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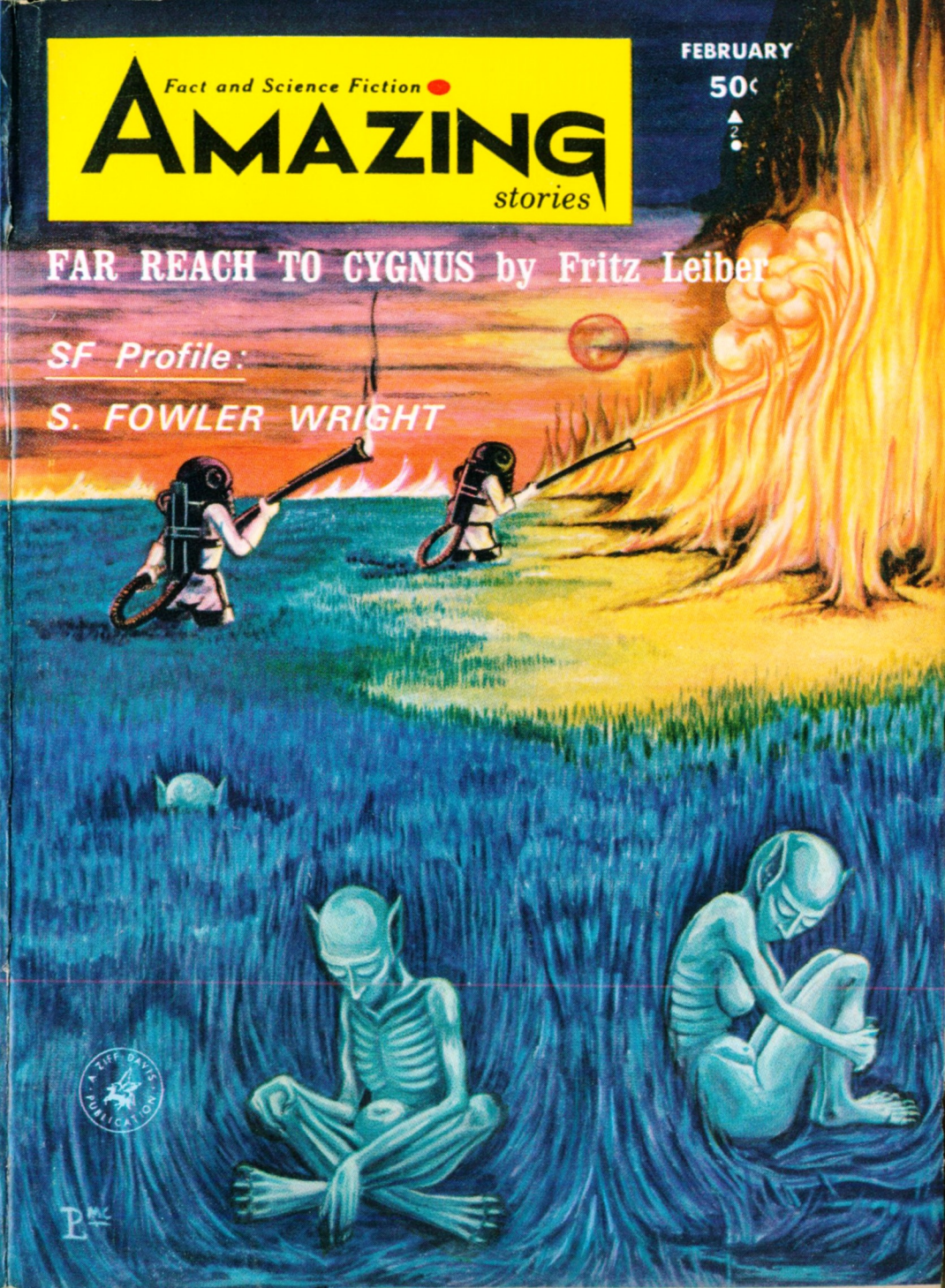

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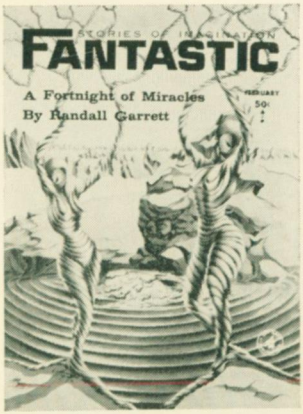

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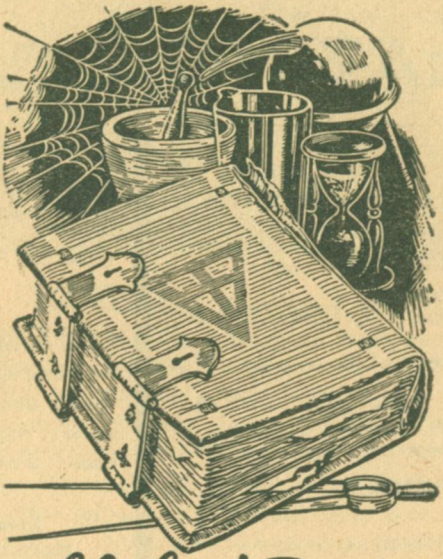

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Why haven't more "mainstream" writers recognized the rich emotional sources available in the "formal art" of science? This question, posed by science-fiction writer and critic Poul Anderson, becomes the starting point for his rambling-but-linked exploration of poetry, science, and fiction that serves as this issue's guest editorial. Without further ado, we turn this considerably expanded space over to Mr. A.:

CONVENTIONAL wisdom calls poetry at its best the highest form of literature. With this I have no quarrel. To be sure, if we go on to ask why it is so, what makes poetry the most exacting and most rewarding use of language, we could argue all night. That would be fun, but this is no time for me to write a book.

However, I might suggest that poetry has one outstanding characteristic. It puts the maximum amount of meaning into a given space. In those poems we generally concede to be the greatest ever written, hardly a word is wasted. This is obvious enough in a case like Japanese haiku. Even in translation, one can appreciate how much is said, and how much more implied, by something like Basho's

This road:
with no man traveling on it,
autumn darkness falls.

But I don't think there is any useless noise in Hamlet's soliloquy either, nor much in the entire play.

The words of a poem convey more than factual information. By their rhythms, by their interrelationships such as rhyme, by their associations and overtones, they come to mean enormously more than they ostensibly say. This is the source of poetic compactness.

My excuse for setting down these clichés is that modern com-

(*Continued on page 118*)

FAR REACH TO CYGNUS

By FRITZ LEIBER

Does the inner world lie inside the mind? Or out there in the world of things, nested on objects or fields? A good question, posed by Fritz Leiber's Dr. Dragonet, and solved perhaps, with a draught of his psionic elixir.

I SHIFTED my borrowed Hillman Minx into double low to help the brave but under-engined little dear scrabble up the last steep-shooting stretch of asphalted road to Dr. Hugo Dragonet's house, perched like an angular flying saucer about to take off from one of the highest pinnacles in the eastern end of the Santa Monica Mountains—a pinnacle overlooking Hollywood, downtown Los Angeles, Griffith Park, Forest Lawn Cemetery, and North Hollywood in the San Fernando Valley.

My heart was thudding like the engine of the Minx—not with overexertion, but excitement. Nineteen minutes ago the Enigmatic Engineer—of psychology and everything else, including

wealth-winning cinematic devices—had said to me, "Arthur, I've discovered a drug that is to mescalin and LSD as they are to weak coffee. Come up and try it." Then Dr. Dragonet's voice, dry as Rhine wine, had broken off and bang had gone down his phone.

Sirens silent, an LA police car and black-and-white truck hurtled past me by all of three inches, almost scaring my Minx into the ditch. At first I thought their target was the Greater Cosmic Fellowship, and I shuddered to think what *that* might let loose on the world—if one could believe Dr. Dragonet's assertions about the GCF, which would have frightened a Communist or Birchite pea-green alike.

But the two police vehicles shot past the gilded gate in the Fellowship's white wall. Drawing up in the turn-around by the Doctor's house, they spewed out bluecoats and also brown-britches, who poured into the shrubbery beyond the house.

My thoughts whizzed: *My phone tapped . . . the Doctor's brazen invitation . . . a raid by LA's unsleeping Narcotics Squad, which has no respect for great secret scientists or any other kind.*

My Minx wouldn't whizz. In the nearest view window of Dr. Dragonet's cantilevered dwelling, in front of the tightly drawn pale drapes, I made out the Doctor's black cat peering down at the police.

I thought: *I hope you're playing lookout, Impet, and doing a right job of it. Snarl the alarm, girl! Fizz, "Fuzz!"*

The last two cops carried great nets trailing from iron hoops five feet across. I wondered dismally how Dr. Dragonet's erect lank silver-topped form would look hanging acutely bent in the mesh of one of them. Very dignified and intensely menacing, I decided impartially.

UNAIDED by the redoubling of my heartbeat, my Minx painfully crawled to the foot of the steps leading up to the cantilevered terrace-porch. Setting the brakes with a swipe of one hand and snatching up with the other my innocent-looking cane —which I have taken to carrying ever since my adventures with Dr. Dragonet began to go deep— I jumped out and raced up the steep steps toward a cloud-flecked blue sky, blown clear of smog for once by a steady west wind, and—here I slowed a bit, I couldn't help it—toward a very pretty pair of slim black-stockinged legs swinging coquettishly from the edge of the terrace still well above me.

I'd never met legs like *that* at any previous session with Dr. Dragonet. But then I'd never

known much about his private affairs. In fact, I'd never thought of the old boy having any.

I resumed speed and soon, three steps from the top, I was looking straight into the dark eyes of the most delicious girl I've ever encountered. She had a slim pale face, humorous sensuous lips, and long black hair hanging sleekly yet unconfined. She was wearing black leotards and a black velvet cape which draped casually from her shoulders across the dull black flagstones of the terrace.

"Why the haste, my hearty?" she asked me tranquilly, sitting there and swinging her legs.

I pictured *her* in a net—or rather explaining to one of LA's hanging judges how she had been cajoled into smoking supermarijuana by a lewd and sinister pseudo-scientist old enough to be her grandfather, almost.

"I'm Arthur Gray," I informed her somewhat breathlessly, eager to create a sensation with my police raid news.

"And I'm Eduina Capasombrio."

Just then I saw it approaching her stealthily yet ripple-swift across the half-roofed, sunbright, shadow-dark terrace—and wondered for a split second if I'd already been somehow dosed, maybe by spray, with the Doctor's new drug. Then for another split instant I thought it was Impet, magnified by some illusion to thrice Impet's height at the shoulder and thirty times the housecat's mass. But *this* narrow black feline had eyes of blue fire and fangs with a steely glitter and its black pelt alternately shimmered and blurred as it moved.

I whipped my sword out of its cane-sheath and thrust it fast over Eduina's shoulder, at least an inch outside her close-fitting ear, just as the creature pounced.

The blade hit something and jarred, an electric shock traveled up my sword-arm, then everything went black before my eyes as if I were about to faint from excitement or fear.

I squinched my eyes and shook my head sharply. My power of sight came back. I stared around the terrace wildly, numb arm posing the sword for another lunge. But the black leopard was gone.

"Arthur, that was very uncool," Eduina informed me severely, "to go stab at a poor panting animal after the police and every idiot he-man with a gun have been hunting him across the hills for a week or more.

"Except coming so near my ear with your skimevitch," she added with a note of consolation. "That was cool, Arthur." She'd still not moved, though her legs were still swinging.

At once the memory came back to me, making sense of the police nets, of the black leopard that had escaped from a private zoo near Tarzana and been pacing back and forth across the bottom of the front page of the *LA Times* for ten days, far below the black jungle treetops of the second-coming headlines about the illegal Soviet bomb-test.

"It didn't look one bit worn and weary to me," I said, still scanning shiveringly for the beast, which had really reminded me of one I'd read about in a science-fiction story—a lordly creature of evil with electricity for blood. "It looked all spruced up, as if it had come to take you to dinner—to be the meat course."

Eduina lightly shook her head. "Probably just wanted sympathy—or his horoscope cast. I'd want my Cat Stars read in his situation."

"Are there Cat Stars?" I asked.

"There are Dog Stars, aren't there?" she responded wide-eyed. I didn't quite know how to take some of her remarks and reactions. Kids change so fast these days that a ten-year age-gap sometimes seems like ten generations. With Eduina, I felt like I was blundering in the dark. Delightful dark, though, even better than iced Irish coffee.

THERE came low shouts, two gunshots, then a thrashing of underbrush from the other side of the terrace. I gave Eduina my free hand as she scrambled up. We ran across and looked down from the unrailed edge.

Twenty feet below, the police were tramping back to their cars. Two of them carried, in a double-over net between them, a sad sweaty-looking black leopard. Its fur was dusty too, but its chest was heaving and I could see no sign of blood. Evidently my sword, if it had ever really hit that leopard, had done no great damage and the police gunshots had been only for scare-effect. The Los Angeles police are good efficient guys, really—the amateurs wouldn't have been satisfied until they'd blown the creature to bits.

I noticed that the police had left behind them in the shrubs a small black suitcase. Or perhaps someone else had dropped it there first.

Alone I wouldn't have been noticed, but girls like Eduina are stare-o-magnetic.

"We got him safe and sound, miss," one of them called up. "You can quit worrying now."

Although my attention was still wholly on the netted leopard, I was tempted to call back, "I do not think worrying is one of the young lady's skills," but just then the same cop called up,

"What's that weapon you got there, fellow?"

"A long shish-kebab skewer," I assured him, guiltily making sure my hand hid the silver-knobbed grip. Sword canes are decidedly illegal and although the LA police are often good guys, they are always sticklers. I was still studying the captured leopard, very doubtfully now.

There was a loud *hist!* behind us. I spun around. It was only Karl, the Doctor's sturdy butler and precision machinist, beckoning us from the porch door.

But I had already made up my mind. The black leopard the police had netted was not *my* black leopard and never had been.

Little Impet, peering around Karl's thick ankles, seemed to agree with me, for the black house-cat scanned about fiercely, then sprang back with a spitting *hiss* of her own.

I was glad myself we were leaving the terrace. Now that the sun was dropping out of sight and the west wind humming higher, the place had turned eerie.

Protectively—well, that was a bit of my reason—I shifted my free arm to Eduina's waist. Even through the velvet cape it felt remarkably slim and supple.

The big living room with its thick tight-drawn drapes was so dark I couldn't see anything clearly. I was annoyed at Karl for closing the door tightly behind us, then remembered what might be lurking outside and stopped feeling irked. Realizing other advantages of the darkness, I shifted my arm to the same position under Eduina's cloak. She didn't mind or maybe didn't notice. She was a very cool girl, truly.

THERE was a pale shape stretched above the center of the floor—on a low dark couch, I guessed. Or maybe floating there. Around it was a circle of eight motionless, weirdly hunched forms. I wondered if they were having drugged visions and perhaps drugged shape-changes, supposing the Doctor's experiment had already begun.

I started to ask, but Eduina breathed at my ear a *shh* that was almost a kiss, while from the pale shape there came a sweet monotonous voice saying:

"It's a blue blue planet, not from oceans, but from great prairies of blue grass reaching almost to the poles and dotted here and there with tiny lakes. Dipping closer, I can see herds of unicorns and tricorns cropping the blue savannas. Now, closer still, I see bands of slim elvish folk. Their naked skins are pale blue. They ride the unicorn, they pound a bluish grain to flour, they study the stars through telescopes with lenses of

water and mirrors of liquid mercury curved by force fields. They dance to pipes and sleep or they meditate alone under their fiery moon . . ."

For a moment I could *see* the blue scene hovering before my eyes—so sharply that I wondered if there could be visions contagious like diseases and delusions—although the edges of my mind and feelings were still busy with my rather loony guesses about a drug-orgy and with *my* black leopard, the deadly one . . . and with Eduina, of course.

As the sweet voice died away, the living room lights came up softly. I looked at the pale figure lying in the center of the room—on a low couch, as I'd guessed—and my heart jumped about a yard away from Eduina and hung there for several seconds.

The pale figure was a long girl in an umbelted white flannel dress that covered her from neck to pink toes. Her tranced face had the lines but not the fullness of that of a Greek goddess. Her long hair outspread was a pale golden sunburst.

The eight weirdly hunched forms dissolved into eight of the Doctor's angularly asymmetric but comfortably cushioned chairs with five superficially normal-looking occupants. The three chairs to my left were empty. The next two held grasshopper-thin restless Professor Seibold and, clerical collar indenting his jowls, plump Father Minturn—two highly intelligent men I'd met before at the Doctor's sessions on those occasions when he'd wanted a thorough materialistic scientist and a thoughtful Man of God among his observers.

Next to the priest reclined a very tall, very thin nun in black flowing habit and a visored and veiled wimple which completely concealed her features. Not so normal-looking, that one, I had to admit.

The figure beyond that—just to my right—made my heart sink: a handsome crophaired sun-tanned suavely muscled young man in rather close-fitting sports jacket, slacks, and suede shoes, all dazzling white; his gaze was bored yet sensuous, raptorial yet veiled—oh, everyboys knows Jay Astar, the newest and most successful Brando-surrogate and homegrown Mastroianni to hit stereo, cinema, and TV.

My jealous and pessimistic mind instantly decided that Eduina and the blonde had to be starlets who had come to this session along with "Jastar." Such offbeat beauties could only be *his* girls. My spirits sank.

Why would the Doctor have *him* here? But then the Doctor rather liked film folks, the old fool.

A LANK figure straightened briskly up from the only chair I couldn't see into, the one in front of me, and turned to face me with a supple unrigid military erectness. At times Dr. Hugo Dragonet looks remarkably like a Prussian or Czarist officer, or diplomat perhaps. His silvery hair was crewcut, his wrinkle-netted eyes gleamed with youth, the other lines of his long face were cynical-genial.

"Arthur!" he said, smiling warmly. Then the smile thinned a trifle. "Stop smooching my niece!"

I tried brazenly to hang onto her, but Eduina unhooked herself from my arm with a full turn that swirled her velvet cape away from her black-fitted body.

Dr. Dragonet's eyes twinkled. "Eduina, Mister Arthur Gray," he said formally. "Arthur, Senorita Eduina Capasombrio."

I bowed peevishly. My pessimistic mind—which at my birth had declared a cold war against my optimistic feelings—slightly redeployed its thoughts about Eduina: she wasn't the girl Jastar had brought, but the one he had come here to fascinate and lay claim to, probably had already done so. And the blonde too, of course. Who can win against stereo stars?

Dr. Dragonet might prove my ally, of course. I could even imagine him saying "Stop necking my niece," to Jastar too. But he was an old man, lost in his experiments and inventions.

Eduina went up to him. "Dear Uncle Hugo," she said softly. He bowed to her and as she pressed a kiss on his forehead, she looked sidewise at me with a peculiarly sly smile. By some chance his lips quirked at the same moment. Was Uncle Hugo really so old? Then she swirled down into the empty chair next his.

To fill the conversational pause, but mostly because I was really curious, I asked, "Was the other young woman actually seeing or clairvoying a scene on another planet? And is she under the influence of—" I hesitated.

"Of my new drug? Yes," he finished for me. "As to your first question, it's rather improbable she was getting anything interplanetary or interstellar. More likely something from her subconscious, or from the subconscious mind of one of us. Some forgotten fairytale, perhaps.

"However, there's this to be said for your suggestion," he went on. "Whenever I ask the young lady where her vision is coming from, she points toward the constellation Cygnus—the Swan or Northern Cross, as you know—whether it happens to be below or, as now, above the horizon, or night or day at the time. As far as I know, she has no knowledge of field astronomy. It's

a suggestive circumstance, though really nothing to build on."

I nodded. Quite restrained for Dr. Dragonet, I thought, remembering the black goggles with which he had let us glimpse the glow of mentality diffusing from the galaxy and with which he had (so he claimed!) discovered the Greater Cosmic Fellowship to be a secret outpost—peaceful, he hoped, he told us—of black giant centipedal Martians *—a good example of the stranger denizens of Hollywood, if you can believe the Doctor.

The memory gave me a start. I wondered if *my* black leopard could be some creature or projection of the Martians.

The priest and the professor were looking at me peculiarly. I realized I was still holding my naked swordcane. Karl silently handed me its sheath.

Eduina began chattily to tell her uncle about the eruption of police and the capture of the escaped leopard. I waited for her to finish, intending to add my theory—conviction, rather—that there had been two black leopards.

MEANWHILE the fair-haired girl sat up on the couch, resting her chin in her hand. Her eyes were open now, but her classic face was still dreamy. She wasn't so long after all—it had been that white dress.

Jay Astar looked at her loosely draped form with a cool appraisal I found infuriating.

The two other men in the circle had begun to talk about the Siberian explosion that had us on the brink of war. Professor Seibold was claiming it had been a giant underground atomic test-blast which had got out of control and vented in spite of all Soviet precautions and secrecy measures. Father Minturn supported the minority guess that it had been an enemy atomic rocket, aimed at Krasnoyarsk and overshooting north. A Chinese rocket, perhaps, or—who dared say?

Palm outthrust protestingly, Dr. Dragonet called briskly, "Ladies, gentlemen, enough of these trivia! Roxane!——bring the psionic elixir!"

I looked toward the girl in white as he called "Roxane!" but she didn't react . . . and then from the next room came a third young lady bearing a tray with crystal-gleaming goblets and two bottles. She too was slim, wearing a blue suit and wraparound blue sun-glasses which somehow reminded me of the blue planet I'd heard described. Really, the girl in white should have been wearing them.

The third girl had dark red hair bobbed rather long. Be-

*"*The Goggles of Dr. Dragonet*," FANTASTIC, July 1961*

neath the masking glasses her lips were curved in an impudent, knowing smile. She wore blue net stockings.

Again my heart did that delightful devastating business of jumping a yard away from Eduina, or this time as much as two.

The newcomer set the tray down on a high taboret beside Dr. Dragonet's chair. Smiling compassionately at me, the Doctor said, "Arthur! Let me introduce you to my nieces Mademoiselle Roxane Rougecheveu—" He indicated the redhead, who sketched a curtsy "—and to Frauline Blondine Haarlang—" The girl in white nodded vaguely "—who belong respectively to the French and German branches of the Dragonet family, through the maternal line, just as Senorita Capasombrio does to the Spanish.

"Oh, by the way, Blondine," he called to the girl in white, "if you see any more of the blue planet, don't hesitate to break in on us, no matter what we're discussing." She gave another vague nod.

The redhead sat down in the farther of the remaining chairs and I in the remaining one—in the exact spot where my heart still vacillated midway between Eduina and Roxane, which was a good thing for my physiological integrity. Bad to have one's anatomic and amatory hearts in different places.

Working with skilled rapidity, Dr. Dragonet poured a pale yellow wine into seven of the goblets, then using a pipette, added to each exactly three drops of a colorless fluid from a glass-stoppered crystal bottle.

Gradually all eyes, even the lazy ones of Jastar, became fixed on the Doctor and his speeding hands. As he worked, he began to speak, quite casually.

"One of life's most fascinating problems, which science refuses to tackle, or shrugs off as 'metaphysics,' is the hook-up between the mind and the world."

I thought, *Oh nuts, a lecture on philosophy—when I want to hear about blue planets and black leopards and golden elixirs.*

FLARING his nostrils at me, as if he'd caught my thoughts, the Doctor continued, "To put it simply, *where* in the brain—or elsewhere!—is the space of my—or your—consciousness? Where is that clearcut shining scene which each sighted man or woman sees outspread before him while he wakes, or shimmering strangely in dreams?" He tapped the silver-lawned side of his skull. "Is it inside here?" He swept five outstretched fingers in front of him. "Or is it . . . out there?"

