingly began to play there. Behind him Vamas whirled and moved back into the gravel road and up toward the other end. Even faster it moved, spraying gravel rearward from the fury of its acceleration. It was still accelerating when it hit the tight group of people at the other end of the village. It changed course and plowed through a wall of a house and back out into the street and through lines of fleeing people. It settled into a tight criss-cross path that swept every yard of the village at enormous speed, its tracks ripping into brick and dirt, its grasper bars tearing at everything upright in the range of its ultra-violet and infrared sensors. Back and forth over the wreckage of the houses it spun, leveling the village so that no stone or brick stood higher than the surrounding plain, and nothing moved in the streets or near them.

When the quiet came, Smithey won his battle with himself. His hands dropped from the belt as unconsciously as they had sought it. He shook his head, and slowly and painfully climbed to his feet. Vamas homed to him, and he climbed aboard and rode to the south, not looking back. "Nice people," he said to Vamas. "I hope they don't hurt that woman too much. Wish I could have thanked them properly for those massages, but I can't stand the sound of a woman screaming.

He turned on Vamas's recording banks and they got to work.

THE END
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BEGINNING this month, something "Amazing" has happened: I've been given room to EXPA N D. So before I go into my reviews, I have the space to tell you about some recent developments in the S-F world that seem to fall in my department, developments I am sure will be of interest to all fans who take pride in this growing field.

Periodicals—That ultra-conservative magazine, the National Review, has seen fit not only to review a few S-F books, but to precede the review by an article which was most sympathetic to science fiction as literature. S-F seems a strange bedfellow for such a right-wing magazine, but plaudits are welcome from all over.

Television—Congratulations to Rod Sterling for his consistently fine series "Twilight Zone" on Channel 2. Using science fiction and supernatural backgrounds, he has fashioned superior dramas for which he won one of TV's top awards. An outstanding example of his work was the program about a cowboy who, at the moment of his lynching, is transported to New York eighty years later.

Records—The disc industry has also jumped onto the S-F bandwagon with children's records. If you have a younger brother or sister who has a hankering for space, these might be just the thing. The companies responsible for this are Golden, Folkways, Lion, Victor and Vox. The range of material is enormous—from a fairy tale of two tiny men from other worlds who visit a toy store on Earth, to interviews with top rocketeers and the actual documented sounds of ballistic missiles taking off. The latter, called Rockets, Missiles and Space Travel was written and directed by Willy Ley.

Music—Undoubtedly, the greatest recognition of the serious
possibilities of science fiction comes from Stockholm, Sweden, where an opera about the end of the world sells out regularly. This does not occur at some offbeat experimental theater, however, but at the Royal Opera House. What greater accolade could be bestowed on S-F, hitherto the black sheep of literature! The opera is based on a volume of space poems by the Swedish writer, Harry Martinson. The music for the two-actor is by Karl-Birger Blomdahl. It is called Aniara (the name of the spaceship involved) and subtitled "A revue of mankind in space-time." The work is a sharp rebuke to man and civilization as we know it. The entire action takes place on the Aniara which is carrying emigrants from Earth to Mars, a planet not yet ravaged by man-made destruction. However, the steering apparatus is damaged and the ship won't be able to reach Mars or return to Earth. It can only go on as it is, a bit of life in the vastness of space.

The most unusual character in the opera is Mima, an electronic brain, who has acquired a soul and a conscience. Blomdahl has given her a very individual mode of expression on stereophonic tape with a great variety of sonorities and rhythms.

Martinson's book of poems, which form the base of the opera, is a bestseller in Sweden and will soon be translated into English. The opera, too, will soon have an English version as well as a German one. The Hamburg Opera will present it, followed by the Zurich Opera. The Stockholm production will soon be seen in London. Even our own Metropolitan has shown signs of interest. Werner Janssen, an American conductor, has already recorded the complete Swedish version, and when it becomes available in the U.S., I hope to describe this most remarkable accomplishment to you more fully.


Brian Aldiss' new book is enjoyable entertainment. Don't search the pages for scientific complexities or a detailed picture of life in the future. What he gives us is just a rousing good story.

Earth had become a subject nation under the rule of the Nul, enormous three-armed mammoths from the planet, Partussy. At this time, the inhabited galaxy was so vast that the Partussians were unable to inspect personally all the planets they controlled. This gave the Partussian-appointed Commissioners a free rein in the administration and government of the subject planets. Cruelty, graft and cor-
ruption were the rule of the day, until a disgraced civil servant managed to get word of these doings back to the home planet. A Councilor was sent from Partussy to investigate the charges.