I thought, *Say, maybe this ap-*

plies. Was my black leopard a living thing . . . out there? Or was it a projection from my mind?—or from someone else's mind! True, my sword had bent and my arm had been shocked. Yet the black leopard had had that glimmering appearance of a projection and the super-realness one associates with fever-visions rather than reality. And something had momentarily blacked out my vision, too.

Professor Seibold muttered to himself, intending to be overheard, I'm sure, "To try to measure pictures in the mind against the great world of matter, as if they were two maps which could be fitted to each other—naive!"

Dr. Dragonet caught it. He said, smiling, "When I was a child, I decided to be naive—which incidentally means 'natural'—forever. It's paid off—in fun and money too. Now to explore the problem." He lifted one finger. "First, is the space of consciousness *in* the brain? That would analyze down only to a pattern of firing neurons or lectric fields, not the vivid theater-like scene itself."

He held up two fingers. "Or is the space of consciousness in another set of dimensions altogether? But that means there are at least two worlds, the world of things and the inner one—which offends against science's Law of Parsimony: the need to find the simplest explanation possible, to avoid assuming one more factor than necessary."

"I go for simplicity myself," Jay Astar observed, that rough sonorous voice of his ringing out for the first time, but it was hard to tell whether he was talking about scientific assumptions, or styles of acting, or clothes maybe—or at any rate I told myself that. I glanced to see if Eduina or Roxane were hanging onto the words of the white-clad male love-god. They didn't seem to be.

Dr. Dragonet continued, "Actually the second explanation involves a gigantic offense against the Law of Parsimony, for if each conscious being has an inner world approximating even to a small degree the world of things, then we are assuming trillions upon trillions of separate worlds—a vast unnecessary multiplication of structures."

PROFESSOR Seibold snorted, "You're just hanging sense data on a pre-Kantian space-time framework."

"Do you dig this?" I whispered experimentally to Eduina. She nodded curtly without looking at me. From Roxane's direction I heard a very faint chuckle. I cursed myself and concentrated.

"Or—" Dr. Dragonet went on, three fingers in the air, his eyes gleaming over his pipette, to the top of which his thumb was

clamped to check its drip—"does the inner world lie out there in the world of things?—like paint on a house, or make-up on a woman's face, or wrappings of finest tissue on a box. De Broglie has said that each electron extends, however tenuously, to the ends of the universe. Why not the conscious mind? What if all our inner worlds lie out there, nested on objects and on fields, clothing with color and feeling the skeleton world of things?"

"More 200-year-old British metaphysics!" the professor jeered.

But, "Perhaps forming together one single great diversified communal mind, Doctor?" the tall veiled black nun across the circle from me observed in a harsh mechanic whisper which made me shiver. There was a faint dry rustling as she leaned forward. Jay Astar, sitting on her left, looked at her sharply.

Dr. Dragonet nodded. "Perhaps, Sister Marcia."

"The Mind of God," Father Minturn murmured on her right.

Dr. Dragonet frowned. "God—a word," he said harshly, "yet not altogether inacceptible. The communal mind would of course have within it a multitude of foci—our individualities. Not a Trinity, but almost an Infinity."

"Bits of mind strewn about," Eduina observed. "You make it sound like ectoplasm, Uncle Hugo." From my other side Roxane chuckled. The Doctor made a face at them.

Professor Seibold was angrily waving his hand. "I can see the stars," he asserted emphatically, but only for a moment mystifyingly. "How can bits of my consciousness lie that far out—hundreds and billions of light years away?"

The Doctor replied quietly, "Aristotle had an insight which we've neglected and derided: that vision goes out from the eye to the object and then returns to the eye. Perhaps consciousness operates that way, moving instantaneously or almost so, even though physical vision doesn't. Modern investigations suggest that psi- or esp-forces move at velocities at least far greater than light."

"But what I see in the stars happened hundreds and billions of years ago!" Professor Seibold rapped back. "The stars have moved since—they and the mind bits would not be congruent!"

"Most of the stars haven't moved far," the Doctor countered. "The dis-congruence would not be great and since we've hardly begun to log psi-observations we wouldn't have detected it just as the apparent movement of the stars with the seasons was indetectable to the ancients and medievals, so that they decided all the stars were set in one vast

crystal sphere at the outer limits of the cosmos."

"You talk of psi-forces and forces of consciousness," the thin professor hammered on. "If they're forces, why haven't we detected them, I ask you, sir?"

"They are too feeble for our instruments to pick up," the Doctor retorted. "Psi-forces may be basic, yet so weak under most terrestrial conditions as to be almost indiscoverable—just as the basic force of gravity itself might never be discovered in a feathery world of free fall. Besides, most of us haven't the right instruments. The gravito-electric and gravito-magnetic spectra exist in theory, but they've never been observed in practice—with the exception of Ehrenfels experiment and one other *."

"Hugo," I cut in. "Would it ever be possible for the parts of the inner world which lie in the world of things to . . . well . . . operate independently?" I was thinking of my black leopard.

"There we enter a more speculative realm," the Doctor said thoughtfully. "But yes, Arthur, some of my most recent trials of the elixir have indicated to me that under certain conditions the contents of the subconscious mind of a highly repressed, highly energized person—a person with powerful drives—might be projected into the world of things, there taking individualized form, possibly animal, like some of Jung's archetypes, and operating for a while independently, with powers to move about and help or harm."

"This is preposterous! I ask you what—" Professor Seibold burst out contentiously, but at that moment Blondine Haarlang began to speak from her central position on the low couch, her eyes again closed, her voice a pleasant yet imperious monotone:

"Great black and silver spaceships are orbiting now around the blue planet. Boats land from the spaceships and discharge beings in great helmets and protective suits—perhaps the air is poisonous to them. They are humanoid but I cannot see their faces. They begin to explore and to test the direction of the wind. The elvish folk hide from them in the deep blue grass."

ALTHOUGH the room was light now, I again had the illusion that the scene Blondine was describing was hovering between me and her. For a brief moment it was frighteningly realistic: I could see the heavy-suited trampers through the grass and I peered in vain to glimpse their faces. I asked myself if it were remotely conceiva-

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*"*The Goggles of Dr. Dragonet*"

ble that her consciousness, traveling some unknown superhighway, had gone out to a planet circling a star in the Northern Cross. On impulse I asked, "Where's the blue planet, Frauline Haarlang?"

Without opening her eyes, she pointed toward me, which was east—I know my directions in Dragonet's house—then raised her hand halfway overhead before she dropped it. That would be right for the Northern Cross at this time of summer.

"I think it's time we drank the elixir—before our speculations get too far out without its help," Dr. Dragonet said, grimacing apologetically at Professor Seibold. "Roxane, pass around the goblets!"

The professor frowned, grasping his goblet when it came as if it were a ceremonial mace. "I have further objections," he said, "but I'll reserve them."

I sniffed at mine, detecting no odor but that of Riesling. Some of the others sniffed too. I noted that Sister Marcia, the black nun, was holding her goblet close to her narrow chest in short black-gloved fingers.

When Roxane came to him, Dr. Dragonet waved her on. "The bartender should never drink," he quipped. "Besides, I have acquired a residual sensitivity from repeated doses."

He dropped his hand to the side of his chair and the lights very slowly began to dim. He said, "Cortisone is the best medical analogy I can find for my psychic or psionic elixir—which incidentally is extracted from the pineal glands of a strain of rhesus monkeys which have undergone certain stresses and been injected with various lesser drugs. Little has been discovered about the pineal's function in a century of research—but if the function is psionic, what orthodox researcher is going to discover that?—or go out on a limb about it if he does?" He shrugged.

"Cortisone makes tissues more permeable, so that healing substances can reach their targets more readily. It weakens the walls between cell and cell.

"My psionic elixir weakens the walls between the cells of the mind, between the conscious and the unconscious and all the other areas, many of them unmapped, unknown, unexplored.

"To an even greater degree it weakens the walls between mind and mind, between minds that are near and minds that are far, between minds that are almost alike and minds that are unutterably divergent. Indicating that we are not lonely little forts of mind, solitary "I"-machines, but instead we are points or rather foci in a great continuum of feeling."

THE room had darkened considerably from the Doctor's rheostat, but I could still see faces, most of them with gazes fixed on his sardonic-lined yet now almost sorcerous one. Between myself and the Doctor, Eduina: a humorous "cool" girl, yet ageless-seeming now, a sphinx. To my left Roxane, her smile made enigmatic by her blue wraparound glasses. To her left, Professor Seibold: suspicious, hostile, rigidly poised—yet I could see his chest move with his rapid breathing. Then Father Minturn: benign, calm, perhaps too calm. Then the inscrutable black-veiled Sister Marcia. Then Jay Astar, lazily smiling, another calm one—but perhaps his hand was shaking slightly, for now he casually steadied his goblet against his white-trousered knee. And so back around the circle to Dr. Dragonet. In the shadows behind him was a dark blocky form—Karl.

And in the center of the circle, Blondine. She faced me rather than the Doctor, but she was not looking directly at me, but somewhat over my head. And her gaze seemed to go far beyond, through the wall, out into space, perhaps to her blue planet.

My heart skipped a beat as a black shape leaped to the back of Father Seibold's chair. Impet. The black housecat silently settled down there behind the cleric's head, though I doubt he was aware of her presence. She directed her slit-eyed gaze at Sister Marcia.

I thought about what the Doctor had said about subconscious minds being projected in animal form, and I shivered at the idea while I tried to reject it. I wondered about the subconscious drives of those around me.

The Doctor said, "We will drink one by one, around the circle, clockwise. That way the effects will be more interesting, particularly to those who drink first. I will point each time to the person who is to drink and snap my fingers to tell them when."

The forefinger of his right hand aimed at me and then the mid-finger slipped off the thumb and struck the groove between bent ring-finger and palm with a solid *click*.

The gazes shifted to me. I felt flustered—and a little resentful that the Doctor had made me the first to take the plunge into the unknown. For the first time I wondered if this drug were safe, had been tested enough—or, contrariwise, if it were only three drops of water. I glanced around quickly—why the devil should the gathering shadows pick this time to remind me of the black leopard the police hadn't netted? My left hand touched my sword-cane by the side of my chair.

I was taking too long, I knew, making Eduina and Roxane think me timid.

Then I realized I had drained the goblet and was carefully setting it on the floor.

The Riesling's mild astringent sting was pleasant in my throat. There was no other taste.

LONG moments passed. I leaned back. I no longer worried about black leopards or what others thought of me. I was feeling relaxed and at home, as if some age-old stricture was being loosened. I wasn't even bothered that the drug was having no particular effect on me. Why did human beings go around tense and unhappy, thinking everything mattered so much? They missed the real juice of life.

I looked at Blondine, since that was easiest. The room was almost black now, but the Doctor must have switched a soft spotlight on her, perhaps to give us a common focal point, for her complexion glowed. I lost myself in her face. I'd always thought it was jewel-juggling or tiffany-flattery when a poet spoke of a girl having lips like rubies or rose-petals, cheeks like mother-of-pearl faintly shot with pink, eyes like sapphires, hair like a cloud of the finest gold wires. Now I realized that—funny!—it could be literally true.

Roxane chuckled. I was glad she appreciated my point.

"Do you notice any effects, Arthur?"

"The colors are richer," I heard myself tell Dr. Dragonet.

"Colors are richer," he repeated quietly. "In fully fifty percent of cases that is the first reaction of LSD or any of the mind-enlarging drugs, including my elixir. I suggest this is because they—and especially my elixir—open the mind of the drug-taker to the minds of those around him, so that he sees things not only through his own eyes, but also through those of others, which since we all see things and even colors differently, has an inevitable enriching effect. Incidentally, this would explain why mind-enlarging drugs have their greatest effect when taken in company, their least when taken alone."

Midway in this statement, he had clicked his fingers and I knew that Roxane had drunk. I agreed with what he said, in an idle sort of way, but continued to watch Blondine. Now it seemed that the light on her was moonlight—the Doctor has full-spectrum illumination in his house—for her lips had gone toward grape or amethyst, the mother-of-pearl or opal of her cheeks was faintly violet, the sapphire of her eyes more intense, the gold of her hair paler but with a note of turquoise or, no, jade. It might not be moonlight, but a

scene undersea, with Blondine a jewel-scaled mermaid.

"Roxane," I said, "there's more green in those wrap-around glasses than I'd have guessed."

Only then did I realize the implication of what I had said. Not that it much surprised me. Meanwhile there had come another resonant *click*: signal for Professor Seibold to drink.

"Oui," Roxane replied softly. "And you, *monsieur*, have an exalted vision of girls. Expensive too."

"Hugo," I observed, "you've got almost too much light on Blondine."

"Young man," Father Minturn answered for him, "the room is nearly pitch dark."

I NOTED that except for Blondine the room *was*, well, moderately dark. I continued to watch her face. Gradually a discordant, almost angry note came into it. Not anything obvious. She was still beautiful, but it was as if her face had been dissected by almost invisible cuts into its parts—forehead, eyes, nose, etc.—like a subtly cubistic painting. After a bit I began also to see, faintly, a red network beneath her skin and then, more faintly still, a silvery one: blood vessels and nerves.

It occurred to me that Professor Seibold was making *his* contribution to the image—and that if this was the way a materialist saw the world and pretty girls, I didn't want any more than the sample.

At the same time the image was getting a surreal appearance, suggestive of Piccaso, which puzzled me, since I hadn't thought the professor was consciously art-minded, only analytic.

I suppose there must have been another *click* a while back, though I hadn't heard it, for a palely glowing tone came into Blondine's face, soothing the discords, brushing them over with a moonlight like Roxane's but milkier, so that the face acquired an additional quality like that of a china statue. This must be coming from Father Minturn, the idealizer, the spiritualizer.

But the Picasso-look was stronger than ever. The image of Blondine was appearing to me both full-face and, at the same time, in complete profile.

Then I realized that Roxane and I were seeing her full face, while Seibold and Minturn, sitting a quarter way around the circle from us, were viewing her profile. It was as simple as that.

All the varied images still added up to a girl's face. The totality, though strange, was still beautiful.

There was still another *click*. This time I heard it and I watched Sister Marcia's goblet

creep up under her heavy black veil—which I still couldn't see through, although the light came up on her as I watched her, as it did on everything I watched.

There was an odd prolonged sipping or sucking sound, barely audible, and the goblet came out empty.

Just then Blondine began to speak again, a note of agitation rippling the sweet monotony.

"The helmeted invaders are firing the blue grass with flame-throwers! Towering red-yellow walls, smoke-topped, rush with the wind across the great savannas or creep against it. The elvish folk crouch unresisting in their grassy hollows, eyes shut, emaciated from privation or from intense thought."

I began to get a vision of that too—there were ghostly flames between us—but just then all my attention was engulfed by another change taking place in Blondine's hair and form. It was an image of her back—Sister Marcia sat across the circle from me—but it was an image which broke up the gold of her hair and the white of her dress into a checkerboard of large dots, like a very coarse-grained newspaper reproduction.

It was Blondine as seen through an insect's eyes, or possibly an arachnid's or chilopod's.

At the same time I found myself salivating and thinking, to my horror, that Blondine would be *good to eat.* The only reassuring thing about the impulse this thought gave me was that it seemed to be strictly inhibited.

I ASKED myself if Dr. Dragonet might conceivably have smuggled into our group one of the giant centipedal Martians from the Greater Cosmic Fellowship. I found this difficult to accept, as I had actually never seen one of the beasts myself and, to tell truth, half doubted all his stories about them. But if it were so, he was on closer terms with them than he'd ever told me—and of course the black-nun disguise a brilliant one. Mars—Sister Marcia—oh Good Lord!

Eduina's hand tugged gently at my elbow. I leaned toward her. She whispered in my ear, "Arthur I think you know that Uncle is an ardent de-segregationist. Just keep that in mind."

In my excitement I must have missed another *click,* for now I heard Jay Astar say lazily, "This'll be only my second drink today. Just another touch of wine and Doc's good old Elixir," and I saw him drain his goblet.

"Jastar and I had a session this morning," the Doctor explained casually, though with a hint of annoyance.

I felt a stab of jealousy that the stereo star should be deeper in the Doctor's secrets than I.

Eduina and I were still leaning together. Impulsively I whispered, "Has that big white ape from the underside of the Panhandle ever made a pass at you?"

"Dozens," she assured me impatiently, as though I should have known the answer to that one. "I brush him off as gently as I can, he's such a child. My heart's still mostly with the family—you know, Uncle Hugo."

"Child gorilla?" I asked, still whispering, of course. "Another of those poor panting leopards?"

She shrugged, then quirked me a quick smile.

At that happy (to me) moment, Blondine burst out more agitatedly with: "I've looked into the helmet of one of the destroyers! They're a cat-people, black-furred!"

There was a flurry of small movements around the circle, touched off by the intensity of her voice, I suppose—or perhaps others here knew about the second black leopard. I know *I started* to think about it again—first the wild notion that Blondine had materialized on earth one of the cat-people invading the blue planet, then Dr. Dragonet's suggestion about a subconscious mind on the loose in animal form. *Whose* would it be, I wondered? Professor Seibold had shown constant irritation and a half repressed anger—*that* might be indicative. Yet the milky calm of Father Minturn's mind might be an even stronger sign of murky unconscious depths. Eduina *dressed* like a black leopard—that could be a clue; while Sister Marcia . . . there were simply too many hints! Why, even I . . . So far the elixir had given me no sight of my own unconscious mind, as the Doctor had said it would. Did that mean my subconscious had gone out of me? True, I had struck at the leopard, but would I know my own subconscious mind if I met it? Would anybody?

THE room seemed to have grown darker now, although Blondine's strange image still was bright, and I began to catch movements in the shadows behind the chairs—movements which stopped as soon as I looked straight at them. I wanted to call for real lights.

There was a *click*—signal for Eduina to drink. We'd be finished soon, I thought hopefully.

I returned to Blondine's image. Jastar's drinking seemed to have added nothing to it at all. Nothing rich in *that* mind, I told myself with a certain satisfaction.

Or perhaps the effects of the elixir were wearing off for me. Even the quintuple-exposure of Blondine was beginning to darken.

Yet at the same time I began to feel a growing tension and I

sensed again the illusion—or reality—of movement in the shadows by the walls, as if some sinuous black beast were pacing there. Half rising, I openly peered around the room—even behind my chair, I have to admit. I didn't see any slinking animal either, but it could have been hiding behind one of the chairs.

The tension continued to grow. Sister Marcia was leaning forward now, looking taller and thinner than ever. Father Minturn's hands made fat white blobs where they gripped the arms of his chair. Professor Seibold was writhing his narrow shoulders and jogging his right knee very fast, like a chess player with a minute in which to make twenty moves. Roxane no longer smiled below her wrap-around glasses. Eduina had slipped off her cloak and was holding it over her left arm. Dr. Dragonet was sitting very erect, his gaze switching quickly from side to side. Only Jay Astar leaned back, serene—or just stupid.

I was leaning forward myself now, my left hand gripping my sword cane, my right hand on its hilt.

Her soft fur bristling, Impet came erect behind Father Minturn's shoulders with a spitting *hiss*. The plump priest threw himself forward on the floor. I didn't blame him one bit.

At first I was sure Impet was hissing at Sister Marcia. Then I saw that the target of the cat's alarm and anger lay beyond. Out of the shadow behind Jay Astar's chair there rose a narrow, high-domed, shimmering black muzzle with ears like silky spear points, eyes that were pulsing blue sparks, fangs that gleamed like steel.

Eduina sprang to the seat of her chair. Stamping on its arm and waving her black cloak forward, she shouted at the top of her voice at the black apparition, *"Gato! Hey, gato!"*

She was citing the black leopard as if it were a bull; she was calling, "Hey, cat!"

The leopard vaulted over Jastar and his chair in one enormous bound—a great curving brushstroke of glimmering black against the lesser darkness. But I had snatched my sword from its sheath and now I lunged high.

A dazzling blue flicker ran along the blade. Lightning flashed in the room, showing the pictures on the walls.

The blade bent double and broke. I felt twice the shock I had on the terrace, but my vision didn't go. I drew back to thrust again with my numb hand, not knowing even if it still held the broken sword.

THE black leopard came weaving forward again, then

turned abruptly and sprang sideways, out of range of my defense, at Roxane.

An instant earlier Sister Marcia had launched herself forward, seeming to lengthen almost impossibly, in a long arc of her own, her black habit streaming. She dove over Father Minturn and Blondine, whose image had dimmed almost to darkness now, and met the leopard in midair. They dropped to the floor together and for a moment there was a scuffling and a horrid dry rustling, then sudden silence, broken almost immediately by our frantic voices.

The darkness was now complete.

"Keep quiet and keep your places!" Dr. Dragonet commanded.

A few moments later enough lights for an operating theater came on. They showed us all on our feet, with one exception.

Sister Marcia was standing like a slightly disheveled black pillar beside the door, half open now, to the terrace.

There was no sight of the black leopard anywhere.

In that mechanical voice, so chillingly suggestive of a voder rather than speech from a living throat, the black nun said, "I must return to my devotions. Thank you, Doctor, for an interesting session. Good night, friends."

Taking mincing steps and ducking her head to miss the lintel, which would have cleared my own head by two feet, she rustled from the room.

I wanted to ask her, "Do subconscious minds taste good, Sister?"

Professor Seibold wiped his forehead and gave of with an inelegant, unscientific "Whew!"

The one of us remaining in his chair, so quiet he might be a stereo still of himself, or dead, was Jay Astar. But when the Doctor lightly shook his shoulder, he came to with a headshake and a "Huh?" and then said in a voice from which most of the glamorous resonance was gone, "How'd the session go, Doc? I must of fell asleep, though I never thought I'd even relax, let alone nap. That Black Sister's starched underthings kept rustling like one of the big centipedes we had down in my granddaddy's house in Old Mississip."

"I heard nothing," Father Minturn said, a shade loftily. "But then I don't listen for such things."

Jay stood up shakily. "Gee, I feel awful weak on my pins. Like I was empty inside."

The Doctor steadied him, saying, "Karl will drive you home." Then, "I think we'd all be better for a breath of fresh air." He indicated the terrace.

I wanted to go beside Eduina,

to compliment her on her technique as a *torero*—or *gatero!*—and maybe fish for a compliment back on my own showing as a *matador*—or *gatador*—but she was chattering excitedly with Roxane. Father Minturn followed, half supporting Jastar, and behind them went Professor Seibold and Blondine. Dr. Dragonet gently held me back and as we drifted after them, he leaned his head and told me confidentially, "I suspected it was Jastar's unconscious mind all along. I like the film colony—I make my living off them!—but some of the newcomers are so single-mindedly ambitious and pushing that they're a public danger. They need their teeth—I mean their drives—drawn and I look upon it as a sort of civic duty to do so. Now he'll be a hollow man for months."

"Won't it ruin his career?" I asked, not too concerned.

"No. Most actors are only lay figures—puppets. His directors will position him properly and use a needle spot to make his eyes gleam and re-resonate his voice with an echo chamber and maybe use collodion to twist his mouth into the smirk his fans love, until something of his old energy returns."

I asked, "Would being rejected by just one girl fill a man like Jastar with such seething resentments?"

He looked at me sharply. "So Eduina's been telling you things? Yes, of course, the littler the big man, the more sensitive he is to slights."

"What do you think would have happened, Doctor, if the leopard had reached Eduina or Roxane?"

He shrugged. "Perhaps nothing. Perhaps a mild electric shock. *I* think she'd have had her face scratched off: Jay has—or had—a very strong feminine component, completely repressed."

"One more thing, Doctor. Is Sister Marcia really—" I began, but we were on the terrace now, near the others, and he lightly squeezed my arm for silence.

"Some creatures, even highly intelligent ones, feed on the body electricity of emotion as well as on flesh," he whispered briskly. "That's all I can tell you."

Now we were all under the stars, bright in the wind-swept sky. Automatically my gaze went up to Cygnus, that great five-starred swan winging high through the dark. Blondine looked up and then the others too, as she said tranquilly, "A terrible cold radiates from the pale blue dreaming elvish folk. The great fires in the blue grass shrink and flicker and die. The helmeted invaders rush back to their boats, but some of them are frozen in their tracks and shat-

tered by their hurtling comrades —their heat vanished like neutrinos or spectrons. The boats take off and then the spaceships that brought them. But—" there was a catch in her voice "—the elvish folk crouch frozen too. Forever frozen, unless . . ."

At that instant, from a point in the heavens between Cygnus and Lyra, there came a tiny flash of blue light which lasted perhaps a second. The blue was the same shade as the grass of Blondine's planet. Real light, I asked myself, or the reflected gleam of consciousness? I had no way of knowing, but murmurs told me the others had seen it too.

"It didn't even come from Cygnus," Professor Seibold protested, possibly in some last-ditch inner defense of his materialism.

"No," the Doctor agreed. "Perhaps the star towing Blondine's planet has moved that far during the millennia it takes its physical light to reach us. Your own point, professor."

"Doctor," I asked, "do you think there's any possible connection between the black felinoids invading the blue planet and our own black leopard?"

He shrugged thoughtfully. "It is one of those grand coincidences, or congruences, which we'll only begin to understand when we've seriously studied the innumerable fields of psionics for fifty years or so."

We asked Blondine questions but, "I don't see anything any more. It's over," was all she would answer.

I joined Eduina and Roxane. The latter, with a grin, drifted away toward the Doctor, who was calling, "Karl! Better get the car out."

JUST then a siren sounded far off and came weaving up through the hills. We all stopped to listen to it—a little apprehensively, I imagine. Even the Doctor's elixir leaves one a shade jittery.

I scanned around. Below us, the lawns and flowerbeds and and gilt domed buildings of the Greater Cosmic Fellowship were dark, except for the tiny golden flame of one peace candle burning steadily.

Presently there was no doubt of the siren's destination, for it grew very loud and high white headlights came hurtling with it up the road. A squeal of brakes, a clatter of footsteps, and then three uniformed policemen and two detectives had run up the stairway onto the black-flagged terrace.

"Any of you here found a little black suitcase, sealed?" the first detective breathlessly demanded of us.

Karl stepped out of the shad-

ows and handed him the suitcase I'd earlier seen lying in the bushes.

The first detective grabbed it, examined the seals closely, breathed a "Thank God," and then—although the other detective was signing him to be quiet—burst out with, "You people have saved our bacon! This suitcase has got in it the biggest haul of heroin we ever made in a single raid! When they went to get the leopard, some boob grabbed it up, thinking it was a case of teargas bombs, and then lost it here. We owe you a vote of thanks!"

The second detective pulled him toward the stairs.

Heroin, I thought contemptuously—and breathed a prayer for all poor thrill-seekers hooked on mind-darkening drugs instead of mind-enlarging ones—and administered without the benefit of Dr. Dragonet.

Karl helped Jastar down the stairs after the police. Professor Seibold followed with Father Minturn. Roxane, Blondine, and the Doctor went inside. I was alone with Eduina.

"Darling," I began, turning to her, "as a *gatero* you were magnificent—"

She interrupted me with, "Verbal compliments are un-cool, Arthur."

I put my arms on her shoulders and drew her to me.

"Arthur!" Dr. Dragonet's voice came sharply from the doorway. "I told you not to smooch my niece. Come inside, Eduina."

I tightened my hands on her shoulders, but she shook her head slightly, brushed her lips against mine, and drew away from me with a smile.

I thought, as she crossed the terrace, *Damn the man! Aren't two nieces enough for him?*

THE END

THE ANSWERER

By BILL CASEY

Of all controversial topics, religion is the one of which editors are most chary. This story raises many questions, flaunts many beliefs. We will be both damned and praised for publishing it. It will outrage some readers, annoy others, delight some. It will also, we feel, do what good s-f should do: make all of you think

ON September 8, 1973, Dr. Vincent S.V. Havenstrite, Dean of the International Theological Seminary, was granted an audience with the President of the United States.

"Mr. President," he said, "I believe the nation is in great danger. I believe prayers are being answered."

Havenstrite was a large man in his late fifties, with an erect carriage, deep-set eyes, and a broad pale brow. He spoke without a trace of nervousness, but with a certain urgency. The President, a tall, lion-headed, genial Southwesterner who sometimes referred publicly to his trust in "the Good Lord" and privately depended upon a ruthless intuition and a brilliant political organization, said, "Sit down, Doctor," in a voice that revealed nothing except the neutralizing effects of private tutoring in enunciation.

"Mr. President, I have come here at the risk of my career and my reputation, because I feel that it is my duty to do so. For several months I have been using what personal influence I command to enlist a number of young men in research, the purpose of which they do not know."

He opened his briefcase and took out a thick stapled pamphlet. "If you will consent to examine this report, you will find certain facts with which you're already familiar. It starts with

the fantastic recovery of the Pope . . ."

"That was last March," the President said.

"Yes. On March 13, he was in a terminal coma—incurable cancer. The prayers of the faithful were solicited, but of course there was no hope. Three days later he was on his feet and has been thriving ever since. This report includes the opinions of the attending physicians. They have no explanation for it. There are other things too—for example, a summary of the report by the group investigating why the Fourth of July weekend saw the predicted number of accidents cut in half."

"I believe the council was *unable* to say why," the President interjected softly.

"Quite right. Their conjectures are here—mistaken ones, in my opinion. At any rate, the report contains all this familiar material. But you will also find a number of other related items which perhaps may be new to you. For example, I have included statistics furnished me by my friend Dr. Talbin, the head of the group which is now investigating the large number of cures said to have been effected by faith healers in the past few months."

"That's the Ford Foundation project?"

"Yes. Their investigation is far from complete, but already the results are shattering. The American Medical Association has also had some word of the findings, and is completely dumbfounded."

The President held out his hand for the report.

"You will also find some cases which, so far, are not statistically significant, though there are a very large number of them. Most of these are miraculous escapes from death. We were able to personally investigate a score or so of these. In each case, the person saved reported later that in the moment of crisis he had prayed for deliverance."

THE President put on his spectacles and paged through the report, one hand shielding his brow and also his expression. After a moment he leveled at Havenstrite that glance of piercing intelligence so different from his public image of fatherly benignity.

"Do you believe, Dr. Havenstrite, that prayers have not heretofore been answered?"

"I see no reason to believe they have been. Mr. President, you may be aware that most contemporary theologians—I may say most contemporary Protestant ministers—have come a very long way from a belief in a personal god, an anthropomorphic god who sees, hears, experiences

the human emotions of love, hate, and jealousy, and answers supplications. I think most of us would say—would have said—that such a conception is, first, inaccurate, and second, a positive hindrance to true spirituality and sane morality. In this view, a prayer might have great benefit to the one who prays, but not because it is answered in crudely literal terms."

The President continued to look at him, waiting.

"Apparently," said Havenstrite, "Something crudely literal is now happening."

"And this is something new?"

"Is it not? Can we believe, for instance, that between 1940 and 1945 six million Jews in Germany went to torment and death without a single prayer being raised? Were those prayers answered? They obviously were not And we can add hundreds, thousands of examples of events too horrible to contemplate which were not prevented by prayer."

The President nodded slowly and looked at Havenstrite through the arch of his touching fingertips. He seemed not at all surprised by anything he had heard.

"And you said we were in great danger."

"There can be nothing more dangerous than a personal god who actively interferes in the lives of men. The most thoughtless person who has paid vague allegiance to this idea will immediately perceive that if it were really true, the results would be disastrous. Mr. President, consider—I am sure you have *already* considered—the decline in the total number of deaths from all causes in the past six months. Thirty-five percent. Think what that trend would mean if it continued, and even increased. At the very least, a new and wildly uncontrollable element has entered into human affairs."

"What do you think should be done?"

"I think an organization should be formed to investigate every extraordinary event—every miracle, if you like—which has happened in recent months, just as the Ford Foundation group is investigating the successes of the faith healers. This information should be organized and fed into computing machines so that we can get reliable information when we need it."

"And then what?"

"Well, it would be much simply to have the information. The expense could certainly be justified on that ground alone."

"Of course. A man's judgment is no better than his information. Doctor, I am not thinking of how to justify the expense. Nor are you, I think. You said the nation is in danger. An unpredictable force has entered the affairs of

men. If such is the case, the executive's first thought must be—neutralizing that force."

It was more prompt and more cold-blooded than Havenstrite had been prepared for. But before he could answer, the ice in the President's gaze suddenly disappeared, his expression changed to that warm, but infinitely remote image which had won him the votes of thousands. He stood up, smiled, and extended his hand.

"Doctor, I have listened to you very carefully," he said. "You may expect to hear from me before long."

II

IN his offices at the Seminary, Havenstrite continued to supervise the research carried on by a number of young scholars who had been attracted to the institute in order to be near him. For the first time, he had drawn upon his personal prestige to build what he called a "labor force" for his own purposes, and the fact that he kept the reason for the research secret leant an anxious and conspiratorial air to the project.

He had in fact confided in only one assistant, a square-faced, swarthy, taciturn ex-priest named Victor Polaski. Now in his early forties, Polaski had broken with the Church five years earlier. An excellent historian, his studies seemed to plunge him each year deeper into a naturally morose temperament.

One morning two weeks after Havenstrite's audience with the President, Polaski entered his office at seven to find his superior dozing over a sheaf of papers at his desk.

"I believe you've got your support," he said without joy.

Havenstrite straightened, rubbed his eyes, and unfolded the newspaper which Polaski placed before him.

The headlines were enormous. Two commercial airliners had collided in midair over Denver. Nothing was left of the planes but twisted, charred fragments flung over a twenty-mile area. But all of the hundred and twenty-five passengers had survived. The most serious injury was a broken collarbone. One of the planes had been chartered by the Southeast Protestant Ministers' Association. Before emplaning, the ministers had prayed for a safe journey.

Havenstrite pushed the paper away and stood up. "Don't move from this phone," he said. "If the White House calls, I'll be at home taking a shower and changing clothes. I'll take a copy of the revised report with me, so I can leave directly for the airport."

After he had left, Polaski sat down in the strange atmosphere

resulting from a combination of fluorescent lamps and the natural light coming from the windows, and gazed at another news story dwarfed below the gigantic headlines. An insane rapist had broken into a young woman's apartment, tied her hands and feet, cut her all over with razor blades, and then assaulted her. The woman was in the hospital and expected to survive, but her sanity was threatened.

"If God exists," Polaski murmured to himself, "We must destroy Him."

AT three o'clock that afternoon, Havenstrite was ushered into the President's office. The President came forward with an extended hand.

"I suppose you have some notion of what prompted me to call you so urgently."

"I had thought the airplane crash in Colorado."

"Yes, that was one thing. Have you perhaps heard some of the rumors about what's happening in Red China?"

"No. Nothing pertaining to this inquiry."

"We've attempted to keep it a secret, but there are leaks. I knew of it when we talked last week. That was one reason I considered your report very seriously. You undoubtedly know of the case of the Reverend Edgar Dollinger, the Jehovah's Witness. The prisoner we've been trying to get released all these years."

"I have read of it."

"He's been in prison since 1961, and he's been praying for the conversion of the Chinese premier. For two weeks now he's been released, having daily audiences with Cho Tien. We've verified it beyond the shadow of a doubt. Cho Tien is now a convert."

Havenstrite permitted himself a moment of silence, his thumb and index fingers lightly massaging his closed eyes.

"Mr. President," he said at length, "It looks as if our basic suspicions have been proven. It may be advisable now to begin making some speculative leaps. *Why* have prayers suddenly begun to be answered?"

"Have you anything to go on?"

"Nothing. But on a purely rational basis, there are several possibilities. First, a change in the nature of the prayers themselves. Second, a change in the mode of transmission. Unfortunately, these lead to thousands of conjectures. We know, for example, that very primitive tribes believe that a prayer, to be effective, must be letter perfect verbally. If this were true, then some linguistic accident—a new idiom or intonation, perhaps—could account for their sudden effectiveness."

"Just perfecting the formula."

"Exactly. Or to take a drastically different point of view, consider prayers as a species of thought, and thought as a series of complex electrical phenomena. We then have the possibility that some physical change, either in the brains themselves or in the atmosphere—a result of nuclear activity perhaps—has resulted in better transmission."

"Better communications."

"Something of the sort. Then there is the third possibility."

"God has undergone a change of character," said the President with a curious smile.

Havenstrite looked at him inquiringly, then smiled also. "There is more logic than sarcasm in that," he said.

"Logic is what sarcasm often is," said the President. He seemed about to stop, but then continued in a more reflective tone.

DOCTOR, I was brought up in a strict fundamentalist family, farm people, who attributed everything good to God and everything bad—and things were mostly bad—to the fault of human beings, or to some malevolent scheme we didn't understand, though they were clear enough on understanding the source of the good things. When I was twelve, something happened that was hard to justify on any grounds. My little sister died of scarlet fever after several days in great pain. My mother told me afterwards that God had wanted an angel—that was why he had not answered our prayers for Velma to be saved. I was crying and said the Devil had caused it. She told me to hush that kind of talk. I shouted at her that God was the devil, if he got angels by burning little girls up with fever. She boxed my ears until I was reeling. I couldn't hear a thing for a week. I still don't hear at all well out of the left one. After that I didn't have a very high opinion of her idea of God, and finally concluded He didn't exist. If He does, he must have had a change of character. I wasn't being sarcastic from my point of view."

The President's voice was controlled, almost casual; but it carried a tremor of feeling.

"Well, you are quite right," said Havenstrite after a moment. "Just as the prayers and their answers are literal, we pursue the literal possibilities. A change of character is one possibility. What are the others? If God has not changed his mind, if He always had the same sentiments, what then? Several possibilities immediately occur: He has been absent. He has been restrained. He has been asleep."

"Or he has suddenly become more efficient."

Havenstrite sat forward. "Mr. President, that is something that

has occurred in my mind . . ."

A buzzer sounded on the President's desk and a voice said, "McGuire is here, sir, just arrived from the airport. He left Mr. Jameson in Dakota and came here to report personally. He says it's urgent."

"Send him in."

Havenstrite rose and picked up his hat. The President motioned for him to remain.

McGuire, a stocky, energetic man now looking harried and unpressed, was shown in.

"Harry, I'm glad you got here intact. This is Dr. Havenstrite. I want him to hear anything you've got to report."

"Sir, it looks bad," McGuire said. "Very much worse than we'd been led to believe, worse than we indicated on the phone last night. He spoke there—" McGuire glanced at Havenstrite. "Sherman Coe, the American Fascist, spoke there last night, in a rented hall. He's insane, of course, it's apparent the minute you see him. But tremendously effective. He's bigger than he looks in his pictures—big belly, big bulldog jaw, gets very red when he speaks. A lot of what he said was incoherent, but he's a powerful speaker, he has a terrible appeal. It was the usual line about the Reds having taken over in Washington, subverted the armed forces, and so on. But this time he actually proposed a march on Washington. He ended with a prayer that fifty thousand men would join him for his Crusade. The crowd was wild, they nearly tore down the place when he finished. Then, thirty minutes later, they seemed to completely cool off. There were only about four or five hundred of them, and as I said when I phoned, it didn't look too bad. The police were out in force, and the governor had his men there."

McGuire took out a handkerchief and pressed it to his brow.

"Today when we woke up—and it was still early—we looked out and the streets were already jammed. People had driven all night to get there. Some men brought their whole families, others came alone. There were forty or fifty motorcycle riders, tough looking hoodlums in leather jackets. But there were plenty of respectable looking businessmen too, a few ranchers and farmers. They were milling around. Some of them were so tired they had a stunned look on their face. None of them knew where to go or what they were going to do next. About noon they had formed up around the hotel where Coe is staying. They were still pouring into town when I left. Mr. President, it's an emergency situation. There's going to have to be a special force sent to stop them."

The President exchanged

glances with Havenstrite. "How many did he pray for?"

"Fifty thousand."

The President pressed a button and said, "Johnny, get me General Greene and the Attorney General."

III

FOR twenty four hours, newsmen had been moving into Fargo to cover the inchoate rebellion, but the first news stories filed were fragmentary, first-person pieces which succeeded only in giving an impression of chaos. The first television crews flown in were mobbed and had their equipment smashed.

By contrast, the growing crowds in the New England town of Mt. Tolliver were receptive to publicity and they got plenty of it. A number of individuals in the crowd around the Mt. Tolliver State Hospital grabbed at the microphones and stared earnestly into the television cameras as they pleaded for release of their prophet.

"All we want, we want the nation to know this—all we want that, for them to release the Prophet Jeremiah," said a perspiring housewife, and continued to star blinking into the camera until someone nudged and prompted her. "He is not insane," she said. "He has never been insane. It was a trick. Just let him come out to us. He has called us here, and they won't let him come out."

"The mental hospitals!" Polaski said, and gripped Havenstrite's arm. "We forgot the mental hospitals."

They had paused in passing through their outer office to look at the TV set there. The screen showed a mob of about a thousand people pressed around the gates of the Mt. Tolliver State Hospital.

"There's no telling what he'll pray for next," Polaski said. "There must be a thousand people in that crowd."

Havenstrite was already on the phone. While the call was going through, he glanced up at the face on the television screen: the insane eyes and long beard incongruously matched with what could only be called a personable grin. It was a photograph of Sam Watts, Jr., taken ten years earlier when he had quit his job as insurance salesman and taken to the streets, proclaiming himself the reincarnation of several Hebrew prophets, principally Jeremiah. He had been committed to Mt. Tolliver shortly thereafter and had been there ever since. Never before had he had any following.

The President's voice sounded anxious, but restrained.

"Mr. President," said Havenstrite, "It was a major oversight

on my part. If you've ever been inside a mental institution you're aware that the most common thing to hear is prayers, preaching, and psalm singing. Most of the prayers are purely conventional. But if one of them should take a notion to pray for something unusual . . ."

"Let's worry about this Jeremiah first. The thing to do ultimately is get all the psychos in the country under heavy sedation for a time. But this thing at Mt. Tolliver has already gone too far. If he ever finds out the power he's got . . ."

"Another Sherman Coe."

"Or worse. Have you got a good man you could send there? One who would know what's at stake? I'll send two or three FBI men with him, and they can do what he thinks necessary."

Havenstrite nodded at Polaski, who stood listening with gloomy resignation.

"Yes, I've got a man," Havenstrite said.

ON the flight to Mt. Tolliver, the FBI agents talked in low tones among themselves and occasionally glanced at Victor Polaski, who sat staring morosely out the window. They had been told that their assignment was to silence a dangerous psychotic who seemed to have extraordinary control over a growing crowd, and that the performance of it might involve considerable danger. Aside from that, and their destination, they knew nothing except that they were to take orders from Polaski. The quality of his judgment was unknown to them, and his expression of withdrawn, brooding malaise did nothing to reassure them in spite of a certain self-control and inward strength that it suggested.

Mt. Tolliver was not a large city. Almost from the time they had passed over the western city limits they could make out a congestion of traffic in the northeastern suburb. Getting closer, they saw that the crowd had dispersed around the high chain-wire fence which bordered the grounds of the state hospital. As the helicopter slowed and descended for reconnaissance, a score of open-mouthed upturned faces swung away under them. Individual shouts could be heard above the soundwells of the crowd.

One of the agents touched Polaski's arm and pointed.

"My God!" said Polaski. "He must have broken out."

"Is that the man we're after?"

Polaski nodded.

They were hovering in slow progress over the grounds now, a vast, fenced expanse of grass and trees with two or three garden spots. Below them, a wild, gaunt figure in shapeless gray pants

and tunic, all elbows and knees and flying beard, had broken from a copse of trees and was racing over the ground with the speed of a frenzied animal. As they circled, he fell against a tree, gasping, flung his head about, and caught sight of one of his pursuers, a burly attendant in white making a broken-winded charge. When the attendant was almost upon him, the madman made an obscene gesture and broke into an incredible sprint. A roar went up from the crowd pressed four and five deep on the other side of the fence.

Polaski knocked on the glass behind the pilot and shouted, "Get over that man and keep with him, as low as you can." The pilot nodded.

The madman had dropped out of sight in a thick growth of shrubs.

"Get that rope ladder down," Polaski said, and buttoned his overcoat up tightly to the collar. "One of you lie down there and keep a grip on my coat to steady me. I'm not going down more than two or three steps."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to kill that man. Give me your gun, Mr. Burton."

The agents exchanged glances.

"How do you take it off safety?" Polaski shouted against the wind that burst through the open bay.

"Good Lord! Like this."

"There he goes," said the third agent, at a window.

Two or three pursuers in white had been running lamely toward the shrubs where the madman lay concealed. Now he raised himself, peered about, and broke in a lope for a far portion of the fence where only one attendant barred his way. The crowd, thin at that part, set up a shout.

Polaski wrapped his hand around the revolver outside the trigger guard, and with six hands clutching his arms and coat, found the top rung of the ladder with his foot and began descending into the wind, his clothes bellying and his hair whipped around his spectacles. Three steps down, he crouched, wedged his armpit between rung and sidepiece, and took the revolver in both hands.

Ten yards in front of the helicopter, the bearded man was plunging along through a patch of uncut weeds that whirled and depressed under the propeller's slipstream. With a cry of exultation, he turned around and ran backwards, his arms lifted, his mad face upturned toward his deliverance.

Hung from the steadily descending plane like a clumsy ornament, Polaski rested his cheek against his right shoulder, held the revolver straight out in both hands, and as his body reached the end of a slow swivel, fired

three shots into the shouting face. Still running backward, the prophet fell away under the rising helicopter. A cry of outrage and a hundred hands snatched at Polaski and missed as he was yanked upwards into the plane. He fell between the seats, gasping. Below them, the sounds of the crowd receded.

"What now?" said Burton.

"Back to Washington, I guess. He's out."

"No." Polaski, deathly pale, opened his eyes, got clumsily to one knee and rested there. "Tell the pilot to circle around and spot the administration building. After he's sure, circle once more and come down as near it as he can. When we land, we may find the President has gotten through to the Governor and explained it. We can't be sure. Burton, you go out first with your gun in your hand. I come next and then you two. Spot the man or men who look to be in authority and get to them."

"What the hell are we doing, Polaski?"

"We're taking over this hospital for about one hour."

"Then we're going to jail for one lifetime," said Burton.

IV

OUTSIDE Fargo, fifty thousand frenzied marchers headed by Sherman Coe and armed with rifles, shotguns, axe-handles and kitchen knives, met the Fiftieth Armored Division head on, ignored loud-speaker warnings to surrender, and on a word from Coe flung themselves with insane abandon against a murderous fusillade. Within ten minutes Coe was wounded and taken prisoner, and a few minutes later his followers—those who were left standing—abruptly went to pieces and dropped their arms in confusion.

By that time, Polaski's successful impromptu operation at Mt. Tolliver State Hospital had become the model for five more such coups on a larger scale by paratroopers ordered to seize and enforce sedation upon the patients at mental hospitals in states whose governors ignored the President's urgent pleas for cooperation.

Polaski himself returned to Washington after midnight, exhausted, half numb from shock, and surprised to find himself still alive. He had talked to the President long-distance several hours earlier. Now, arriving at his apartment, he dropped onto the bed with his clothes on and was almost instantly asleep, deep in nightmare.