This is the setting for the author's tale of intrigue—the Partussian Earth Commissioner trying to hide his guilt, the Councilor trying to sniff it out, and the Terran guerrilas trying to unearth proof to help convince the Councilor of their plight. Caught between these factions is Gary Towler, an Earthman who is forced to interpret for the Nul. How he grows in stature to meet the trying circumstances into which he has been thrust, provides the real meat of the novel.

On the other side of this Ace Double Book is a soft cover reprint of Manly Wade Wellman's *The Dark Destroyers* which I reviewed in this column previously.

**Lords of Atlantis. By Wallace West. 220 pp. Avalon Books. $2.95.**

This is, without doubt, one of the most annoying books this department has had to deal with in a long time. All the character and place names are ones which we associate with grand deeds and exciting times—Zeus, Aphrodite, Hermes, Heracles, Apollo, Medusa, Jason etc. All that was great in Greek history and mythology is reincarnated on these pages, but in name only. Take away the label and the setting, and all that remains is a dull and pedestrian tale. If there is any saving grace in the author's effort, it is the few touches of humor that Hermes, a journalist, manages to slip in. But these are the only oases in what is basically a very dry desert.


Author Dickson takes us on a long upward climb with him and his hero, Donal Graeme, from the planet Dorsai. In the course of the novel, Graeme goes from an eighteen year old boy just out of military school to become the most powerful man in the galaxy. In outline this sounds like too much ground to cover, and it is a tribute to Mr. Dickson's craftsmanship that he manages to make it both convincing and interesting. Yet, it is not simply a one character novel with all the other people no more than cardboard stage props. There are at least a half dozen memorable characters from as many different worlds. Through them, the reader gets a picture of what makes that far-flung universe workable. Dickson has invented a very ingenious economic system to keep things balanced. What he has not described quite
so well is the strange hidden power that makes his hero’s meteoric rise possible. It is a kind of intuitive power that “no living being could explain,” but further than this Mr. Dickson does not care to go. Nevertheless, I can respect this vagueness, maddening though it may be, because the author has recognized his limitations and has not attempted to go beyond them. And because he has written such a first-rate action story, I can even forgive him the hack work that appears on the other side of this Ace Double Book called *Time to Teleport*. Fortunately, it is a very short novel.

To round off the month we have three anthologies. They differ from each other as much as can be in content, but they all can boast of the same high quality.


Poe’s first collection of stories was published in Philadelphia in 1840. This Dolphin edition is a reprint of those stories. A lot has happened in the one hundred and twenty years since they first appeared, but they are by no means old-fashioned or hard to read. Though it is true that Poe can be considered the father of our modern horror story, this label gives the erroneous impression that his work is dated. Nothing could be farther from the truth. His fantastic stories still have a sense of terror that can make the modern heart beat considerably faster.


This excellent collection provides a wonderful contrast to the Poe, for although the title may sound grim, the stories are not. They have a whimsical and delightful veneer over their mystery. Included are such favorite authors as H. G. Wells, Jack London, John Collier, Ted Sturgeon, and Ray Bradbury.


Again, a fine contrast to the other two collections. Here are five long tales of the “real” world as seen through Pohl’s satiric magnifier. Very few of our sacred institutions are left standing after the author lets loose his barrage. Nothing is safe while he has a typewriter and paper—politics, advertising, the mass media, war, business. You name it and he’s got it in his sights and from there imprints it indelibly on your memories.
Dear Editor:

Why should I comment on the July Amazing? There hasn't been a good argument in "... Or So You Say" for years. I'm going to anyway. Please, somebody, disagree with me.

The reason for illos is to show something worth being shown. If you don't, and nobody but Finlay does inside though your covers are okay, skip the illos. You don't need to be tied to one format.

"... And All The Stars A Stage" was a failure in spite of the sense of power in the last installment. It tried too much for a two part serial and wound up choppy. The author never makes clear the theme that he tries to bring out in the last chapter. He starts out painting a picture of a matriarchy, a society much overused in sf today. He stops before he has more than started a Heinlein-like description of a training program. Then he jumps to an end of the world theme. Then comes a takeoff against mobs a la "One in 300" and countless others. Then a Chad Oliver short story of alien contact.

As I said before the last parts are at least treated fully and no doubt the author intended the quick changes to give a sense of vastness, which they would have done had they been twice as long.