Even after his paralyzed brain recognized the sound as that of a ringing telephone, he was unable to respond. It rang six more times before he groped toward it

through the dark. The luminous hands of the clock on the desk showed three-forty-five. Even had he been fully awake he would hardly have recognized the voice that spoke his name.

"Who? Who is this?"

"Victor, listen. No time. Listen carefully . . ."

"Good Lord, Dr. Havenstrite! Are you ill? What's the matter with you?"

"My heart . . . Victor, don't worry about . . . that . . . Must tell you, Victor." The words ended in a gasp of pain.

"I'm coming over there. Hang up, don't exert yourself."

"No. No time . . . Check Jodrell Banks reports . . . find pattern . . . computer . . . Prayers not answered by God, Victor . . . computer . . ."

The received clattered in Polaski's ear.

He listened for breathing, but could hear none, only a regular soft bump as if the receiver were dangling from its cord and striking something.

Running downstairs, he got into his car and drove as fast as he could to Havenstrite's house in Georgetown. Ambulance attendants were bringing the body out on a stretcher as he arrived. He stared at the sheet-covered body, and when the ambulance had driven away, sank down on the damp stone steps of the empty house.

"WHAT did he mean by that?" the President asked Polaski.

Dawn was breaking over the city, and the lights were burning in the President's office as well as in offices all over Washington. The President himself was red-eyed and unshaven, his face gaunt under the black and white mane.

"I checked with the technicians that handle our computer. In the evening, Havenstrite came in very excited and asked them to stay all night if necessary. He wanted them to feed it some data received from Jodrell Banks. You know that for years their radio telescopes have been regularly picking up and recording radio signals from outer space. Some of these are undoubtedly from 'sun-spots'—gaseous explosions or electromagnetic storms. The source of the others is largely unknown."

"But they're from natural sources."

"Well, yes. That's what has been assumed. Havenstrite had gotten reports, though, of vastly increased transmissions recorded in the past few months. The observatory had been keeping it quiet, but there was a leak. There is unprecedented activity, and it is coming from comparatively near: in this solar system. Havenstrite was having the data checked out for any possible spatial pattern when he began to

feel ill and went home. They were still working on it when I got there. They should be through within a couple of hours."

"Havenstrite was—so to speak—having a map charted."

Polaski nodded. "Apparently, Mr. President, something is out there."

"What do you think Havenstrite was going to say? The prayers are answered by—what?"

"I suppose it's clear enough. The prayers go out, and regardless of their form—whether heartfelt or merely conventional—and regardless of their content, they are answered."

"By what?"

"By something like a giant Univac."

The President had risen to pace the floor quietly. He stopped.

"In that event, what do you suggest we do?"

"Mr. President, I suggest you destroy it."

V

IN the following week, the rockets, one after another, were mounted with hydrogen warheads and sent out to perform a deadly probe of the solar system according to a complex scheme based on the Jodrell Banks observations.

Newspapers and television, meanwhile, continued to report an appalling succession of freak phenomena. A Little Leaguer in Cleveland had prayed in jest for a third arm to help his fielding. Surgeons were discussing the possibility of cosmetic amputation. In a drouth-stricken sector of Oklahoma, public prayers for rain had hardly begun when a thunderstorm broke, drowning three of the participants on the spot and subsequently flooding half a dozen towns and causing forty-five deaths. In Rome, the Pope was once again hospitalized for cancer; once again the prayers of the faithful were solicited; and once again the pontiff recovered almost overnight. In certain quarters, there was a suspicion of theatrics. In Red China, the powerful political factions opposing the prayerful convert Cho Tien were being visited by mysterious illnesses and freak accidents.

Washington was alive with rumors about the possibility of the President's impeachment. Just as the newspapers were beginning to publish fully detailed stories of the actions at Fargo, Mt. Tolliver and the other mental hospitals, news of the rocket launchings, hitherto suppressed, burst into headlines that covered half the front page. Scores of scientists testified that the atmosphere was being irremediably contaminated. By the sixth day, angry crowds had formed around

the double line of infantry ringing the White House.

The President was spending his days and nights in a controlled fury of political machination. Key senators, congressmen, and cabinet members, flanked by guards with fixed bayonets, entered and left the White House at all hours.

Meanwhile, trackers at Jodrell Banks, Palomar, and the Bakleva reported the outer-space explosions, one by one, as they occurred. Polaski, slumped at Havenstrite's desk in a profound, uncommunicative gloom, received word of them impassively. His inherited staff, completely demoralized, continued working but without any word of direction or encouragement from him. At last, on the seventh day, he roused himself, brushed ashes from his shirt front, and called for Jerry Parker, the technician who directed operation of the computer.

"Jerry," he said without any real interest, "I want you to run the B Series again to check something."

"Fine, Dr. Polaski. But we can't run anything right now. There's something wrong with the computer."

"What is it?"

"Something weird. There doesn't seem to be anything wrong, that I can see. I've called for a crew, but they're all out. The machines at CIA, State, and Defense are all on the blink. There's something strange here, Dr. Polaski."

"Jerry, do you know anybody working with computers in other parts of the country?"

"Sure, I know Fairbanks and Smith in New Mexico, Cartaret in . . ."

"Get them on the phone and see if they're having the same trouble."

Within thirty minutes, Jerry returned excited. "Dr. Polaski, they're all jammed. It looks like every computer in the country is jammed. Do you know what it means?"

Polaski shook his head and turned away.

After a while, his pacing took him to the outer office, where the television, as always, was turned on in a cornern its volume low.

" 'A Time for Miracles' is coming up," said a young man at his desk. "You said to remind you."

Polaski nodded, sat down, and stared absent-mindedly at the screen. After a commercial and a hymn, the fleshy, wide-mouthed face of Virgil Mulligan, Gods Worker in the Vineyard, filled the screen in an opening prayer. The camera then moved back to show the stage-platform, backed by gaudy silk hangings and ringed about by a silent throng of the faithful.

The first Seeker of the day was

a frightened and embarrassed thirteen-year-old boy on crutches accompanied by his weeping mother. She told the story of how he had been crippled since the age of eight as a result of rickets. Mulligan began questioning the boy on his faith. "Do you believe . . ."

Polaski rose impatiently. The performance of genuine miracles had become routine.

"Harry, what time is it?"

"Two o'clock. Are you expecting something?"

"No. I don't know. In a way I am. But what, I don't know."

Outside of the most begrudged instructions, it was the most Polaski had said to anyone for days. He was restlessly moving off into Havenstrite's office when a gasp issued from the television speaker.

The camera had moved to follow the boy's fall. Trying to walk without crutches, he had toppled face down on the ground below the platform and was grimacing with pain. Within seconds, people swarmed around him and obscured the view. On the platform, his mother was screaming and Mulligan was angrily motioning the cameras to move away.

Before Harry or Polaski could speak, Jerry Parker came in holding a box of IBM cards.

"Damnedest thing I ever saw," he said. "The computers are working again, without anybody touching them. I called up a friend at CIA, and theirs are working again too. They're all working, it looks like."

Polaski turned back to the television screen.

"All but one," he said.

"Which one?"

"The big one. Harry, see if you can get through to the White House."

SIX month later the ex-President of the United States, the first chief executive in the history of the nation to be removed from office by impeachment, returned from a trip around the world during which his steadfast refusal to comment had gradually worn out the patience of the newsmen hounding him.

The second evening after his return, he visited Victor Polaski at the latter's apartment, unannounced and unaccompanied. He was still a handsome figure of a man, tailored and barbered to perfection; but he had grown thinner, and there were permanent dark circles under his eyes. During the impeachment proceedings he had developed a slight tic which occasionally pulled at the corner of his mouth. He now walked with a cane.

Polaski himself was unshaven, dressed in a soiled shirt and baggy trousers. His rooms, littered with papers and books, empty

Scotch bottles and dirty dishes, looked as if they had not been cleaned in a decade. For an instant his visitor registered shock at the sight, but soon regained his style. Amidst the ruin, they sat and talked through the night as if they had been old friends.

As the dawn was breaking, the older man rose with the aid of his cane and picked up his hat, but paused.

"I find myself with Hamlet's wish," he said. "That someone might tell my story."

Polaski nodded, avoiding the other man's eyes. "But Horatio had seen the Ghost," he murmured. "We saw nothing. We don't yet know what it was the bombs destroyed."

"Then you're not convinced Havenstrite was right?"

Polaski had remained seated, his eyes fixed in an abstracted gaze. "Twenty years ago," he said, "as a young theological student, I began to study history, ambitious to discover the hand of a benevolent deity in the progress of the species, despite apparent evidence to the contrary. I found instead a senseless carnival of slaughter, rapine, cruelty, stupidity, and madness. At last I began to see in it neither what I had hoped to find, nor even the workings of chance—but instead, a vast, malicious, demented practical joke. When the prayers began to be answered it seemed to me to be not so much something new as a cruel variation of the same old thing."

"But when the computers jammed and the miracles stopped, you were convinced."

"For a time I was," said Polaski, and rose. "Come here to the window."

He raised the glass. A gray, unhealthy dawn light suffused the damp streets and buildings.

"Do you notice anything unusual?"

"No—unless you mean the smog. It's gotten terrible everywhere, even in Europe. Smoke and exhaust fumes."

"Is that what it smells like?"

"Now that you mention it—no. There's something different about it."

"Were you ever in combat?"

"Yes, in the Pacific, World War II. Wait a minute!" He gripped the cane as if to keep himself from staggering, and put his other hand on Polaski's arm. "Great God, Polaski! That's the smell of—"

Polaski's dark eyes gleamed with an emotion that might have been triumph. He closed the window.

"It is the smell," he said, "of a gigantic corpse."

THE END

Doubt and Dread can come to the strongest, even to the new-metal Stronghold Man, when naked faith and—truth?—come back for . . .

REUNION

By DAVID R. BUNCH

IT was back in the times when the hours were shooting me down daily, by the minutes, by the seconds, that I had seen him last . . . a long long span ago. We were both flesh then and he was stronger than I, flesh stronger, will stronger, and firmer in faith and mind. He had battle dreams then of how to win with the flesh, how to conquer through to the soul, how to go up at last to the Street where the round Smiles sat beatific all folded in wings and the blissful hands stroked gold, for certainly the harps would be gold. Yes, he went with the big Paper Shield, the Promises couched in the Word, and I said NO! And we parted, though we had been close.

It wrenched me to part from this man, for we had indeed been close, far closer than friends, nearer the battlefield troops who had divided a bomb blast together and somehow lived. Yes, we had divided our own bomb blast together and somehow lived, the terrible bomb blast of a childhood of fear. And we had lived to it different, he had to become stronger in faith, more reliant and sure of the Promises, the things that couldn't be proved, but were there, surely there—he said. I became one to question; all shaken, I needed the things I could touch. With the littlest hint of a threat I would reach for the ball peen of steel to hammer-stroke the Insolent Face of the Fears, not talk of a Beautiful Hour. So we were different who had once been much the same. Our lives went their different ways.

I came over to New Processes Land to become mostly 'replacements'—new-metal steel and a few flesh-strips now hold me neatly to shape—and he stayed with the big Paper Shield, the

Word and the long pulpit-fight for souls. —And now, after all the long span, to see him once again—the comparisons!—it filled me with certain dread. But there was no mistaking—it was not a flesh mutant, it was not a vegetable walking, it was not a masquerade. It was what it was. Dreadfully. As soon as he came on the Warn—

So I took me a calmness bath with the hot rays and the cold. I put the Small Noises on high. I dialed the bravery poems out of the Stronghold wall and thought of all the lines that might somehow help me now, all of the high words of the mind in anguish and courage set on TRY. For I had known he must one day come to where I cowered in my innermost Stronghold den, perhaps even in the cowardly-careful peep-box of steel. Even in the days of my highest triumphs, when many a fortress rocked from my Big War guns and my Stronghold was winning, I had had this whiplash of dread. Some time to be visited, and evaluated, by the Calm Eyes looking—yes, I knew.

What could I say when he came? How set the wide-range mechanized sight of New Processes Land to stare such a calm look back? What tapes would I use to beat his arguments down to our plastic-yard-sheet ground? —I would not blast him out on the open reaches as he came on in, *bleep* and *bleep* and *bleep*, the soft flesh-sound on the Warner like a faucet in old days leaking the night hours down, when you could not sleep—*bleep* and *bleep* and *bleep*. No, I would not blast him. Though I could, easily could.

WHY would I not? How easy to blast him and have done with one whiplash of dread. Out of all the whiplashes one cancel to give just that much more time to practise to be brave for the others. As simple as one small gun going, a little flick of a steel thumb at a knob, and the *bleep* and *bleep* and *bleep* must be gone from my Warner potential, gone from my memory—GONE! But would it? NO. Not gone from my memory, unless I tore out MEMORY and cast it forever out. And I could not do that. NO! Too much depended—all the splendid place and the great gain, all New Processes Land was built upon memory. Was it not? YES! All New Processes was an escape from old, remembered things, and implicit in the very escape was the memory. No, I could not throw out MEMORY from the banked tapes in my mind. So I lived with remembering and the many dreads.

And this, save death, was the blackest prince of dreads, the one that dragged me kicking, crumbling up inside, steel-hollow and

steel-weak, with the scream tapes going, with the coward times full high, out of all my triumph beds. DOUBT. Doubt of my own worthiness, doubt of the rightness of my choice of the new-metal steel adventure, doubt of how I would stand comparisons now—doubt Doubt DOUBT—Why had I not killed him a long long time ago—this measurer, this yardstick?

Yes, I had a chance once. I believed I had a chance once. If I had killed him clean when I killed me, the soft, pulpy and flesh-down-burdened me, and came to New Processes Land to take up my steel parts—it might have worked. Or why had I not brought him along? Well, there were reasons—REASONS—Why does not one, one day, one sportive full-blown decision-type Accomplishment Day, pick up a full-grown mountain and cast it into the sea? REASONS!

Certainly the poems out of the wall were not helping me much now. All the high words of soul were not succeeding in putting me back together where I waited all crumpled-up and broken-wide in my fears. My calmness bath of the hot rays and the cold had failed me a greater more dismal fail than it had ever failed me before. I looked at my steel palms, for indeed it felt as though they were sweating. But was that not silly? Steel palms nervously sweating!? Or was it silly? This was the ultimate dread, save one, save ONE—

So how did he find me? I pressed all the buttons for flags, I flicked all the switches for noise, I turned on the dancers. I let a flurry of balloons go up through my armored roof, up through the gun lids. I filled a picnic sky with soft eagles. I turned on the rainbow air and fixed him a holiday. For he was a special man. Amidst that carnival he found me as two panic eye slits looking, wide-range, out of a peep-box of steel.

"Sorrow to sorrow!" So he said as he came up toward my eyes—in the shimmering haze of my fears and trembling reluctance, a beautiful flesh-form walking, and YES! he had on no clothes. —I had left the main gates open. But I had not meant to let him know so exactly how I could not face him well. Oh sometimes in my panic times, in my own personal Nation of Dread, I shrink to less than a hero. "Sorrow to Sorrow," he said again as he came on slowly—sadly, it seemed — walking toward the eye slits.

HE was a beautiful man and by some miracle in agelessness he appeared not much older than when I had left him, a long long span ago. Indeed he seemed in many ways but a picture of me before I had crossed down for

steel, and yes, we had been in appearance once quite the same. Was it but a copy of me before the new-metal steel adventure? —How my head ached now from the steel drums that would not stop beating!

As I moved out to meet him there was a wild hollow sound in both of my new-metal ears, but my eyes held to his steady look. "Sorrow to sorrow?" I said, and he said, "Yes! And doubt." Then suddenly, strangely, there was no distance at all between us as we stood there and wept and said nothing. He seemed to be weeping real tears from eyes that were a dark depthless stare, while I used the mechanical tear bags with my wide-range mechanized sight, in the manner of New Processes times. But my hurt and my deep anguish were surely not less than his, that day of our reunion, as I held him so gently, being careful with metal arms, that I sometimes held but the air. And him holding me I could not feel through the intricate thickness, and weight, of my new-metal shell. But our conversation continued in tears, unlessened, under the garish picnic sky, amidst the holiday noise and the wild movements of dancers I had set whirling in a false try at being gay.

So the man from the pulpit had come! the soul gatherer, the crier out for the Light. Was it true that he brought me only the tears for a message!? I had expected that when he came he would bring a long sermon and perhaps harsh admonishment for the turn I had taken to steel. And surely there would be words about a long road back. But we merely cried for awhile there together, like two entirely lost shipmates, and nothing at all was said. Then he moved out after awhile and at the very far edge of my Stronghold just before the last, open gate he turned and his lips formed, "Brother!" although with my ears on VERY HIGH I swear I heard no sound. But I made the same word at him and all at once he was gone, a beautiful flesh-form walking, naked, striding the homeless plastic. Or was it but a reflection, and truly he was upside down in the sky?

I turned on a few more dancers, put fresh balloons through the roof and placed the Big Noise HIGH-HIGH. Then in my own personal Area of Silence, amidst all the noise and the havoc of the steel dancers, I suddenly remembered that it was near to two-hundred years, two-hundred steel-driven years, since I had last seen my twin brother! the preacher, the man who had staked it all on the strength of the big Paper Shield. Well, how had he fared with the War? Why was he walking naked now along our plastic-yard-sheet ground?

And why did he, the man of Faith, a prince of the long war bought in the change-winds on the doubt-swept plains of bad souls, bring me only a message of tears?—Sorrow to sorrow? Was he telling me how sorry he was at my condition, each new-metal part of me but a faucet to turn on his tears? Or was he trying to say that sorrow and doubt were all, after all, either his way or mine? Had my brother not found, had he truly not found more than a Shadow in the shade of his big Paper Shield? Had he leaned it against a stone one time out there in a big showdown for souls, taking a breather, and had old Satan seized that shield and run laughing?

The message was unclear . . .

But as so often happens with me, from the Low Valley some toughness hurled me aloft, my fears put out their fight banners once again and doubts stood up long spear points to the air; weak knees that had but a moment before seemed not capable of even a decent stance drove forward and were brave. YES! we shut off the holiday and thumbed dead all the steel dancers. The gun lids closed out their carnival and the soft cellophane eagles collapsed in the rainbow air, even as we turned it all to a darkness. —Since we lived, since we existed, we would act and play out the game. YES! that's what we did. With almost no warning at all we declared war on all the roundabout Strongholds, and soon amidst the stern havoc, the hard contest demands and all the real problems of carnage, there was not time for either doubt, ghosts, or fears.

THE END

He Who Shapes

By ROGER ZELAZNY

Conclusion

Illustrated by SCHELLING

Charles Render is a "Shaper" —one of the few psychiatrists specializing in neuroparticipation therapy. He treats functional mental disorders by means of a device which permits him to induce intensely realistic dreams in his patients and then to enter into these dreams as an active participant, shaping them into symbolic analogues of the person's condition. Because the neural impulses are artificially amplified during this process an almost instantaneous catharsis can sometimes be obtained. The technique is a double-edged affair, however, in that too intense an anxiety-arousal will result in the patient's taking over the dream-sequence and transferring the pattern of aberance to the therapist. For this reason, the technique is never employed in cases involving deep-seated personality disorders or organic brain damage.

Doctor Render is approached by a fellow psychiatrist, Eileen Shallot, who wishes to specialize in neuroparticipation therapy herself. An apparently insurmountable obstacle though, is the fact that she suffers from congenital blindness. She argues her case with Render, however, suggesting that the obstacle might be overcome if a practising neuroparticipant would undertake to transfer sight-impressions directly to her visual cortex, demonstrating their significance through a series of dreams.

Render, unable to judge the strength of the anxiety-reaction which might occur, undertakes the case nevertheless—because he knows it to be unique, because he considers himself very capable, because he is somewhat intrigued by Eileen Shallot.

Render's personal problems involve a strong commitment to the memory of his dead wife, a deep concern for the welfare of his young son, a pronounced ambivalence toward his mistress, Jill, a possibly more-than-clinical interest in the problem of suicide —both actual and neurotically symbolic—and a constant uneasiness whenever he is in the presence of Eileen's seeing-eye dog— Sigmund, a mutant German Shepherd who is capable of speech.

The first sessions with Eileen go well, although Render notes that she idealizes him to the point of cliche and that she constantly attempts to take control of the dream in small ways. Then it becomes necessary for him to suspend the sessions for a time because of a European vacation. Jill supposedly wants to go for

purposes of studying old architecture. Render, something of a claustrophobe, wants mainly to ski.

Prior to their departure, Render's son Peter breaks his ankle in a physical education class; Render, infuriated, decides to change his school. That night he and Jill get very drunk, and for an instant—as his car drives them home—he feels he is in the midst of a dream-sequence which he has been shaping. It takes but an instant for him to realize he is not, when he tries to change the world as he would a dream. But during that moment he experiences an apocalyptic vision of the Fenris Wolf devouring the moon, realizes that he, too, is subject to the dictates of circumstance, and feels a strange forboding as to what may occur before very long.

He is a successful Shaper because of a certain necessary emotional numbness. He is in danger of losing it by falling in love with his patient . . .

III.

". . . The plain, the direct, and the blunt. This is Winchester Cathedral," said the guidebook. "With its floor-to-ceiling shafts, like so many huge treetrunks, it achieves a ruthless control over its spaces: the ceilings are flat; each bay, separated by those shafts, is itself a thing of certainty and stability. It seems, indeed, to reflect something of the spirit of William the Conqueror. Its disdain of mere elaboration and its passionate dedication to the love of another world would make it seem, too, an appropriate setting for some tale out of Mallory . . ."

"Observe the scalloped capitals," said the guide. "In their primitive fluting they anticipated what was later to become a common motif . . ."

"Faugh!" said Render—softly though, because he was in a group inside a church.

"Shh!" said Jill (Fotlock—that was her real last name) DeVille.

But Render was impressed as well as distressed.

Hating Jill's hobby though, had become so much of a reflex with him that he would sooner have taken his rest seated beneath an oriental device which dripped water on his head than to admit he occasionally enjoyed walking through the arcades and the galleries, the passages and the tunnels, and getting all out of breath climbing up the high twisty stairways of towers.

So he ran his eyes over everything, burnt everything down by shutting them, then built the place up again out of the still smouldering ashes of memory, all so that at a later date he would be able to repeat the per-

formance, offering the vision to his one patient who could see only in this manner. This building he disliked less than most. Yes, he would take it back to her.

The camera in his mind photographing the surroundings, Render walked with the others, overcoat over his arm, his fingers anxious to reach after a cigarette. He kept busy ignoring his guide, realizing this to be the nadir of all forms of human protest. As he walked through Winchester he thought of his last two sessions with Eileen Shallot. He recalled his almost unwilling Adam-attitude as he had named all the animals passing before them, led of course by the *one* she had wanted to see, colored fearsome by his own unease. He had felt pleasantly bucolic after boning up on an old Botany text and then proceeding to Shape and name the flowers of the fields.

So far they had stayed out of the cities, far away from the machines. Her emotions were still too powerful at the sight of the simple, carefully introduced objects to risk plunging her into so complicated and chaotic a wilderness yet; he would build her city slowly.

Something passed rapidly, high above the cathedral, uttering a sonic boom. Render took Jill's hand in his for a moment and smiled as she looked up at him. Knowing she verged upon beauty, Jill normally took great pains to achieve it. But today her hair was simply drawn back and knotted behind her head, and her lips and her eyes were pale; and her exposed ears were tiny and white and somewhat pointed.

"Observe the scalloped capitals," he whispered. "In their primitive fluting they anticipated what was later to become a common motif."

"Faugh!" said she.

"Shh!" said a sunburnt little woman nearby, whose face seemed to crack and fall back together again as she pursed and unpursed her lips.

Later, as they strolled back toward their hotel, Render said, "Okay on Winchester?"

"Okay on Winchester."

"Happy?"

"Happy."

"Good, then we can leave this afternoon."

"All right."

"For Switzerland . . ."

She stopped and toyed with a button on his coat.

"Couldn't we just spend a day or two looking at some old chateaux first? After all, they're just across the Channel, and you could be sampling all the local wines while I looked . . ."

"Okay," he said.

She looked up—a trifle surprised.

"What? No argument?" she

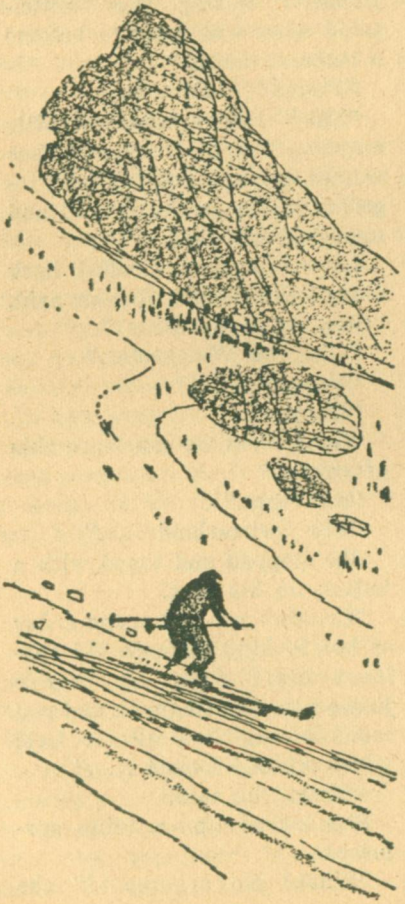
smiled. "Where is your fighting spirit?—to let me push you around like this?"

She took his arm then and they walked on as he said, "Yesterday, while we were galloping about in the innards of that old castle, I heard a weak moan, and then a voice cried out, 'For the love of God, Montresor!' I think it was my fighting spirit, because I'm certain it was my voice. I've given up der geist der stets verneint. Pax vobiscum! Let us be gone to France. Alors!"

"Dear Rendy, it'll only be another day or two . . ."

"Amen," he said, "though my skis that were waxed are already waning."

So they did that, and on the morn of the third day, when she spoke to him of castles in Spain, he reflected aloud that while psychologists drink and only grow angry, psychiatrists have been known to drink, grow angry, and break things. Construing this as a veiled threat aimed at the Wedgewoods she had collected, she acquiesced to his desire to go skiing.



FREE! Render almost screamed it.

His heart was pounding inside his head. He leaned hard. He cut to the left. The wind strapped at his face; a shower of ice crystals, like bullets of emery, fired by him, scraped against his cheek.

He was moving. Aye—the world had ended at Weissflujoch, and Dorftali led down and away from this portal.

His feet were two gleaming rivers which raced across the stark, curving plains; they could not be frozen in their course. Downward. He flowed. Away

from all the rooms of the world. Away from the stifling lack of intensity, from the day's hundred spoon-fed welfares, from the killing pace of the forced amusements that hacked at the Hydra, leisure; away.

And as he fled down the run he felt a strong desire to look back over his shoulder, as though to see whether the world he had left behind and above had set one fearsome embodiment of itself, like a shadow, to trail along after him, hunt him down, and to drag him back to a warm and well-lit coffin in the sky, there to be laid to rest with a spike of aluminum driven through his will and a garland of alternating currents smothering his spirit.

"I hate you," he breathed between clenched teeth, and the wind carried the words back; and he laughed then, for he always analyzed his emotions, as a matter of reflex; and he added, "Exit Orestes, mad, pursued by the Furies . . ."

After a time the slope leveled out and he reached the bottom of the run and had to stop.

He smoked one cigarette then and rode back up to the top so that he could come down it again for non-therapeutic reasons.

* * *

That night he sat before a fire in the big lodge, feeling its warmth soaking into his tired muscles. Jill massaged his shoulders as he played Roschach with the flames, and he came upon a blazing goblet which was snatched away from him in the same instant by the sound of his name being spoken somewhere across the Hall of the Nine Hearths.

"Charles Render!" said the voice (only it sounded more like "Sharlz Runder"), and his head instantly jerked in that direction, but his eyes danced with too many afterimages for him to isolate the source of the calling.

"Maurice?" he queried after a moment, "Bartelmetz?"

"Aye," came the reply, and then Render saw the familiar grizzled visage, set neckless and balding above the red and blue shag sweater that was stretched mercilessly about the wine-keg rotundity of the man who now picked his way in their direction, deftly avoiding the strewn crutches and the stacked skis and the people who, like Jill and Render, disdained sitting in chairs.

Render stood, stretching, and shook hands as he came upon them.

"You've put on more weight," Render observed. "That's unhealthy."

"Nonsense, it's all muscle. How have you been, and what are you up to these days?" He looked down at Jill and she smiled back at him.

"This is Miss DeVille," said Render.

"Jill," she acknowledged.

He bowed slightly, finally releasing Render's aching hand.

". . . And this is Professor Maurice Bartelmetz of Vienna," finished Render, "a benighted disciple of all forms of dialectical pessimism, and a very distinguished pioneer in neuroparticipation—although you'd never guess it to look at him. I had the good fortune to be his pupil for over a year."

Bartelmetz nodded and agreed with him, taking in the Schnapsflasche Render brought forth from a small plastic bag, and accepting the collapsible cup which he filled to the brim.

"Ah, you are a good doctor still," he sighed. "You have diagnosed the case in an instant and you make the proper prescription. Nozdrovia!"

"Seven years in a gulp," Render acknowledged, refilling their glasses.

"Then we shall make time more malleable by sipping it."

They seated themselves on the floor, and the fire roared up through the great brick chimney as the logs burnt themselves back to branches, to twigs, to thin sticks, ring by yearly ring.

Render replenished the fire.

"I read your last book," said Bartelmetz finally, casually, "about four years ago."

Render reckoned that to be correct.

"Are you doing any research work these days?"

Render poked lazily at the fire.

"Yes," he answered, "sort of."

HE glanced at Jill, who was dozing with her cheek against the arm of the huge leather chair that held his emergency bag, the planes of her face all crimson and flickering shadow.

"I've hit upon a rather unusual subject and started with a piece of jobbery I eventually intend to write about."

"Unusual? In what way?"

"Blind from birth, for one thing."

"You're using the ONT&R?"

"Yes. She's going to be a Shaper."

"Verfluchter!—Are you aware of the possible repercussions?"

"Of course."

"You've heard of unlucky Pierre?"

"No."

"Good, then it was successfully hushed. Pierre was a philosophy student at the University of Paris, and he was doing a dissertation on the evolution of consciousness. This past summer he decided it would be necessary for him to explore the mind of an ape, for purposes of comparing a moins-nausee mind with his own, I suppose. At any rate, he ob-

tained illegal access to an ONT&R and to the mind of our hairy cousin. It was never ascertained how far along he got in exposing the animal to the stimuli-bank, but it is to be assumed that such items as would not be immediately trans-subjective between man and ape—traffic sounds and so weiter—were what frightened the creature. Pierre is still residing in a padded cell, and all his responses are those of a frightened ape.

"So, while he did not complete his own dissertation," he finished, "he may provide significant material for someone else's."

Render shook his head.

"Quite a story," he said softly, "but I have nothing that dramatic to contend with. I've found an exceedingly stable individual —a psychiatrist, in fact—one who's already spent time in ordinary analysis. She wants to go into neuroparticipation—but the fear of a sight-trauma was what was keeping her out. I've been gradually exposing her to a full range of visual phenomena. When I've finished she should be completely accommodated to sight, so that she can give her full attention to therapy and not be blinded by vision, so to speak. We've already had four sessions."

"And?"

". . . And it's working fine."

"You are certain about it?"

"Yes, as certain as anyone can be in these matters."

"Mm-hm," said Bartelmetz "Tell me, do you find her excessively strong-willed? By that I mean, say, perhaps an obsessive-compulsive pattern concerning anything to which she's been introduced so far?"

"No."

"Has she ever succeeded in taking over control of the fantasy?"

"No!"

"You lie," he said simply.

Render found a cigarette. After lighting it, he smiled.

"Old father, old artificer," he conceded, "age has not withered your perceptiveness. I may trick me, but never you.—Yes, as a matter of fact, she *is* very difficult to keep under control. She is not satisfied just to see. She wants to Shape things for herself already. It's quite understandable—both to her and to me—but conscious apprehension and emotional acceptance never do seem to get together on things. She has become dominant on several occasions, but I've succeeded in resuming control almost immediately. After all, I *am* master of the bank."

"Hm," mused Bartelmetz. "Are you familiar with a Buddhist text—*Shankara's Catechism?*"

"I'm afraid not."

Then I lecture you on it now.

It posits—obviously not for therapeutic purposes—a true ego and a false ego. The true ego is that part of man which is immortal and shall proceed on to nirvana: the soul, if you like. Very good. Well, the false ego, on the other hand, is the normal mind, bound round with the illusions—the consciousness of you and I and everyone we have ever known professionally. Good?—Good. Now, the stuff this false ego is made up of they call skandhas. These include the feelings, the perceptions, the aptitudes, consciousness itself, and even the physical form. Very unscientific. Yes. Now they are not the same thing as neuroses, or one of Mister Ibsen's life-lies, or an hallucination—no, even though they are all wrong, being parts of a false thing to begin with. Each of the five skandhas is a part of the eccentricity that we call identity—then on top come the neuroses and all the other messes which follow after and keep us in business. Okay?—Okay. I give you this lecture because I need a dramatic term for what I will say, because I wish to say something dramatic. View the skandhas as lying at the bottom of the pond; the neuroses, they are ripples on the top of the water; the 'true ego', if there is one, is buried deep beneath the sand at the bottom. So. The ripples fill up the-the—zwischenwelt—between the object and the subject. The skandhas are a part of the subject, basic, unique, the stuff of his being.—So far, you are with me?"

"With many reservations."

"Good. Now I have defined my term somewhat, I will use it. You are fooling around with skandhas, not simple neuroses. You are attempting to adjust this woman's overall conception of herself and of the world. You are using the ONT&R to do it. It is the same thing as fooling with a psychotic, or an ape. All may seem to go well, but—at any moment, it is possible you may do something, show her some sight, or some way of seeing which will break in upon her selfhood, break a skandha—and pouf!—it will be like breaking through the bottom of the pond. A whirlpool will result, pulling you—where? I do not want you for a patient, young man, young artificer, so I counsel you not to proceed with this experiment. The ONT&R should not be used in such a manner."

Render flipped his cigarette into the fire and counted on his fingers:

"One," he said, "You are making a mystical mountain out of a pebble. All I am doing is adjusting her consciousness to accept an additional area of perception. Much of it is simple transference

work from the other senses.—Two, her emotions were quite intense initially because it *did* involve a trauma—but we've passed that stage already. Now it is only a novelty to her. Soon it will be a commonplace.—Three, Eileen is a psychiatrist herself; she is educated in these matters and deeply aware of the delicate nature of what we are doing.—Four, her sense of identity and her desires, or her skandhas, or whatever you want to call them, are as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar. Do you realize the intense application required for a blind person to obtain the education she has obtained? It took a will of ten-point steel and the emotional control of an ascetic as well—"

"—And if something that strong should break, in a timeless moment of anxiety," smiled Bartelmetz sadly, "may the shades of Sigmund Freud and Karl Jung walk by your side in the valley of darkness.

"—And five," he added suddenly, staring into Render's eyes. "Five," he ticked it off on one finger. "Is she pretty?"

Render looked back into the fire.

"Very clever," sighed Bartelmetz, "I cannot tell whether you are blushing or not, with the rosy glow of the flames upon your face. I fear that you are, though, which would mean that you are aware that you yourself could be the source of the inciting stimulus. I shall burn a candle tonight before a portrait of Adler and pray that he give you the strength to compete successfully in your duel with your patient."

Render looked at Jill, who was still sleeping. He reached out and brushed a lock of her hair back into place.

"Still," said Bartelmetz, "if you do proceed and all goes well, I shall look forward with great interest to the reading of your work. Did I ever tell you that I have treated several Buddhists and never found a 'true ego'?"

Both men laughed.

LIKE me but not like me, that one on a leash, smelling of fear, small, gray and unseeing. *Rrowl* and he'll choke on his collar. His head is empty as the oven till She pushes the button and it makes dinner. Make talk and they never understand, but they are like me. One day I will kill one—why? . . . Turn here.

"Three steps. Up. Glass doors. Handle to right."

Why? Ahead, drop-shaft. Gardens under, down. Smells nice, there. Grass, wetdirt, trees and cleanair. I see. Birds are recorded though. I see all. I.

"Dropshaft. Four steps."

Down. Yes. Want to make loud noises in throat, feel silly. Clean,

smooth, many of trees. God . . . She likes sitting on bench chewing leaves smelling smooth air. Can't see them like me. Maybe now, some. . . ? No.

Can't Bad Sigmund me on grass, trees, here. Must hold it. Pity. Best place . . .

"Watch for steps."

Ahead. To right, to left, to right, to left, trees and grass now. Sigmund sees. Walking . . . Doctor with machine gives her his eyes. *Rrowl* and he will not choke. No fearsmell.

Dig deep hole in ground, bury eyes. God is blind. Sigmund to see. Her eyes now filled, and he is afraid of teeth. Will make her to see and take her high up in the sky to see, away. Leave me here, leave Sigmund with none to see, alone. I will dig a deep hole in the ground . . .

* * *

It was after ten in the morning when Jill awoke. She did not have to turn her head to know that Render was already gone. He never slept late. She rubbed her eyes, stretched, turned onto her side and raised herself on her elbow. She squinted at the clock on the bedside table, simultaneously reaching for a cigarette and her lighter.

As she inhaled, she realized there was no ashtray. Doubtless Render had moved it to the dresser because he did not approve of smoking in bed. With a sigh that ended in a snort she slid out of the bed and drew on her wrap before the ash grew too long.

She hated getting up, but once she did she would permit the day to begin and continue on without lapse through its orderly propression of events.

"Damn him," she smiled. She had wanted her breakfast in bed, but it was too late now.

Between thoughts as to what she would wear, she observed an alien pair of skis standing in the corner. A sheet of paper was impaled on one. She approached it.

"Join me?" asked the scrawl.

She shook her head in an emphatic negative and felt somewhat sad. She had been on skis twice in her life and she was afraid of them. She felt that she should really try again, after his being a reasonably good sport about the chateaux, but she could not even bear the memory of the unseemly downward rushing—which, on two occasions, had promptly deposited her in a snowbank—without wincing and feeling once again the vertigo that had seized her during the attempts.

So she showered and dressed and went downstairs for breakfast.

All nine fires were already roaring as she passed the big hall and looked inside. Some red-faced skiers were holding their

hands up before the blaze of the central hearth. It was not crowded though. The racks held only a few pairs of dripping boots, bright caps hung on pegs, moist skis stood upright in their place beside the door. A few people were seated in the chairs set further back toward the center of the hall, reading papers, smoking, or talking quietly. She saw no one she knew, so she moved on toward the dining room.

As she passed the registration deck the old man who worked there called out her name. She approached him and smiled.

"Letter," he explained, turning to a rack. "Here it is," he announced, handing it to her. "Looks important."

It had been forwarded three times, she noted. It was a bulky brown enevelope, and the return address was that of her attorney.

"Thank you."

She moved off to a seat beside the big window that looked out upon a snow garden, a skating rink, and a distant winding trail dotted with figures carrying skis over their shoulders. She squinted against the brightness as she tore open the envelope.

Yes, it was final. Her attorney's note was accompanied by a copy of the divorce decree. She had only recently decided to end her legal relationship to Mister Fotlock, whose name she had stopped using five years earlier, when they had separated. Now that she had the thing she wasn't sure exactly what she was going to do with it. It would be a hell of a surprise for dear Rendy, though, she decided. She would have to find a reasonably innocent way of getting the information to him. She withdrew her compact and practiced a "Well?" expression. Well, there would be time for that later, she mused. Not too much later, though . . . Her thirtieth birthday, like a huge black cloud, filled an April but four months distant. Well . . . She touched her quizzical lips with color, dusted more powder over her mole, and locked the expression within her compact for future use.

IN the dining room she saw Doctor Bartelmetz, seated before an enormous mound of scrambled eggs, great chains of dark sausages, several heaps of yellow toast, and a half-emptied flask of orange juice. A pot of coffee steamed on the warmer at his elbow. He leaned slightly forward as he ate, wielding his fork like a windmill blade.

"Good morning," she said.

He looked up.

"Miss DeVille—Jill . . . Good morning." He nodded at the chair across from him. "Join me, please."

She did so, and when the waiter approached she nodded and

said, "I'll have the same thing, only about ninety percent less."

She turned back to Bartelmetz.

"Have you seen Charles today?"

"Alas, I have not," he gestured, open-handed, "and I wanted to continue our discussion while his mind was still in the early stages of wakefulness and somewhat malleable. Unfortunately," he took a sip of coffee, "he who sleeps well enters the day somewhere in the middle of its second act."

"Myself, I usually come in around intermission and ask someone for a synopsis," she explained. "So why not continue the discussion with me?—I'm always malleable, and my skandhas are in good shape."

Their eyes met, and he took a bite of toast.

"Aye," he said, at length, "I had guessed as much. Well—good. What do you know of Render's work?"

She adjusted herself in the chair.

"Mm. He being a special specialist in a highly specialized area, I find it difficult to appreciate the few things he does say about it. I'd like to be able to look inside other people's minds sometimes—to see what they're thinking about *me*, of course—but I don't think I could stand staying there very long. Especially," she gave a mock-shudder, "the mind of somebody with —problems. I'm afraid I'd be too sympathetic or too frightened or something. Then, according to what I've read—pow!—like sympathetic magic, it would be my problem.

"Charles never has problems though," she continued, "at least, none that he speaks to me about. Lately I've been wondering, though. That blind girl and her talking dog seem to be too much with him."

"Talking dog?"

"Yes, her seeing-eye dog is one of those surgical mutants."

"How interesting . . . Have you ever met her?"

"Never."

"So," he mused.

"Sometimes a therapist encounters a patient whose problems are so akin to his own that the sessions become extremely mordant," he noted. "It has always been the case with me when I treat a fellow-psychiatrist. Perhaps Charles sees in this situation a parallel to something which has been troubling him personally. I did not administer his personal analysis. I do not know all the ways of his mind, even though he was a pupil of mine for a long while. He was always self-contained, somewhat reticent; he could be quite authoritative on occasion, however. —What are some of the other

things which occupy his attention these days?"

"His son Peter is a constant concern. He's changed the boy's school five times in five years."

HER breakfast arrived. She adjusted her napkin and drew her chair closer to the table.

"—and he has been reading case histories of suicides recently, and talking about them, and talking about them, and talking about them."

"To what end?"

She shrugged and began eating.

"He never mentioned why," she said, looking up again. "Maybe he's writing something . . ."

Bartelmetz finished his eggs and poured more coffee.

"Are you afraid of this patient of his?" he inquired.

"No . . . Yes," she responded, "I am."

"Why?"

"I am afraid of sympathetic magic," she said, flushing slightly.

"Many things could fall under that heading."

"Many indeed," she acknowledged. And, after a moment, "We are united in our concern for his welfare and in agreement as to what represents the threat. So, may I ask a favor?"

"You may."

"Talk to him again," she said. "Persuade him to drop the case."

He folded his napkin.

"I intended to do that after dinner," he stated, "because I believe in the ritualistic value of rescue-motions. They shall be made."

* * *

Dear Father-Image,

Yes, the school is fine, my ankle is getting that way, and my classmates are a congenial lot. No, I am not short on cash, undernourished, or having difficulty fitting into the new curriculum. Okay?

The building I will not describe, as you have already seen the macabre thing. The grounds I cannot describe, as they are presently residing beneath cold white sheets. Brrr! I trust yourself to be enjoying the arts wint'rish. I do not share your enthusiasm for summer's opposite, except within picture frames or as an emblem on ice cream bars.

The ankle inhibits my mobility and my roommate has gone home for the weekend—both of which are really blessings (saith Pangloss), for I now have the opportunity to catch up on some reading. I will do so forthwith.

Prodigally,
Peter

* * *

Render reached down to pat the huge head. It accepted the gesture stoically, then turned its gaze up to the Austrian whom

Render had asked for a light, as if to say, "Must I endure this indignity?" The man laughed at the expression, snapping shut the engraved lighter on which Render noted the middle initial to be a small 'v".

'Thank you," he said, and to the dog: "What is your name?"

"Bismark," it growled.

Render smiled.

"You remind me of another of your kind," he told the dog. "One Sigmund, by name, a companion and guide to a blind friend of mine, in America."

"My Bismark is a hunter," said the young man. "There is no quarry that can outthink him, neither the deer nor the big cats."

The dog's ears pricked forward and he stared up at Render with proud, blazing eyes.

"We have hunted in Africa and the northern and southwestern parts of America. Central America, too. He never loses the trail. He never gives up. He is a beautiful brute, and his teeth could have been made in Solingen."

"You are indeed fortunate to have such a hunting companion."

"I hunt," growled the dog. 'I follow . . . Sometimes, I have, the kill . . ."

"You would not know of the one called Sigmund then, or the woman he guides—Miss Eileen Shallot?" asked Render.

The man shook his head.

"No, Bismark came to me from Massachusetts, but I was never to the Center personally. I am not acquainted with other mutie handlers."

"I see. Well, thank you for the light. Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon."

"Good, after, noon . . ."

Render strolled on up the narrow street, hands in his pockets. He had excused himself and not said where he was going. This was because he had had no destination in mind. Bartelmetz' second essay at counseling had almost led him to say things he would later regret. It was easier to take a walk than to continue the conversation.

On a sudden impulse he entered a small shop and bought a cuckoo clock which had caught his eye. He felt certain that Bartelmetz would accept the gift in the proper spirit. He smiled and walked on. And what was that letter to Jill which the desk clerk had made a special trip to their table to deliver at dinnertime? he wondered. It had been forwarded three times, and its return address was that of a law firm. Jill had not even opened it, but had smiled, overtipped the old man, and tucked it into her purse. He would have to hint subtly as to its contents. His curiosity so aroused that she would be sure to tell him out of pity.

The icy pillars of the sky suddenly seemed to sway before him as a cold wind leapt down out of the north. Render hunched his shoulders and drew his head further below his collar. Clutching the cuckoo clock, he hurried back up the street.

THAT night the serpent which holds its tail in its mouth belched, the Fenris Wolf made a pass at the moon, the little clock said "cuckoo" and tomorrow came on like Manolete's last bull, shaking the gate of horn with the bellowed promise to tread a river of lions to sand.

Render promised himself he would lay off the gooey fondue.

* * *

Later, much later, when they skipped through the skies in a kite-shaped cruiser, Render looked down upon the darkened Earth dreaming its cities full of stars, looked up at the sky where they were all reflected, looked about him at the tape-screens watching all the people who blinked into them, and at the coffee, tea, and mixed drink dispensers who sent their fluids forth to explore the insides of the people they required to push their buttons, then looked across at Jill, whom the old buildings had compelled to walk among their walls—because he knew she felt he should be looking at her then—felt his seat's demand that he convert it into a couch, did so, and slept.

IV.

HER office was full of flowers, and she liked exotic perfumes. Sometimes she burned incense.