As for the last "point" made: that there is a goal to life and that all is not futile, it is so written but I am not convinced. At least not by the story. Worth
printing for entertainment and for a slight sense of wonder, but not for continuity necessary for a novel nor for the meaning that supposedly lies within.

On the opposite extreme a short story of almost no plot or entertainment value is the “meaning” bit of the magazine. It won’t change my way of life... but it set me thinking. Can man make use of a second chance? I don’t know. James Barrie came closer to convincing me of the point. You should have reprinted “Dear Brutus” in place of “Time Enough”. Lacking the copyright to that, Knight was worthwhile.

“Transient” has aroused a lot of praise and howls but very little comment except on the sex, a very unimportant part. This is understandable. After a classic like that what can you say.

Dear Mr. Taylor, are you trying to make us completists feel bad. Completism allows constructive informed and beneficial criticism. It is not selfish, it aids the medium as a whole.

Frederick Norwood
111 Upperline
Franklin, La.

- Somebody ought to find something here to argue about. As for us, we’ll argue about the Blish novel, which we thought was convincing and meaningful.

Otherwise we would not have chosen it for Amazing.

Dear Editor:

Though I do not consider myself a newcomer to science fiction, I regret to admit that I am a mere novice to the magazine field. But that is all past as of the June issue of Amazing.

I have never been a particular fan of Mr. Robert Bloch, and his story “The Bald-Headed Mirage” does not change my attitude. You know more about the business than I, but to my way of thinking, it was at least 70% fantasy. I have nothing against fantasy (in fact I now buy Fantastic regularly,) but I thought that Amazing was strictly sf. By your letter column in Fantastic it seems that you are having a hard time finding good fantasy for that magazine, therefore how come the above mentioned story was in Amazing?

In the same issue “Step IV” was the worst “story” I have read in quite some time. I am no puritan, but I do object to such degrading of sex as in that story. I realize that sex is essential to some stories, and it is usually extremely well handled, but certainly not in this case. I am sure many of your other readers feel likewise.

So much for my dislikes. The
remainder of the issue was fine with me, especially the begin-
ing of the Blish novel. I sincerely hope he gets another Hugo award for this effort. My only gripe is that the title is being changed from the so de-
scriptive “... And All The Stars A Stage” to the cut and
dried “Crab Nebula”.
Anthony Ryan
2024 Bristol Ave.
Stockton, Calif.

- As we all know, the line between sf and fantasy is hard
to draw. Our feelings were the reverse of yours.

Dear Editor:

It is appalling beyond measure, 15 years after WW II, par-
ticularly in light of the recent frightening world-wide swastika rash, J. F. Bone has chosen to
project his own brutish stupidities with his strenuously stress-
ed anti-semitism in an age he
established as ADE (After De-
struction of Earth) in his
“story” “Noble Redman”.

My innocent son brought this issue home and I had to explain
to him the dirty-streaked anti-
semitism in the story.

Considering the implied in-
tent of Bone’s story, it would
be just as simple to deduce he
feels we fought on the wrong side in WW II. We should have
fought on the side of those who
wanted to establish anti-semi-
tism and hate as a world reli-
gion.

Apologies from you will be
to no avail. The story, the very
first in your July issue, was
printed black on white, in your
magazine, obviously with your
approval.

So Abie Feldstein, the only
character in “Noble Redman”
with a genuine Earth name is a
greedy, avaricious, dishonest,
money-grubbing owner of the
only hockshop and gambling
joint, guarded by an army of
murderous quickshooting inter-
space goons, in Bone’s future
“ideal” world.

But there is a special kind ofone I want to pick with most sf writers. Why do all the brut-
ish stupidities and maniacal do-
ings now prevailing have to be
projected into the kind of fu-
ture they picture?

All sf writers should ask
themselves this fundamental
and simple question: Is the kind
of future they project in their
sick creations what they want
for their children? If not, then
why write in such a gleefully
irresponsible manner? If they
do, then why continue living?
There is absolutely no point to
it, if that is the only kind of
future they anticipate.

When Mary Shelley, the or-
ginator of modern sf, wrote
Frankenstein over 100 years ago,
she wrote it as a solemn warn-
ing we must be careful science
should not be used as an evil
force against humanity. In the
light of this warning, it would
seem to me the function of sf
writers today should be one of
inspirational guidance.

It would also seem to me, in
all due and humble respect to
Einstein, the father of the
Atomic Age, whose theoretical
findings gave such as Bone the
opportunity to write inspiring
literature, to remember Einstein
was a Jew. It must also be re-
membered Einstein came to feel
extremely unhappy his name
was associated with atomic
weapons.

I say sf stories can be written
with emphasis on hope, peace,
dignity, equality, liberty, de-
cency, honesty, freedom.

Why does the future have to
be peopled with brain-twisted
monsters springing from the
minds (?) of so many sf writ-
ers?

Obviously, neither most sf
writers, nor yourself, have heed-
ed the only sensible statement
made in your July issue, by Ar-
thur C. Clarke. I’ll quote the
essence in part: “But it seems
unlikely that this first contact
with our equals, or our peers,
will occur during the explora-
tion of the planets of this sun.
Perhaps that is just as well; it
may be some centuries yet be-
fore man is morally and psy-
chologically ready for such
encounters.”

If the sf writers these com-
ments are directed to, can create
only the distorted aberrations
crawling through their “stories”,
as far as I am concerned, we
can well do without their par-
ticular breed.

Mark Keats
484 Via Vista
Montebello, Calif.

• Permit us to answer your
letter in two parts: First, and
most important, we apologize
for permitting any sort of an
anti-semitic reference no matter
how inadvertent to creep into
AMAZING. It was an unforgivable
error, and should never have
happened. To say that this is
the first time that any such
thing has ever occurred in this
magazine is beside the point.
However, it is noteworthy to
mention that Abe Feldstein was
not a central character in this
story and was not, as a matter
of fact, nearly as unpleasant as
Cyril Wallingford; and the
story would not have been
changed in the slightest had Abe
Feldstein been called John Doe
or Joe Doakes.

What makes the mistake all
the more ridiculous is that the
Publisher of AMAZING is himself
Jewish, an active member of
the ADL and other organiza-

140

AMAZING STORIES
tions which are devoted to fighting all ignorant bigotry. We are very sorry that such a good story as Noble Redman had to be tainted in so unpleasant a manner.

The good will and sincerity of author J. F. Bone are well-known to those who work with him. That there was no antisemitic intention in his story is reaffirmed in his own letter printed below:

"I received a letter today about Noble Redman and learned what a tempest in a teapot has blown up about the ears of Abie Feldstein. Living out here in the far West and in a small town that hasn't been bothered by any such thing as prejudice, such a comment shocked me.

"To set the record straight: there was no malice aforethought and it never occurred to me that anyone might be disturbed by the name of a character in a light yarn created merely for amusement.

"I could and probably should have given this character some carefully denatured name like Rollo McOrsondorf or a more accurate one such as Tiberius Caesar—which would have had historical confirmation since Tiberius was a tight-fisted, tyrannical, goon-bossing blob of unpleasantness. But the awful thought occurs to me that had I used either alternative I would have been smitten hip and thigh by historians or by members of the composite nationalities that went into the makeup of Rollo. Well, live and learn! But I'm going to be careful what I call my next villain."

Returning to the second part of your letter Mr. Keats, we would like to disagree with your opinion that "all writers" create "sick futures." To look at the future with rose-colored glasses in a world where the H-bomb dominates, national leaders are largely irresponsible, and human nature shows few signs of losing its less attractive aspects—to be completely Pollyanna-ish about such a future would be a dereliction of the sf writer's duty. But many writers—to name any would be to slight the majority—do attempt to guide and inspire us about the future. One way they do so is to point out the evil effects that can result if the current inanities and evils of our culture persist. Another way is by holding out the ideals of hope and peace and dignity you mention. Can you think of a recent story that pleaded so eloquently for freedom that warned so eloquently about the perversion of science as, for example, Fritz Leiber's anti-war novel, The Night of the Long Knives?
Dear Editor:

I recently read and enjoyed the July issue of Amazing. All the stories and novels were exciting. “Noble Redman”, in my opinion, was the very best. The setting was excellent, also the great striving for the people of Earth to exist and once again become a cultured race. I hope that in the future you will print more stories by J. F. Bone.

If it is possible for you to print, in the future, a story having to do with a war between two solar systems, I would look forward to it.

Harry Karabinis
410 S. E. 7th Street
Gainesville, Florida

We'll do our best to stir one up.

Dear Editor:

In any text or course on short story writing, the prospective author is first made to recognize the difference between a short story and a vignette: “Nothing wrong with vignettes, it’s just that they’re not short stories, and are, therefore, unsaleable to magazines, which are looking for stories.” (Quotes my own, the remark is merely paraphrasing what is repeated over and over in the various writer’s magazines, yearbooks, and short story courses.)