She liked soaking in overheated pools, walking through falling snow, listening to too much music, played perhaps too loudly, drinking five or six varieties of liqueurs (usually reeking of anise, sometimes touched with wormwood) every evening. Her hands were soft and lightly freckled. Her fingers were long and tapered. She wore no rings.

Her fingers traced and retraced the floral swellings on the side of her chair as she spoke into the recording unit"

". . . Patient's chief complaints on admission were nervousness, insomnia, stomach pains and a period of depression. Patient has had a record of previous admissions for short periods of time. He had been in this hospital in 1995 for a manic depressive psychosis, depressed type, and he returned here again, 2-3-96. He was in another hospital, 9-20-97. Physical examination revealed a BP of 170/100. He was normally developed and well-nourished on the date of examination, 12-11-98. On this date patient complained of chron-

ic backache, and there was noted some moderate symptoms of alcohol withdrawal. Physical examination further revealed no pathology except that the patient's tendon reflexes were exaggerated but equal. These symptoms were the result of alcohol withdrawal. Upon admission he was shown to be not psychotic, neither delusional nor hallucinated. He was well-oriented as to place, time and person. His psychological condition was evaluated and he was found to be somewhat grandiose and expansive and more than a little hostile. He was considered a potential trouble maker. Because of his experience as a cook, he was assigned to work in the kitchen. His general condition then showed definite improvement. He is less tense and is cooperative. Diagnosis: Manic depressive reaction (external precipitating stress unknown). The degree of psychiatric impairment is mild. He is considered competent. To be continued on therapy and hospitalization."

She turned off the recorder then and laughed. The sound frightened her. Laughter is a social phenomenon and she was alone. She played back the recording then, chewing on the corner of her handkerchief while the soft, clipped words were returned to her. She ceased to hear them after the first dozen or so.

When the recorder stopped talking she turned it off. She was alone. She was very alone. She was so damned alone that the little pool of brightness which occurred when she stroked her forehead and faced the window—that little pool of brightness suddenly became the most important thing in the world. She wanted it to be immense. She wanted it to be an ocean of light. Or else she wanted to grow so small herself that the effect would be the same: she wanted to drown in it.

It had been three weeks, yesterday . . .

Too long, she decided, *I should have waited. No! Impossible! But what if he goes as Riscomb went? No! He won't. He would not. Nothing can hurt him. Never. He is all strength and armor. But—but we should have waited till next month to start. Three weeks . . . Sight withdrawal—that's what it is. Are the memories fading? Are they weaker? (What does a tree look like? Or a cloud?—I can't remember! What is red? What is green? God! It's hysteria! I'm watching and I can't stop it!—Take a pill! A pill!*

HER shoulders began to shake. She did not take a pill though, but bit down harder on the handkerchief until her sharp teeth tore through its fabric.

"Beware," she recited a per-

sonal beatitude, "those who hunger and thirst after justice, for we *will* be satisfied.

"And beware the meek," she continued, "for we shall attempt to inherit the Earth.

"And beware . . ."

There was a brief buzz from the phone-box. She put away her handkerchief, composed her face, turned the unit on.

"Hello . . . ?"

"Eileen, I'm back. How've you been?"

"Good, quite well in fact. How was your vacation?"

"Oh, I can't complain. I had it coming for a long time. I guess I deserve it. Listen, I brought some things back to show you—like Winchester Cathedral. You want to come in this week? I can make it any evening."

Tonight No. I want it too badly. It will set me back if he sees . . .

"How about tomorrow night?" she asked. "Or the one after?"

"Tomorrow will be fine," he said. "Meet you at the P & S, around seven?"

"Yes, that would be pleasant. Same table?"

"Why not?—I'll reserve it."

"All right. I'll see you then."

"Good-bye."

The connection was broken.

Suddenly, then, at that moment, colors swirled again through her head; and she saw trees—oaks and pines, poplars and sycamores—great, and green and brown, and iron-colored; and she saw wads of fleecy clouds, dipped in paintpots, swabbing a pastel sky; and a burning sun, and a small willow tree, and a lake of a deep, almost violet, blue. She folded her torn handkerchief and put it away.

She pushed a button beside her desk and music filled the office: Scriabin. Then she pushed another button and replayed the tape she had dictated, half-listening to each.

* * *

Pierre sniffed suspiciously at the food. The attendant moved away from the tray and stepped out into the hall, locking the door behind him. The enormous salad waited on the floor. Pierre approached cautiously, snatched a handful of lettuce, gulped it.

He was afraid.

If only the steel would stop crashing, and crashing against steel, somewhere in that dark night . . . If only . . .

SIGMUND rose to his feet, yawned, stretched. His hind legs trailed out behind him for a moment, then he snapped to attention and shook himself. She would be coming home soon. Wagging his tail slowly, he glanced up at the human-level clock with the raised numerals, verified his feelings, then crossed the apartment to the teevee. He

rose onto his hind legs, rested one paw against the table and used the other to turn on the set.

It was nearly time for the weather report and the roads would be icy.

* * *

"I have driven through county-wide graveyards," wrote Render, "vast forests of stone that spread further every day.

"Why does man so zealously guard his dead? Is it because this is the monumentally democratic way of immortalization, the ultimate affirmation of the power to hurt—that is to say, life—and the desire that it continue on forever? Unamuno has suggested that this is the case. If it is, then a greater percentage of the population actively sought immortality last year than ever before in history . . ."

* * *

Tch-tchg, tchga-tchg!

"Do you think they're really people?"

"Naw, they're too good."

* * *

The evening was starglint and soda over ice. Render wound the S-7 into the cold sub-subcellar, found his parking place, nosed into it.

There was a damp chill that emerged from the concrete to gnaw like rats' teeth at their flesh. Render guided her toward the lift, their breath preceding them in dissolving clouds.

"A bit of a chill in the air," he noted.

She nodded, biting her lip.

Inside the lift, he sighed, unwound his scarf, lit a cigarette.

"Give me one, please," she requested, smelling the tobacco.

He did.

They rose slowly, and Render leaned against the wall, puffing a mixture of smoke and crystallized moisture.

"I met another mutie shep," he recalled, "in Switzerland. Big as Sigmund. A hunter though, and as Prussian as they come," he grinned.

"Sigmund likes to hunt, too," she observed. "Twice every year we go up to the North Woods and I turn him loose. He's gone for days at a time, and he's always quite happy when he returns. Never says what he's done, but he's never hungry. Back when I got him I guessed that he would need vacations from humanity to stay stable. I think I was right."

The lift stopped, the door opened, and they walked out into the hall, Render guiding her again.

Inside his office, he poked at the thermostat and warm air sighed through the room. He hung their coats in the inner office and brought the great egg out from its nest behind the wall. He connected it to an outlet and moved to convert his desk into a control panel.

"How long do you think it will take?" she asked, running her fingertips over the smooth, cold curves of the egg. "The whole thing, I mean. The entire adaptation to seeing."

He wondered.

"I have no idea," he said, 'no idea whatsoever, yet. We got off to a good start, but there's still a lot of work to be done. I think I'll be able to make a good guess in another three months."

She nodded wistfully, moved to his desk, explored the controls with fingerstrokes like ten feathers.

"Careful you don't push any of those."

"I won't. How long do you think it will take me to learn to operate one?"

"Three months to learn it. Six, to actually become proficient enough to use it on anyone; and an additional six under close supervision before you can be trusted on your own.—About a year altogether."

"Uh-huh." She chose a chair.

Render touched the seasons to life, and the phases of day and night, the breath of the country, the city, the elements that raced naked through the skies, and all the dozens of dancing cues he used to build worlds. He smashed the clock of time and tasted the seven or so ages of man.

"Okay," he turned, "everything is ready."

IT came quickly, and with a minimum of suggestion on Render's part. One moment there was grayness. Then a dead-white fog. Then it broke itself apart, as though a quick wind had arisen, although he heard nor felt a wind.

He stood beside the willow tree beside the lake, and she stood half-hidden among the branches and the lattices of shadow. The sun was slanting its way into evening.

"We have come back," she said, stepping out, leaves in her hair. "For a time I was afraid it had never happened, but I see it all again, and I remember now."

"Good," he said. "Behold yourself." And she looked into the lake.

"I have not changed," she said. "I haven't changed . . ."

"No."

"But you have," she continued, looking up at him. "You are taller, and there is something different . . ."

"No," he answered.

"I am mistaken," she said quickly, "I don't understand everything I see yet.

"I will though."

"Of course."

"What are we going to do?"

"Watch," he instructed her.

Along a flat, no-colored river of road she just then noticed beyond the trees, came the car. It came from the farthest quarter

of the sky, skipping over the mountains, buzzing down the hills, circling through the glades, and splashing them with the colors of its voice—the gray and the silver of synchronized potency—and the lake shivered from its sounds, and the car stopped a hundred feet away, masked by the shrubberies; and it waited. It was the S-7.

"Come with me," he said, taking her hand. "We're going for a ride."

They walked among the trees and rounded the final cluster of bushes. She touched the sleek cocoon, its antennae, its tires, its windows—and the windows transpared as she did so. She stared through them at the inside of the car, and she nodded.

"It is your Spinner."

"Yes." He held the door for her. "Get in. We'll return to the club. The time is now. The memories are fresh, and they should be reasonably pleasant, or neutral."

"Pleasant," she said, getting in.

He closed the door, then circled the car and entered. She watched as he punched imaginary coordinates. The car leapt ahead and he kept a steady stream of trees flowing by them. He could feel the rising tension, so he did not vary the scenery. She swiveled her seat and studied the interior of the car.

"Yes," she finally said, "I can perceive what everything is."

She stared out the window again. She looked at the rushing trees. Render stared out and looked upon rushing anxiety patterns. He opaqued the windows.

"Good," she said, "thank you. Suddenly it was too much to see—all of it, moving past like a . . ."

"Of course," said Render, maintaining the sensations of forward motion. I'd anticipated that. You're getting tougher, though."

After a moment, "Relax," he said, "relax now," and somewhere a button was pushed, and she relaxed, and they drove on, and on and on, and finally the car began to slow, and Render said, "Just for one nice, slow glimpse now, look out your window."

She did.

He drew upon every stimulus in the bank which could promote sensations of pleasure and relaxation, and he dropped the city around the car, and the windows became transparent, and she looked out upon the profiles of towers and a block of monolithic apartments, and then she saw three rapid cafeterias, an entertainment palace, a drugstore, a medical center of yellow brick with an aluminum caduceus set above its archway, and a glassed-in high school, now emptied of

its pupils, a fifty-pump gas station, another drugstore, and many more cars, parked or roaring by them, and people, people moving in and out of the doorways and walking before the buildings and getting into the cars and getting out of the cars; and it was summer, and the light of late afternoon filtered down upon the colors of the city and the colors of the garments the people wore as they moved along the boulevard, as they loafed upon the terraces, as they crossed the balconies, leaned on balustrades and windowsills, emerged from a corner kiosk, entered one, stood talking to one another; a woman walking a poodle rounded a corner; rockets went to and fro in the high sky.

The world fell apart then and Render caught the pieces.

He maintained an absolute blackness, blanketting every sensation but that of their movement forward.

AFTER a time a dim light occurred, and they were still seated in the Spinner, windows blanked again, and the air as they breathed it became a soothing unguent.

"Lord," she said, "the world is so filled. Did I really see all of that?"

"I wasn't going to do that tonight, but you wanted me to. You seemed ready."

"Yes," she said, and the windows became transparent again. She turned away quickly.

"It's gone," he said. "I only wanted to give you a glimpse."

She looked, and it was dark outside now, and they were crossing over a high bridge. They were moving slowly. There was no other traffic. Below them were the Flats, where an occasional smelter flared like a tiny, drowsing volcano, spitting showers of orange sparks skyward; and there were many stars: they glistened on the breathing water that went beneath the bridge; they silhouetted by pinprick the skyline that hovered dimly below its surface. The slanting struts of the bridge marched steadily by.

"You have done it," she said, "and I thank you." Then: "Who are you, really?" (He must have wanted her to ask that.)

"I am Render," he laughed. And they wound their way through a dark, now-vacant city, coming at last to their club and entering the great parking dome.

Inside, he scrutinized all her feelings, ready to banish the world at a moment's notice. He did not feel he would have to, though.

They left the car, moved ahead. They passed into the club, which he had decided would not be crowded tonight. They were shown to their table at the foot

of the bar in the small room with the suit of armor, and they sat down and ordered the same meal over again.

"No," he said, looking down, "it belongs over there."

The suit of armor appeared once again beside the table, and he was once again inside his gray suit and black tie and silver tie clasp shaped like a treelimb.

They laughed.

"I'm just not the type to wear a tin suit, so I wish you'd stop seeing me that way."

"I'm sorry," she smiled. "I don't know how I did that, or why."

"I do, and I decline the nomination. Also, I caution you once again. You are conscious of the fact that this is all an illusion. I had to do it that way for you to get the full benefit of the thing. For most of my patients though, it is the real item while they are experiencing it. It makes a counter-trauma or a symbolic sequence even more powerful. You are aware of the parameters of the game, however, and whether you want it or not this gives you a different sort of control over it than I normally have to deal with. Please be careful."

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to."

"I know. Here comes the meal we just had."

"Ugh! It looks dreadful! Did we eat all that stuff?"

"Yes," he chuckled. "That's a knife, that's a fork, that's a spoon. That's roast beef, and those are mashed potatoes, those are peas, that's butter . . ."

"Goodness! I don't feel so well."

". . . And those are the salads, and those are the salad dressings. This is a brook trout —mm! These are French fried potatoes. This is a bottle of wine. Hmm—let's see—Romanee-Conti, since I'm not paying for it—and a bottle of Yquem for the trou—Hey!"

The room was wavering.

HE bared the table, he banished the restaurant. They were back in the glade. Through the transparent fabric of the world he watched a hand moving along a panel. Buttons were being pushed. The world grew substantial again. Their emptied table was set beside the lake now, and it was still nighttime and summer, and the tablecloth was very white under the glow of the giant moon that hung overhead.

"That was stupid of me," he said. "Awfully stupid. I should have introduced them one at a time. The actual sight of basic, oral stimuli can be very distressing to a person seeing them for the first time. I got so wrapped up in the Shaping that I forgot the patient, which is just dandy! I apologize."

"I'm okay now. Really I am."

He summoned a cool breeze from the lake.

". . . And that is the moon," he added lamely.

She nodded, and she was wearing a tiny moon in the center of her forehead; it glowed like the one above them, and her hair and dress were all of silver.

The bottle of Romanee-Conti stood on the table, and two glasses.

"Where did that come from?"

She shrugged. He poured out a glassful.

"It may taste kind of flat," he said

"It doesn't. Here—" She passed it to him.

As he sipped it he realized it had a taste—a *fruite* such as might be quashed from the grapes grown in the Isles of the Blest, a smooth, muscular *charnu,* and a *capiteux* centrifuged from the fumes of a field of burning poppies. With a start, he knew that his hand must be traversing the route of the perceptions, symphonizing the sensual cues of a transference and a counter-transference which had come upon him all unawares, there beside the lake.

"So it does," he noted, "and now it is time we returned."

"So soon? I haven't seen the cathedral yet . . ."

"So soon."

He willed the world to end, and it did.

"It is cold out there," she said as she dressed, "and dark."

"I know. I'll mix us something to drink while I clear the unit."

"Fine."

He glanced at the tapes and shook his head. He crossed to his bar cabinet.

"It's not exactly Romanee-Conti," he observed, reaching for a bottle.

"So what? I don't mind."

Neither did he, at that moment. So he cleared the unit, they drank their drinks, and he helped her into her coat and they left.

As they rode the lift down to the sub-sub he willed the world to end again, but it didn't.

* * *

Dad,

I hobbled from school to taxi and taxi to spaceport, for the local Air Force Exhibit—Outward, it was called. (Okay, I exaggerated the hobble. It got me extra attention though.) The whole bit was aimed at seducing young manhood into a five-year hitch, as I saw it. But it worked. I wanna join up. I wanna go Out There. Think they'll take me when I'm old enuff? I mean take me Out—not some crummy desk job. Think so?

I do.

There was this dam lite colonel ('scuse the French) who saw this kid lurching around and pressing his nose 'gainst the big window-

panes, and he decided to give him the subliminal sell. Great! He pushed me through the gallery and showed me all the pitchers of AF triumphs, from Moonbase to Marsport. He lectured me on the Great Traditions of the Service, and marched me into a flic room where the Corps had good clean fun on tape, wrestling one another in null-G "where it's all skill and no brawn," and making tinted water sculpture-work way in the middle of the air and doing dismounted drill on the skin of a cruiser. Oh joy!

Seriously though, I'd like to be there when they hit the Outer Five—and On Out. Not because of the bogus balonus in the throwaways, and suchlike crud, but because I think someone of sensibility should be along to chronicle the thing in the proper way. You know, raw frontier observer. Francis Parkman. Mary Austin, like that. So I decided I'm going.

The AF boy with the chicken stuff on his shoulders wasn't in the least way patronizing, gods be praised. We stood on the balcony and watched ships lift off and he told me to go forth and study real hard and I might be riding them some day. I did not bother to tell him that I'm hardly intellectually deficient and that I'll have my B.A. before I'm old enough to do anything with it, even join his Corps. I just watched the ships lift off and said, "Ten years from now I'll be looking down, not up." Then he told me how hard his own training had been, so I did not ask howcum he got stuck with a lousy dirtside assignment like this one. Glad I didn't, now I think on it. He looked more like one of their ads than one of their real people. Hope I never look like an ad.

Thank you for the monies and the warm sox and Mozart's String Quintets, which I'm hearing right now. I wanna put in my bid for Luna instead of Europe next summer. Maybe. . . ? Possibly. . . . ? Contingently. . . ? Huh?—If I can smash that new test you're designing for me. . . ? Anyhow, please think about it.

Your son,
Pete

"Hello. State Psychiatric Institute."

"I'd like to make an appointment for an examination."

"Just a moment. I'll connect you with the Appointment Desk."

"Hello. Appointment Desk."

"I'd like to make an appointment for an examination."

"Just a moment . . . What sort of examination."

"I want to see Doctor Shallot, Eileen Shallot. As soon as possible."

"Just a moment. I'll have to check her schedule . . . Could you make it at two o'clock next Tuesday?"

"That would be just fine."

"What is the name, please?"

"DeVille. Jill DeVille."

"All right, Miss DeVille. That's two o'clock, Tuesday."

"Thank you."

THE man walked beside the highway. Cars passed along the highway. The cars in the high-accelleration lane blurred by.

Traffic was light.

It was 10:30 in the morning, and cold.

The man's fur-lined collar was turned up, his hands were in his pockets, and he leaned into the wind. Beyond the fence, the road was clean and dry.

The morning sun was buried in clouds. In the dirty light, the man could see the tree a quarter mile ahead.

His pace did not change. His eyes did not leave the tree. The small stones clicked and crunched beneath his shoes.

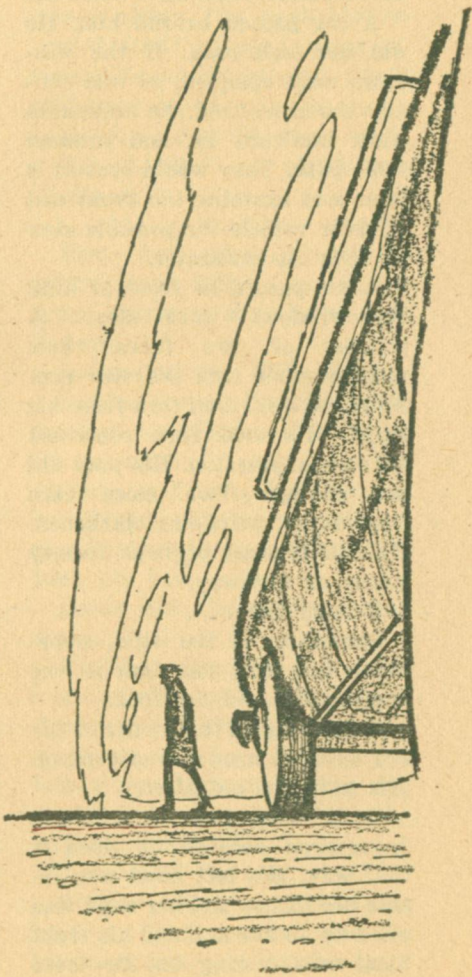
When he reached the tree he took off his jacket and folded it neatly.

He placed it upon the ground and climbed the tree.

As he moved out onto the limb which extended over the fence, he looked to see that no traffic was approaching. Then he seized the branch with both hands, lowered himself, hung a moment, and dropped onto the highway.

It was a hundred yards wide, the eastbound half of the highway.

He glanced west, saw there



was still no traffic coming his way, then began to walk toward the center island. He knew he would never reach it. At this time of day the cars were moving at approximately one hundred-sixty miles an hour in the high-accelleration lane. He walked on.

A car passed behind him. He did not look back. If the windows were opaqued, as was usually the case, then the occupants were unaware he had crossed their path. They would hear of it later and examine the front end of their vehicle for possible sign of such an encounter.

A car passed in front of him. Its windows were clear. A glimpse of two faces, their mouths made into O's, was presented to him, then torn from his sight. His own face remained without expression. His pace did not change. Two more cars rushed by, windows darkened. He had crossed perhaps twenty yards of highway.

Twenty-five . . .

Something in the wind, or beneath his feet, told him it was coming. He did not look.

Something in the corner of his eye assured him it was coming. His gait did not alter.

Cecil Green had the windows transpared because he liked it that way. His left hand was inside her blouse and her skirt was piled up on her lap, and his right hand was resting on the lever which would lower the seats. Then she pulled away, making a noise down inside her throat.

His head snapped to the left.

He saw the walking man.

He saw the profile which never turned to face him fully. He saw that the man's gait did not alter.

Then he did not see the man.

There was a slight jar, and the windshield began cleaning itself. Cecil Green raced on.

He opaqued the windows.

"How. . . ?" he asked after she was in his arms again, and sobbing.

"The monitor didn't pick him up . . ."

"He must not have touched the fence . . ."

"He must have been out of his mind!"

"Still, he could have picked an easier way."

It could have been any face . . . Mine?

Frightened, Cecil lowered the seats.

CHARLES Render was writing the "Necropolis" chapter for *The Missing Link is Man*, which was to be his first book in over four years. Since his return he had set aside every Tuesday and Thursday afternoons to work on it, isolating himself in his office, filling pages with a chaotic longhand.

"There are many varieties of death, as opposed to dying . . ."

he was writing, just as the intercomm buzzed briefly, then long, then again briefly.

"Yes?" he asked it, pushing down on the switch.

"You have a visitor," and there was a short intake of breath between "a" and "visitor".

He slipped a small aerosol into his side pocket, then rose and crossed the office.

He opened the door and looked out.

"Doctor . . . Help . . ."

Render took three steps, then dropped to one knee.

"What's the matter?"

"Come she is . . . sick," he growled.

"Sick? How? What's wrong?"

"Don't know. You come."

Render stared into the unhuman eyes.

"What kind of sick?" he insisted.

"Don't know," repeated the dog. "Won't talk. Sits. I . . . feel, she is sick."

"How did you get here?"

"Drove. Know the co, or, din, ates . . . Left car, outside."

"I'll call her right now." Render turned.

"No good. Won't answer."

He was right.

Render returned to his inner office for his coat and medkit. He glanced out the window and saw where her car was parked, far below, just inside the entrance to the marginal, where the monitor had released it into manual control. If no one assumed that control a car was automatically parked in neutral. The other vehicles were passed around it.

So simple even a dog can drive one, he reflected. *Better get downstairs before a cruiser comes along. It's probably reported itself stopped there already. Maybe not, though. Might still have a few minutes grace.*

He glanced at the huge clock.