O.K. So why are you upset-
ting the apple cart? I am referring, of course, to Bunch’s Stronghold series. The publication of the series could very well give the authors of short story writing courses some cases of indigestion. Interesting to read, but an entire book?

Dudley Glass III
341 So. Rexford Dr.
Beverly Hills, Calif.

Vignettes, perhaps, but with (in our opinion) an emotional wallop and strong moral overtones, not to mention reality of characterization. All of these elements are harder to come by than “plot.” Besides, people who write in writer’s magazines rarely write for a living.

Dear Editor:

I agree with readers Don Legere and David B. Williams. I buy your magazine for only one reason and that is to read science fiction. I’m not interested in articles on what percentage of iron is present in the moon’s crust, or other gems of science fact. I’d be happy if your issues were cover to cover with stories.

Let the people who want facts buy a newspaper.

P. F. Wolschleger
1 B.M. Corp. Sage Bldg.
McGuire AFB, N. J.

The way the world is going, you aren’t even sure of facts
there. Seriously, we think fact deserves some space, but not the kind of “gems” you refer to. What is your opinion of the type of fact article represented by del Rey’s Venus piece in this issue?

Dear Editor:

I want to congratulate you on your best issue I’ve seen so far. I am, of course, speaking of the July issue.

The conclusion of James Blish’s serial, “... And All The Stars A Stage”, took first place in my book. However, the ending struck me as a little too weak to justify the fast moving action of the first part.

I’d pick William F. Temple’s “‘L’ Is For Lash” for second place. This one interested me from the entertainment viewpoint mostly, and it was very well written. By the way, thanks for publishing a novelet in Amazing; I almost fainted.

I have a question: is there any set length for a story to be a novelet, short story, nevella, etc., or do you just call a story whatever comes to your mind? If there is a set length, please tell me.

Scott Nielsen
731 Brookridge Dr.
Webster Groves 19, Mo.

...There are set lengths with elastic borders. A short story runs between 2,000 and 7,500 words. Anything around 10,000 words is a novelet. From 15,000 to 25,000 words is a novella. Over that, we are in the realm of serials or novels.

Dear Editor:

You would like to hear the comments the fan type are muttering about that letter from Don Legere, would you? And so you shall. It’s hard to imagine a more active fan than myself unless they have figured out a way to put 30 hours in each day. Yet the points he brings up don’t stir up any violent reaction, and although it may be heretical for a fan to say so, I even agree with him. The sf magazines should present sf first and foremost.

He errs somewhat in considering that fandom is somehow separate from sf though. Generally the active fan is the true fanatic, with an intense love and loyalty to this kind of story. But the fan simply isn’t satisfied with reading it alone. As every editor knows they are the hard core of readers who stick with the magazine through good times and bad. Fans will stick with magazines even though they personally are ignored, as long as the material presented is good. But fans alone simply can’t keep those magazines on the stands, so the poor editor has to
find some way to steer along that in-between path, they usually can’t ignore either the fans or the more prevalent but less vocal group who only read the magazine but never write and tell them how it is liked.

Reading the magazine simply isn’t enough for the fan. He wants to write it too. That is where those much deplored fanzines come in, as a place where they can learn to write before selling the pros. Some have gone on to that, Ray Bradbury, Blob Bloch, Bob Silverberg and Marion Bradley come immediately to mind.

Might I make a suggestion? Forget about fan columns, and as a single concession to that group leave the letter column alone, since that is where we do most of our recruiting. Any readers who are interested in the weird and wonderful world of fandom, can feel free to write to me personally. As president of the International Science Fiction Correspondence Club, and a very active member of the National Fantasy Fan Federation I’ll be only too happy to give them full information and send along examples of various fan publications.

As for complaints about the “good old days” it is only natural since fans have such long memories for stories, and sometimes have simply enormous collections of those old magazines, comparison is easy.

Still when something comparable appears fans are quick to say so. Take note of the comments on Ward Moore’s memorable “Transient”. Nearly every favorable comment from a well known fan.

Most certainly you deserve praise, as well as complaints. After thirty years of reading this kind of story I still say the current Amazing is as good as any of them. I wouldn’t miss it for the world, and neither would lots of others, fan and non-fan alike. As Buz Busby so aptly points out in that last issue, you aren’t afraid of exploring new ideas.

What will the readers say when you are gone (unhappy thought)? Only that you were one of the best editors of all. Honestly some of the stories you have published have already earned you a special niche in the fannish hall of fame.

You take criticism well, how do you do with sheer admiration for the magazine you edit?

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