"Okay, Sig," he called out. "Let's go."

They took the lift to the ground floor, left by way of the front entrance and hurried to the car.

Its engine was still idling.

Render opened the passenger-de door and Sigmund leapt in. He squeezed by him into the driver's seat then, but the dog was already pushing the primary coordinates and the address tabs with his paw.

Looks like I'm in the wrong seat.

He lit a cigarette as the car swept ahead into a U-underpass. It emerged on the opposite marginal, sat poised a moment, then joined the traffic flow. The dog directed the car into the high-accelleration lane.

"Oh," said the dog, "oh."

Render felt like patting his head at that moment, but he looked at him, saw that his teeth

were bared, and decided against it.

"When did she start acting peculiar?" he asked.

"Came home from work. Did not eat. Would not answer me, when I talked. Just sits."

"Has she ever been like this before?"

"No."

What could have precipitated it?—But maybe she just had a bad day. After all, he's only a dog—sort of.—No. He'd know. But what, then?

"How was she yesterday—and when she left home this morning?"

"Like always."

Render tried calling her again. There was still no answer.

"You, did, it," said the dog.

"What do you mean?"

"Eyes. Seeing. You. Machine. Bad."

"No," said Render, and his hand rested on the unit of stunspray in his pocket.

"Yes," said the dog, turning to him again. "You will, make her well. . . ?"

"Of course," said Render.

Sigmund stared ahead again.

RENDER felt physically exhilirated and mentally sluggish. He sought the confusion factor. He had had these feelings about the case since that first session. There was something very unsettling about Eileen Shallot: a combination of high intelligence and helplessness, of determination and vulnerability, of sensitivity and bitterness.

Do I find that especially attractive?—No. It's just the counter-transference, damn it!

"You smell afraid," said the dog.

"Then color me afraid," said Render, "and turn the page."

They slowed for a series of turns, picked up speed again, slowed again, picked up speed again. Finally, they were traveling along a narrow section of roadway through a semi-residential area of town. The car turned up a side street, proceeded about half a mile further, clicked softly beneath its dashboard, and turned into the parking lot behind a high brick apartment building. The click must have been a special servomech which took over from the point where the monitor released it, because the car crawled across the lot, headed into its transparent parking stall, then stopped. Render turned off the ignition.

Sigmund had already opened the door on his side. Render followed him into the building, and they rode the elevator to the fiftieth floor. The dog dashed on ahead up the hallway, pressed his nose against a plate set low in a doorframe, and waited. After a moment, the door swung several inches inward. He pushed it

open with his shoulder and entered. Render followed, closing the door behind him.

The apartment was large, its walls pretty much unadorned, its color combinations unnerving. A great library of tapes filled one corner; a monstrous combination-broadcaster stood beside it. There was a wide bowlegged table set in front of the window, and a low couch along the right-hand wall; there was a closed door beside the couch; an archway to the left apparently led to other rooms. Eileen sat in an overstuffed chair in the far corner by the window. Sigmund stood beside the chair.

Render crossed the room and extracted a cigarette from his case. Snapping open his lighter, he held the flame until her head turned in that direction.

"Cigarette?" he asked.

"Charles?"

"Right."

"Yes, thank you. I will."

She held out her hand, accepted the cigarette, put it to her lips.

"Thanks.—What are you doing here?"

"Social call. I happened to be in the neighborhood."

"I didn't hear a buzz, or a knock."

"You must have been dozing. Sig let me in."

"Yes, I must have." She stretched. "What time is it?"

"It's close to four-thirty."

"I've been home over two hours then . . . Must have been very tired . . ."

"How do you feel now?"

"Fine," she declared. "Care for a cup of coffee?"

"Don't mind if I do."

"A steak to go with it?"

"No thanks."

"Bicardi in the coffee?"

"Sounds good."

"Excuse me then. It'll only take a moment."

She went through the door beside the sofa and Render caught a glimpse of a large, shiny, automatic kitchen.

"Well?" he whispered to the dog.

Sigmund shook his head.

"Not same."

Render shook his head.

He deposited his coat on the sofa, folding it carefully about the medkit. He sat beside it and thought.

Did I throw too big a chunk of seeing at once? Is she suffering from depressive side-effects—say, memory repressions, nervous fatigue? Did I upset her sensory adaptation syndrome somewhow? Why have I been proceeding so rapidly anyway? There's no real hurry. Am I so damned eager to write the thing up?—Or am I doing it because she wants me to? Could she be that strong, consciously or unconsciously? Or am I that vulnerable—somehow?

SHE called him to the kitchen to carry out the tray. He set it on the table and seated himself across from her.

"Good coffee," he said, burning his lips on the cup.

"Smart machine," she stated, facing his voice.

Sigmund stretched out on the carpet next to the table, lowered his head between his forepaws, sighed, and closed his eyes.

"I've been wondering," said Render, "whether or not there were any aftereffects to that last session—like increased synesthesiac experiences, or dreams involving forms, or hallucinations or . . ."

"Yes," she said flatly, "dreams."

"What kind?"

"That last session. I've dreamt it over, and over."

"Beginning to end?"

"No, there's no special order to the events. We're riding through the city, or over the bridge, or sitting at the table, or walking toward the car—just flashes, like that. Vivid ones."

"What sort of feelings accompany these—flashes?"

"I don't know. They're all mixed up."

"What are your feelings now, as you recall them."

"The same, all mixed up."

"Are you afraid?"

"N-no. I don't think so."

"Do you want to take a vacation from the thing? Do you feel we've been proceeding too rapidly?"

"No. That's not it at all. It's—well, it's like learning to swim. When you finally learn how, why then you swim and you swim and you swim until you're all exhausted. Then you just lie there gasping in air and remembering what it was like, while your friends all hover and chew you out for overexerting yourself—and it's a good feeling, even though you do take a chill and there's pins and needles inside all your muscles. At least, that's the way I do things. I felt that way after the first session and after this last one. First Times are always very special times . . . The pins and the needles are gone though, and I've caught my breath again. Lord, I don't want to stop now! I feel fine."

"Do you usually take a nap in the afternoon?"

The ten red nails of her fingernails moved across the tabletop as she stretched.

". . . Tired," she smiled, swallowing a yawn. "Half the staff's on vacation or sick leave and I've been beating my brains out all week. I was about ready to fall on my face when I left work. I feel all right now that I've rested, though."

She picked up her coffee cup with both hands, took a large swallow.

"Uh-huh," he said. "Good. I was a bit worried about you. I'm glad to see there was no reaon."

She laughed.

"Worried? You've read Doctor Riscomb's notes on my analysis —and on the ONT&R trial—and you think I'm the sort to worry about? Ha! I have an operationally beneficent neurosis concerning my adequacy as a human being. It focusses my energies, coordinates my efforts toward achievement. It enhances my sense of identity . . ."

"You do have one hell of a memory," he noted. "That's almost verbatim."

"Of course."

"You had Sigmund worried today, too."

"Sig? How?"

The dog stirred uneasily, opened one eye.

"Yes," he growled, glaring up at Render. "He needs, a ride, home."

"Have you been driving the car again?"

"Yes."

"After I told you not to?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I was a, fraid. You would, not, answer me, when I talked."

"I was *very* tired—and if you ever take the car again, I'm going to have the door fixed so you can't come and go as you please."

"Sorry."

"There's nothing wrong with me."

"I, see."

"You are *never* to do it again."

"Sorry." His eye never left Render; it was like a burning lens.

Render looked away.

"Don't be too hard on the poor fellow," he said. "After all, he thought you were ill and he went for the doctor. Supposing he'd been right? You'd owe him thanks, not a scolding."

Unmollified, Sigmund glared a moment longer and closed his eye.

"He has to be told when he does wrong," she finished.

"I suppose," he said, drinking his coffee. "No harm done, anyhow. Since I'm here, let's talk shop. I'm writing something and I'd like an opinion."

"Great. Give me a footnote?"

"Two or three.—In your opinion, do the general underlying motivations that lead to suicide differ in different periods of history, or in different cultures?"

"My well-considered opinion is no, they don't," she said. "Frustrations can lead to depressions or frenzies; and if these are severe enough, they can lead to self-destruction. You ask me about motivations and I think they stay pretty much the same. I feel this is a cross-cultural, cross-temporal aspect of the human condition. I don't think it

could be changed without changing the basic nature of man."

"Okay. Check. Now, what of the inciting element?" he asked. "Let man be a constant, his environment is still a variable. If he is placed in an overprotective life-situation, do you feel it would take more or less to depress him —or stimulate him to frenzy— than it would take in a not so protective environment?"

"Hm. Being case-oriented, I'd say it would depend on the man. But I see what you're driving at: a mass predisposition to jump out windows at the drop of a hat —the window even opening itself for you, because you asked it to— the revolt of the bored masses. I don't like the notion. I hope it's wrong."

"So do I, but I was thinking of symbolic suicides too—functional disorders that occur for pretty flimsy reasons."

"Aha! Your lecture last month: autopsychomimesis. I have the tape. Well-told, but I can't agree."

"Neither can I, now. I'm rewriting that whole section— "Thanatos in Cloudcuckooland," I'm calling it. It's really the death-instinct moved nearer the surface."

"If I get you a scalpel and a cadaver, will you cut out the death-instinct and let me touch it?"

"Couldn't," he put the grin into his voice, "it would be all used up in a cadaver. Find me a volunteer though, and he'll prove my case by volunteering."

"Your logic is unassailable," she smiled. "Get us some more coffee, okay?"

RENDER went to the kitchen, spiked and filled the cups, drank a glass of water, returned to the living room. Eileen had not moved; neither had Sigmund.

"What do you do when you're not busy being a Shaper?" she asked him.

"The same things most people do—eat, drink, sleep, talk, visit friends and not-friends, visit places, read . . ."

"Are you a forgiving man?"

"Sometimes. Why?"

"Then forgive me. I argued with a woman today, a woman named De Ville."

"What about?"

"You—and she accused me of such things it were better my mother had not born me. Are you going to marry her?"

"No, marriage is like alchemy. It served an important purpose once, but I hardly feel it's here to stay."

"Good."

"What did you say to her?"

"I gave her a clinic referral card that said, 'Diagnosis: Bitch. Prescription: Drug therapy and a tight gag.'"

"Oh," said Render, showing interest.

"She tore it up and threw it in my face."

"I wonder why?"

She shrugged, smiled, made a gridwork on the tablecloth.

" 'Fathers and elders, I ponder,' " sighed Render, " 'what is hell?' "

" 'I maintain it is the suffering of being unable to love,' " she finished. "Was Dostoevsky right?"

"I doubt it. I'd put him into group therapy, myself. That'd be *real* hell for him—with all those people acting like his characters, and enjoying it so."

Render put down his cup, pushed his chair away from the table.

"I suppose you must be going now?"

"I really should," said Render.

"And I can't interest you in food?"

"No."

She stood.

"Okay, I'll get my coat."

"I could drive back myself and just set the car to return."

"No! I'm frightened by the notion of empty cars driving around the city. I'd feel the thing was haunted for the next two-and-a-half weeks.

"Besides," she said, passing through the archway, "you promised me Winchester Cathedral."

"You want to do it today?"

"If you can be persuaded."

As Render stood deciding, Sigmund rose to his feet. He stood directly before him and stared upward into his eyes. He opened his mouth and closed it, several times, but no sounds emerged. Then he turned away and left the room.

"No," Eileen's voice came back, "you will stay here until I return."

Render picked up his coat and put it on, stuffing the medkit into the far pocket.

As they walked up the hall toward the elevator, Render thought he heard a very faint and very distant howling sound.

IN this place, of all places, Render knew he was the master of all things.

He was at home on those alien worlds, without time, those worlds where flowers copulate and the stars do battle in the heavens, falling at last to the ground, bleeding, like so many spilt and shattered chalices, and the seas part to reveal stairways leading down, and arms emerge from caverns, waving torches that flame like liquid faces—a midwinter night's nightmare, summer go a-begging, Render knew—for he had visited those worlds on a professional basis for the better part of a decade. With the crooking of a finger he

could isolate the sorcerors, bring them to trial for treason against the realm—aye, and he could execute them, could appoint their successors.

Fortunately, this trip was only a courtesy call . . .

He moved forward through the glade, seeking her.

He could feel her awakening presence all about him.

He pushed through the branches, stood beside the lake. It was cold, blue, and bottomless, the lake, reflecting that slender willow which had become the station of her arrival.

"Eileen!"

The willow swayed toward him, swayed away.

"Eileen! Come forth!"

Leaves fell, floated upon the lake, disturbed its mirror-like placidity, distorted the reflections.

"Eileen?"

All the leaves yellowed at once then, dropped down into the water. The tree ceased its swaying. There was a strange sound in the darkening sky, like the humming of high wires on a cold day.

Suddenly there was a double file of moons passing through the heavens.

Render selected one, reached up and pressed it. The others vanished as he did so, and the world brightened; the humming went out of the air.

He circled the lake to gain a subjective respite from the rejection-action and his counter to it. He moved up along an aisle of pines toward the place where he wanted the cathedral to occur. Birds sang now in the trees. The wind came softly by him. He felt her presence quite strongly.

"Here, Eileen. Here."

She walked beside him then, green silk, hair of bronze, eyes of molten emerald; she wore an emerald in her forehead. She walked in green slippers over the pine needles, saying: "What happened?"

"You were afraid."

"Why?"

"Perhaps you fear the cathedral. Are you a witch?" he smiled.

"Yes, but it's my day off."

He laughed, and he took her arm, and they rounded an island of foliage, and there was the cathedral reconstructed on a grassy rise, pushing its way above them and above the trees, climbing into the middle air, breathing out organ notes, reflecting a stray ray of sunlight from a plane of glass.

"Hold tight to the world," he said. "Here comes the guided tour."

They moved forward and entered.

" '. . . With its floor-to-ceiling shafts, like so many huge tree-trunks, it achieves a ruthless control over its spaces,' " he said.

"—Got that from the guidebook. This is the north transept . . ."

" 'Greensleeves,' " she said, "the organ is playing 'Greensleeves.' "

"So it is. You can't blame me for that though.—Observe the scalloped capitals—"

"I want to go nearer the music."

"Very well. This way then."

RENDER felt that something was wrong. He could not put his finger on it.

Everything retained its solidity . . .

Something passed rapidly then, high above the cathedral, uttering a sonic boom. Render smiled at that, remembering now; it was like a slip of the tongue: for a moment he had confused Eileen with Jill—yes, that was what had happened.

Why, then . . .

A burst of white was the altar. He had never seen it before, anywhere. All the walls were dark and cold about them. Candles flickered in corners and high niches. The organ chorded thunder under invisible hands.

Render knew that something was wrong.

He turned to Eileen Shallot, whose hat was a green cone towering up into the darkness, trailing wisps of green veiling. Her throat was in shadow, but . . .

"That necklace—Where?"

"I don't know," she smiled.

The goblet she held radiated a rosy light. It was reflected from her emerald. It washed him like a draft of cool air.

"Drink?" she asked.

"Stand still," he ordered.

He willed the walls to fall down. They swam in shadow.

"Stand still!" he repeated urgently. "Don't do anything. Try not even to think.

"—Fall down!" he cried. And the walls were blasted in all directions and the roof was flung over the top of the world, and they stood amid ruins lighted by a single taper. The night was black as pitch.

"Why did you do that?" she asked, still holding the goblet out toward him.

"Don't think. Don't think anything," he said. "Relax. You are very tired. As that candle flickers and wanes so does your consciousness. You can barely keep awake. You can hardly stay on your feet. Your eyes are closing. There is nothing to see here anyway."

He willed the candle to go out. It continued to burn.

"I'm not tired. Please have a drink."

He heard organ music through the night. A different tune, one he did not recognize at first.

"I need your cooperation."

"All right. Anything."

"Look! The moon!" he pointed.

She looked upward and the moon appeared from behind an inky cloud.

". . . And another, and another."

Moons, like strung pearls, proceeded across the blackness.

"The last one will be red," he stated.

It was.

HE reached out then with his right index finger, slid his arm sideways along his field of vision, then tried to touch the red moon.

His arm ached, it burned. He could not move it.

"Wake up!" he screamed.

The red moon vanished, and the white ones.

"Please take a drink."

He dashed the goblet from her hand and turned away. When he turned back she was still holding it before him.

"A drink?"

He turned and fled into the night.

It was like running through a waist-high snowdrift. It was wrong. He was compounding the error by running—he was minimizing his strength, maximizing hers. It was sapping his energies, draining him.

He stood still in the midst of the blackness.

"The world around me moves," he said. "I am its center."

"Please have a drink," she said, and he was standing in the glade beside their table set beside the lake. The lake was black and the moon was silver, and high, and out of his reach. A single candle flickered on the table, making her hair as silver as her dress. She wore the moon on her brow. A bottle of Romanee-Conti stood on the white cloth beside a wide-brimmed wine glass. It was filled to overflowing, that glass, and rosy beads clung to its lip. He was very thirsty, and she was lovelier than anyone he had ever seen before, and her necklace sparkled, and the breeze came cool off the lake, and there was something—something he should remember . . .

He took a step toward her and his armor clinked lightly as he moved. He reached toward the glass and his right arm stiffened with pain and fell back to his side.

"You are wounded!"

Slowly, he turned his head. The blood flowed from the open wound in his bicep and ran down his arm and dripped from his fingertips. His armor had been breached. He forced himself to look away.

"Drink this, love. It will heal you."

She stood.

"I will hold the glass."

He stared at her as she raised it to his lips.

"Who am I?" he asked.

She did not answer him, but something replied—within a splashing of waters out over the lake:

"You are Render, the Shaper."

"Yes, I remember," he said; and turning his mind to the one lie which might break the entire illusion he forced his mouth to say: "Eileen Shallot, I hate you."

The world shuddered and swam about him, was shaken, as by a huge sob.

"Charles!" she screamed, and the blackness swept over them.

"Wake up! Wake up!" he cried, and his right arm burned and ached and bled in the darkness.

HE stood alone in the midst of a white plain. It was silent, it was endless. It sloped away toward the edges of the world. It gave off its own light, and the sky was no sky, but was nothing overhead. Nothing. He was alone. His own voice echoed back to him from the end of the world: ". . . hate you," it said, ". . . hate you."

He dropped to his knees. He was Render.

He wanted to cry.

A red moon appeared above the plain, casting a ghastly light over the entire expanse. There was a wall of mountains to the left of him, another to his right.

He raised his right arm. He helped it with his left hand. He clutched his wrist, extended his index finger. He reached for the moon.

Then there came a howl from high in the mountains, a great wailing cry—half-human, all challenge, all loneliness and all remorse. He saw it then, treading upon the mountains, its tail brushing the snow from their highest peaks, the ultimate loup-garou of the North—Fenris, son of Loki—raging at the heavens.

It leapt into the air. It swallowed the moon.

It landed near him, and its great eyes blazed yellow. It stalked him on soundless pads, across the cold white fields that lay between the mountains; and he backed away from it, up hills and down slopes, over crevasses and rifts, through valleys, past stalagmites and pinnacles—under the edges of glaciers, beside frozen river beds, and always downwards—until its hot breath bathed him and its laughing mouth was opened above him.

He turned then and his feet became two gleaming rivers carrying him away.

The world jumped backwards. He glided over the slopes. Downward. Speeding—

Away . . .

He looked back over his shoulder.

In the distance, the gray shape loped after him.

He felt that it could narrow

the gap if it chose. He had to move faster.

The world reeled about him. Snow began to fall.

He raced on.

Ahead, a blur, a broken outline.

He tore through the veils of snow which now seemed to be falling upward from off the ground—like strings of bubbles.

He approached the shattered form.

Like a swimmer he approached —unable to open his mouth to speak, for fear of drowning—of drowning and not knowing, of never knowing.

He could not check his forward motion; he was swept tidelike toward the wreck. He came to a stop, at last, before it.

Some things never change. They are things which have long ceased to exist as objects and stand solely as never-to-be-calendared occasions outside that sequence of elements called Time.

Render stood there and did not care if Fenris leapt upon his back and ate his brains. He had covered his eyes, but he could not stop the seeing. Not this time. He did not care about anything. Most of himself lay dead at his feet.

There was a howl. A gray shape swept past him.

The baleful eyes and bloody muzzle rooted within the wrecked car, champing through the steel, the glass, groping inside for . . .

"No! Brute! Chewer of corpses!" he cried. "The dead are sacred! *My* dead are sacred!"

He had a scalpel in his hand then, and he slashed expertly at the tendons, the bunches of muscle on the straining shoulders, the soft belly, the ropes of the arteries.

Weeping, he dismembered the monster, limb by limb, and it bled and it bled, fouling the vehicle and the remains within it with its infernal animal juices, dripping and running until the whole plain was reddened and writhing about them.

RENDER fell across the pulverized hood, and it was soft and warm and dry. He wept upon it.

"Don't cry," she said.

He was hanging onto her shoulder then, holding her tightly, there beside the black lake beneath the moon that was Wedgewood. A single candle flickered upon their table. She held the glass to his lips.

"Please drink it."

"Yes, give it to me!"

He gulped the wine that was all softness and lightness. It burned within him. He felt his strength returning.

"I am . . ."

"*—Render, the Shaper,*" splashed the lake.

"No!"

He turned and ran again, looking for the wreck. He had to go back, to return . . .

"You can't."

"I can!" he cried. "I can, if I try . . ."

Yellow flames coiled through the thick air. Yellow serpents. They coiled, glowing, about his ankles. Then through the murk, two-headed and towering, approached his Adversary.

Small stones rattled past him. An overpowering odor corkscrewed up his nose and into his head.

"Shaper!" came the bellow from one head.

"You have returned for the reckoning!" called the other.

Render stared, remembering.

"No reckoning, Thaumiel," he said. "I beat you and I chained you for—Rothman, yes, it was Rothman—the cabalist." He traced a pentagram in the air. "Return to Qliphoth. I banish you."

"This place be Qliphoth."

". . . By Khamael, the angel of blood, by the hosts of Seraphim, in the Name of Elohim Gebor, I bid you vanish!"

"Not this time," laughed both heads.

It advanced.

Render backed slowly away, his feet bound by the yellow serpents. He could feel the chasm opening behind him. The world was a jigsaw puzzle coming apart. He could see the pieces separating.

"Vanish!"

The giant roared out its double-laugh.

Render stumbled.

"This way, love!"

She stood within a small cave to his right.

He shook his head and backed toward the chasm.

Thaumiel reached out toward him.

Render toppled back over the edge.

"Charles!" she screamed, and the world shook itself apart with her wailing.

"Then Vernichtung," he answered as he fell. "I join you in darkness."

Everything came to an end.

* * *

"I want to see Doctor Charles Render."

"I'm sorry, that is impossible."

"But I skip-jetted all the way here, just to thank him. I'm a new man! He changed my life!"

"I'm sorry, Mister Erikson. When you called this morning, I told you it was impossible."

"Sir, I'm Representative Erikson—and Render once did me a great service."

"Then you can do him one now. Go home."

"You can't talk to me that way!"

"I just did. Please leave. May-

be next year sometime . . ."

"But a few words can do wonders . . ."

"Save them!"

"I-I'm sorry . . ."

LOVELY as it was, pinked over with the morning—the slopping, steaming bowl of the sea—he knew that it *had* to end. Therefore . . .

He descended the high tower stairway and he entered the courtyard. He crossed to the bower of roses and he looked down upon the pallet set in its midst.

"Good morrow, m'lord," he said.

"To you the same," said the knight, his blood mingling with the earth, the flowers, the grasses, flowing from his wound, sparkling over his armor, dripping from his fingertips.

"Naught hath healed?"

The knight shook his head.

"I empty. I wait."

"Your waiting is near ended."

"What mean you?" He sat upright.

"The ship. It approacheth harbor."

The knight stood. He leaned his back against a mossy tree-trunk. He stared at the huge, bearded servitor who continued to speak, words harsh with barbarci accents:

"It cometh like a dark swan before the wind—returning."

"Dark, say you? Dark?"

"The sails be black, Lord Tristram."

"You lie!"

"Do you wish to see? To see for yourself?—Look then!"

He gestured.

The earth quaked, the wall toppled. The dust swirled and settled. From where they stood they could see the ship moving into the harbor on the wings of the night.

"No! You lied!—See! They are white!"

The dawn danced upon the waters. The shadows fled from the ship's sails.

"No, you fool! Black! They *must* be!"

"White! White!—Isolde! You have kept faith! You have returned!"

He began running toward the harbor.

"Come back!—Your wound! You are ill!—Stop . . ."

The sails were white beneath a sun that was a red button which the servitor reached quickly to touch.

Night fell.

THE END

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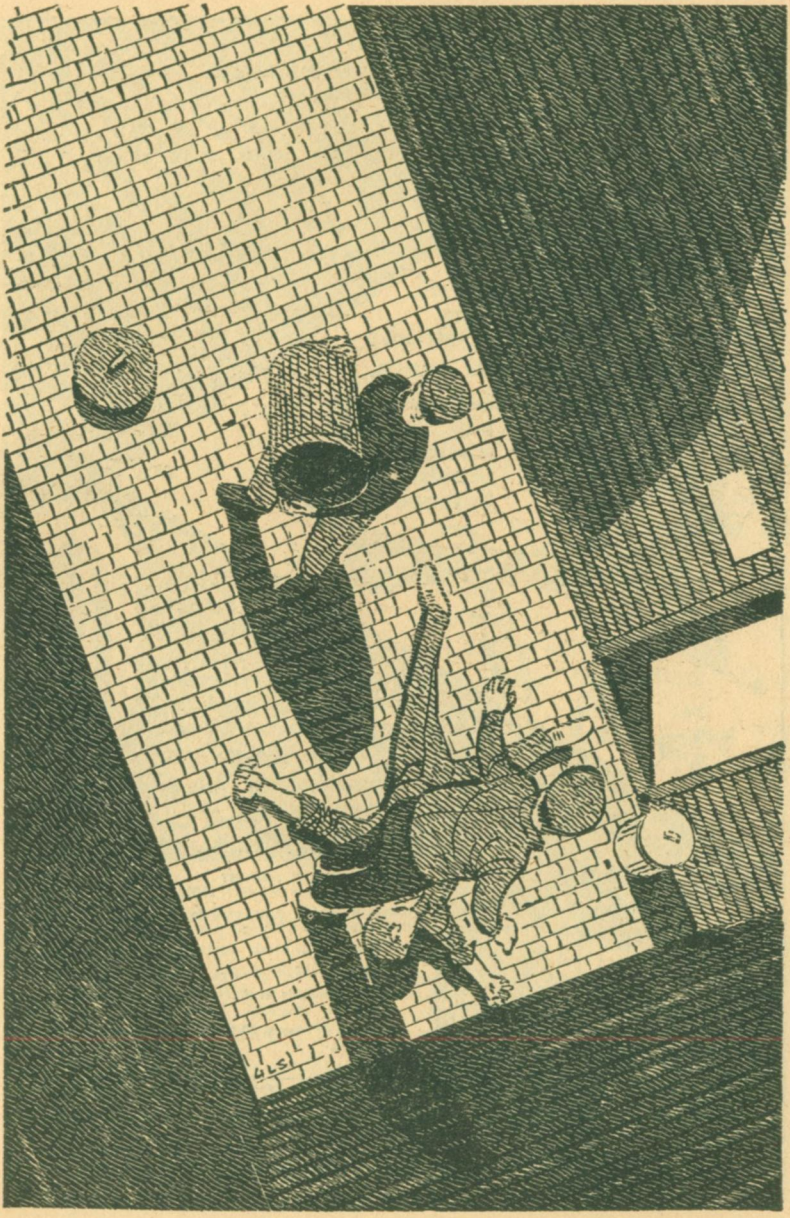

Alfred Grossman, a novelist of some repute (*Acrobat Admits, Many Slippery Errors,* and a third book due out soon), wonders why the sanitation department men make so much noise at night—and proposes a chilling truth about . . .

THE GOBBITCH MEN

By ALFRED GROSSMAN

Illustrated by SCHELLING

FOR a number of reasons, Irving Brown felt absolutely stench. For one thing, there was Millie. Yes, she was still his girl, he supposed, in the narrow technical sense that she lived with him, but he definitely felt something was going wrong. She would look at him unspeaking, for long periods, with faint but discernible loathing. She would make odd, seemingly random remarks that stuck in his memory and which, when mulled over, all pointed in the same direction. "Fenstermacher," she would say, "has the most beautiful pair of eyes of any man I've ever met," she would say, "so lucid." "Keefe," she would say, "walks with the most titillating animal grace of any man I've ever met," she would say. "I dreamed last night that Professor Torson ravished me," she would say, "it was a truly beautiful experience." Irving thought wistfully of Edna, his girl before. She had been sweet, but one morning she was gone. Well, it was a big university, people came and went.

And then Irving worried about himself. In the last six months he had, to his surprise, discovered that he possessed a strong affinity for gin. Well, alcohol in any form, if it came to that, but particularly gin. He liked the smell, he liked the taste and he most particularly liked the feeling. Which was why he was so shaky most mornings, found it hard to apply himself most days and, to be honest, he supposed

was the cause or partial cause of his really serious problem.

Which was the damned thesis. Oh, Professor Holeborne had been his usual smooth self. There had been no direct threat or even criticism. But when old Holeborne said, "I do hope, my boy, that your work is coming along. You know, we wouldn't want to be disappointed in you. Would we?" Irving knew very well he was getting the prod.

Brooding on these unhappy matters as he sat, cold sober, in front of the library console in the basement of the Graduate Students Building, Irving sighed and glanced at his watch. He was astonished to see that it was almost two in the morning; he'd been sitting for over an hour. Well, get on with it and get to bed and start sweating through the damn spools in the morning. Working from his notes, he punched out the call numbers of the necessary spools, feeling nauseated with boredom. Why in heaven's name had he let Holeborne steer him into this miserably dull subject? Ole Holeborne had gone on and on about "a somewhat neglected field in which a young scholar could quite well make his mark," and "I have an idea, a strong presentiment, let us say, that you will find the subject quite suitable to your temperament." Oh well. Maybe old Holeborne really knew what he was doing. Maybe.

SIGHING aloud again, Irving checked his console against his scribbled notes. Yes, he'd got it right, all the spooly cruds were there. Pop Heroes 1950-1970; a Synthesis and Revaluation. Pop Music of the Last Century. From Presley to Dorkins. Adolescents and their Gods. And so on. Ugh. Just as his weary forefinger came down on the Operate button there was a mild but definite jar he felt through his seat and legs and the room was inundated in a hideous screech. Irving could see the lights of the spool sorter dancing in action but the machine's not inconsiderable wheeze was completely drowned in the ghastly noise from outside. Irving raised his eyes to heaven and muttered, "The gobbitch men." Why, he wondered again, did their damn trucks have to have such a murderously penetrating screech? Why, he wondered, did the big cans they bounced seem designed to produce such a stunning combination of boom and crunch? And why the hell didn't the University do a better job of soundproofing its precious students' living and working quarters? Oh well, and he relaxed his jaw muscles as the noise slowly moved off into the night and his spools rattled into the hopper.

He picked them up with his

notes, turned off the console light and trudged to the elevator. He wavered, before pushing his dorm floor number, wavered, almost pushed for the fourteenth and its coop bar and one, at the most two gins, wavered and almost fell, then, tense with rectitude, pushed for his room.

He glanced into the sleeping alcove. Yes, Millie was there, asleep, or acting asleep, her back toward him. He fell into his desk chair, whimpered in pain, carefully groped under him and came up with a handful of Millie's junk jewelry, all sharp metal and hard stones. He glared at them, then put them gently on the desk. He sighed.

He was tired but wide awake and gin thirsty. Why, he wondered again, didn't he have the guts to keep a bottle in his room? Surely it was not beyond his witpower to find a cache safe from the inspections of the Dean's crew. But no, he had to drink sip by sip in the bar, while the register kept track. Oh well.

Take a pill and go to bed. No, it wouldn't work for fifteen minutes and he knew before then he'd want Millie and he suspected that she wouldn't want him. Oh well. Take a pill and sit here until it works. Oh well.

He washed, took a pill, stripped his clothes off and sat back to wait. These? Oh yes, the stenchy spools. Wearily, he picked one up, thumbed on the viewer, snapped in the spool and yawned.

"Population and Catastrophe," it said. Irving nodded, blinked, shook his head sideways. "Whaaaat?" he whispered. He yanked the spool out, shook it, looked at it, dropped it and put in another. "Population Explosion, the Woeful Tide," it said. Irving shrugged. He put in another spool. "Population Control," it said. Irving sighed and began to run the spool forward in short bursts, grabbing at sentences.

The writer maundered on in tones of doom. The great problem. Unless solved, horror. People sleeping three deep in the gutter. Eating offal. Eating each other. The earth eaten bare. Carpets of flesh. Dead.

Irving sighed. He stopped at a vaguely familiar but elusive word. Contraception. Against, against. Oh, of course, those little pinky pills the girls took every month. The answer? That's what the man was saying. But that was nonsense. Everybody knew the things didn't work. Not at any level of certainty. Why, Millie had had two kids when she was an undergraduate, and his own three kids were at the Plattsburg Nursery last time he heard. Nonsense.

But of course it was all nonsense. Population explosion, indeed. Imminent catastrophe, pah.

He'd never heard of anything like it, any discussion or hint of it, not even in treatments of the period's psychological pathology, and he was a student specializing in just—he flipped back to check the date of the spool again—yes, just in the period these things were written, the third quarter of the last century. What? What?

IRVING half woke up an hour later, his head resting on the edge of the desk. He stumbled up, fell into bed and went to sleep, trying to think what it was that was odd.

He woke late, feeling awful. He looked at the clock and sat up horrified; he was going to miss the damn statistics seminar. Again. Third time in two weeks. He touched the clock stud. Alarm turned off. That damn Millie had done it and left without waking him, knowing, knowing perfectly well. . . . He dropped back with an enormous self-pitying moan.

He was almost off to sleep again when he remembered the population explosion nonsense, and came awake. He went over it all in his mind. No. The whole thing simply made no sense. Well, only one thing to do, go ask Professor Holeborne. That's What the old mole was there for.

Irving shaved and dressed and went down to the first floor Union. He had coffee and a pastry and called Holeborne's office. Yes, the girl said, he could have an appointment but no, not right away, not until three this afternoon. Irving turned away from the phone and wondered if a drink would make him feel better. I shouldn't, he thought, I shouldn't. But then he thought, well, just one and slowly, very slowly, a sip now and a sip then. Just one, very slowly. He patted his pocket to make sure the spools were there and went upstairs to the bar.

He was only about ten minutes late in arriving at Professor Holeborne's office. He felt very much better. Three slow drinks had just about set him up, he judged. He crushed the breath pill between his molars, worked his mouth and pushed open the door. The old Proffo had a new secretary. Irving identified himself. She smiled, spoke into the communicator and nodded him to the inner office. Irving leered and said, "You living with anybody, lambchop?"

"Not right now, sweetface," the girl said.

"Amazing," Irving said. "A cutlet shaped like you. How about cohabiting in your room after work tonight?"

"Some other time, cobra man," the girl said.

Irving knocked on the Professor's door. "Come in, my boy," the Professor called, "come in, come in."

Old Holeborne was a tall stout man with a jolly red face and a jolly loud voice. When he had made sure that Irving was comfortable in that chair, did not want a glass of fruit juice or even of water, was in generally good health and spirits, he permitted Irving to arrive at the point. Irving pulled the spools out and told him what had happened, what strange nonsensical maunderings on population the spools contained.

Holeborne reached out a big hand and picked the spools up. Irving assumed he was going to look at them to confirm the ridiculous story. He didn't. He dropped them in a drawer and closed the drawer.

"Simple enough, my boy," he said. "Perfectly simple. Late hours, hard work, too much study. You simply punched for the wrong spools. Nothing to worry about. We all nod, even, I believe the saying goes, Homer nods. Yes, I believe he does."

"No, no, sir," Irving said. "I'm positive I didn't. I checked before I punched. But that's not the point."

"Positive, are you?" the Professor said. "Tell me, my boy, was there any disturbance of any kind when you punched the spools?"

Irving thought. "Well, yes," he said, "the gobbitch men were just upstairs, you know what a terrible racket they make, bouncing their cans all over. But, sir, that's not the point."

"Well, there you are," the Professor said. "Perfectly simple. The poor old library console got a jar, shot you the wrong spools. Deplorable, of course, great waste of time, to be sure. But even machines, yes, even machines make mistakes. Nothing to worry about, my boy, nothing at all. You just get back to your work or dating or games of chance or whatever it is you're doing at the moment and forget all about the silly little accident."

Irving almost yelled. "But sir," he said, "that's not the point. Those spools, whatever kind of mistake it was, what about those spools? What were they talking about? What population explosion? What danger? What? It's my field, my period, why haven't I ever heard about it? What else have I missed?"

HOLEBORNE looked surprised. "Oh, I assumed you had understood, an intelligent young man like you. These things—fantasies. Works of the imagination. There was, yes, I believe there was a generic name for that sort of thing, let me think now, ah yes, science fiction it was called. A minor, momentarily fashionable branch of the literary scene. You can imagine.

Monsters in outer space. Invasion of the earth. Overpopulation. That sort of nonsense. We know there aren't monsters in outer space, we know the earth won't be invaded and we certainly know there isn't and never was any danger of overpopulation, as you call it. Fantasy."

Irving said, "Oh." Then he thought for a moment. "But sir," he said, "I'm sure you must be mistaken. Look at one of the spools, any one. Just look."

"That won't be necessary," the Professor said.

"But sir," Irving said. "It's true that I don't read much fiction, haven't the time for it, but I'm positive these weren't, what you called, science fiction or any other kind. I went through them pretty carefully. The tone. The structure. The feeling. I'm positive that . . . ."

"Now that I think of it, Brown," the Professor said, "I've been meaning to talk to you again. I hope you haven't missed any more seminars?"

"Today," Irving mumbled. "But sir."

"I think you should be warned," the Professor said, "that your academic position is in an unfortunate condition. Now, let's go over the facts of your curriculum and plans for future work. Perhaps it will help us clear our minds."

For a miserable three-quarters of an hour Irving sat and listened to the Professor's drone, to warnings of impending doom, scholastic rather than populational, to pessimistic analyses of his curriculum's minutiae, to less than subtle animadversions on his intellect, his character, his habits, his most probable future. Finally it ended. "And so, Brown," the Professor said, standing and nodding at the door, "I very strongly suggest that you pull yourself together and concentrate on what is of the greatest importance to you and your future career. If any."

"Yes sir," Irving said, ashes heavy on his tongue. He got up, but turned at the door. "But sir," he said, "there's still this population business. I still don't understand. I think. . . ."

"Brown," the Professor bellowed, "you are an idiot. Forget about that nonsense or I myself personally will see that you're out out out. Understand? You'd better. Now go away." Irving went away.

He went away to the gin room. He drank. When, in the middle evening, the accountant informed him, politely, that he was already working on his drink allotment for three months in advance Irving made what was intended as a grand gesture and ordered another. By this time he was in conversation with two men, fellow graduate students

whose names and fields he knew but had momentarily mislaid. And Irving was saying, "A plot. By God it must be some kind of plot. I tell you it's my field. And I never never heard of it. They're not telling us. They think they're protecting us. But they're not. We're all going to get hit, we're all going to go WHAMMO when the popushalon, population expulsion, explosion goes WHAMMO, we're going to be standing on each other's heads and eating each other at the same time. Old Holeborne he's crafty, but he knows, he knows. No wonder they worried. Everybody dies. Everybody dies." And considerably more.

Quite a bit later, the last thing he remembered saying was, "WHAMMO. BLOOOIE."

WHEN he awoke he thought the drinking had been a dream. Here he was, still in the Professor's office. But then he realized that he still was pretty drunk and the Professor was now wearing a green dressing cloak over his trousers. He was also sipping a glass of what appeared to be hot milk. Irving gagged. "Idiot," the Professor said.

"Sir?" Irving said.

"Oh well," the Professor said. "No matter now. To anybody but you, that is. I told you to drop it but oh no. Drunk."

"Sir?" Irving said again.

"Although now, as a matter of fact, you might be interested, it's your field, after all, was your field, I should say, and they'll take a little time before they can come for you. Actually, it is a remarkably neat solution to a number of problems. A really acute piece of social engineering, although I shouldn't say so because as you may or may not know—well, of course you don't —my father, Professor Henry T. Holeborne, of whom I suppose even you have heard, was one of the leaders in the project. Project Stepforward, they called it."

"Sir?" Irving said.

"That's right, he was," the Professor said. "And always remember, my boy, that the highest achievement of the scientific mind is to make a synthesis of two or more seemingly uncorrelated factors. Here, I'll tick them off and you see what you can come up with. One, overpopulation. Yes, all that babble you brought me, highly classified of course, don't know what the machine did, it's being fixed now, was perfectly true. There was a problem, then, in this country. Worse elsewhere, of course, in all those brown and yellow places, before they got the little pinky pill too, but who cares about them, I'm talking about the United States of America, your country and mine, no matter

where you are. So after the little pinky pill that wasn't a problem any more, it was a factor: we could have surplus people if we wanted, if we didn't want we wouldn't."

"But sir," Irving said, "the pinky pills don't work."

"Shut up," the Professor said. "But a little after that there was another problem. We'd gotten to Venus, of course, but it was found out pretty soon that the original plan to send a certain number of volunteers and let the number grow by, ah, the normal processes of sexual intercourse, you know what I mean . . . ?"

Irving got mad, as he always did when confronted with the older generation's prudery. "You mean cohabitation," he snarled.

"Exactly," the Professor said. "But, and this you certainly don't know, it doesn't work. Every male who makes that trip is rendered permanently sterile. Every. What to do? There would not be anything like enough volunteers to go and frontier it on a new planet. Life's hard there, very hard.

"Well, why bother?" Irving said. "What do you want to colonize Venus for?"

THE Professor stared. "I knew you were a fool," he said, "but I didn't realize you were a traitor. Venus must be colonized by Americans so that Venus is American today, tomorrow and forever," he bellowed, pounding his fist.

"I'm sorry I asked," Irving said.

"Yes, well," the Professor said, looking at his watch. "And then, after a long period of worry and study, the team, the team my father was on, came up with the answer, an absolutely first-rate answer. I don't suppose you've ever heard of the Stolz-cabrini generator?" Irving shook his head, no. The Professor sighed. "I'd heard of it when I was a student," he said, "even though it wasn't in my field. You young people and your narrow specialization. Tch. Anyway, the generator had been developed a few years back. Pure research, there didn't seem to be any practical use for it at all. It's effect, you see, is perfectly random. It makes no selection as to type, mental or physical or any other characteristic. Perfectly random. And that was perfect, you see. A randomly selected cross-section of the population was exactly what was wanted."

"Wanted?" Irving said.

"Oh come now," the professor said. "In every first grade schoolroom in the country a Stolz-Cabrini is directed at the little tads. It's set for about twenty-two years ahead, give or take a bit. And when the time comes, this day or that, if you've been ran-

domly selected, there you go."

"To Venus?" Irving said.

"Of course," the Professor said.

"But sir," Irving said.

The Professor laughed and laughed. "That's the absolutely first-rate part of it, my boy. Have you ever seen the gobbitch men in action?"

"I don't think so," Irving said. "Heard them often enough but I don't think I've actually seen them. Of course, it's pretty late when they come."

"And you never would see them unless you were on your way. That's what the Stolz-Cabrini randomly implants, of course, a response to the frequency the gobbitch truck sends out. If you've been randomly selected you're compelled to go out to it, woosh, the gobbitch men stuff you in the truck, at the night's end, woosh, you're all collected and sent, woosh, to Arizona and, woosh, you're processed and, woosh, a few weeks later you wake up on Venus, a new member of that great and growing American colony. And if you haven't been randomly selected you've been given an aversion to the frequency so you stay away and can't see. Of course, sometimes people make a bit of fuss and noise before the gobbitch men have them right. That's why the gobbitch men bang those cans around."

"But sir," Irving said, "can I find out if I'm, ah, gobbitch prone?"

"You'll never know now, Brown, you'll never know," the Professor said, smiling. "You're a special case. They happen once in a while. You're going to Venus whether you've been randomly selected or not. I told you to forget about that population business. Can't have people wondering. It's delicate. We keep the little pinky pills just inefficient enough to maintain supply in people, and that's random too. But we can't let it get spread around, can we? I told you to forget it. I hope you like life on Venus but from what I hear I don't think you will."

If Irving had been quite sober he couldn't have done it, but he was residually drunk. He dove across the clear desk top, grabbing the far side and smashing his head into the Professor's middle. The Professor went over backwards with his chair and his big head went thonk on the floor.

Irving scurried to the door. It was locked. He scurried back to the Professor, found the key in his dressing cloak pocket. Irving ran.

As he ran, he wondered a lot about his future, but most of all he wondered what he would do someday when the gobbitch men came by.

THE END

S. FOWLER WRIGHT: SF's Devil's Disciple

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

THE name of Sidney Fowler Wright is enshrined in the Hall of Fame of science fiction writers primarily for his epic *The World Below*, a work of story-telling magic, imaginative power and poetic evocation published in 1929. Beyond that, however, it has had far-reaching social influences, and many would-be imitators. For Wright was a propagandizer in his fiction for the overthrow of advanced social legislation. He extolled the virtues of a return to radical primitivism with an ardor that would have shocked Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Distrustful of scientific advances and the men who made them possible, Wright was nevertheless hypnotized by it. He was erudite and brilliant in describing the technological progress he excoriated. To him, the successful achievement of a Utopia with long life, health, comfort and plenty for all was not a worthy goal. To his mind "hazard was better than security, effort better than success."

Wright's diatribes against science were made not so much because he feared its misuse would bring the destruction of civilization—he welcomed that since it would mean that man would revert to a simpler state; but because he knew science might enable man to achieve his dream of eliminating strife, want and insecurity. Wright felt this state of affairs would deprive life of all meaning. Only a superb literary technique and superior imagination gained him respect and rescued him from the "crank" label he deserved.

THE controversial author was born in Birmingham, England, Jan., 1874. After high school he went to work as an accountant, got married and had

six children. Wright "retired" from accounting in 1920 and, two years after his wife died, married a second time. This marriage produced four more children. Evidently Wright's lifelong battle against birth control, stressed repeatedly in his science fiction, was a sincere and not a frivolous notion.

The economic circumstances which made it possible for Wright to give up accounting as a livelihood after 25 years in the business are not clear. But at 46 he became editor of a magazine titled POETRY. This post he held continuously through 1932. His interest in poetry was, without question, deep. *Scenes From Morte d' Arthur*, his first book published in 1920, was verse, as was his second, *Some Songs of Bilitis*, in 1922. There would be three other volumes of poems as well as the editorship of numerous anthologies. Some of them had an air of vanity publishing, specifically the series of which a typical title was: *Contemporary Poetry of Shropshire, Worcestershire, Hertfordshire and Monmouthshire* (1929).

The World Below was actually Wright's first serious work of fiction and was intended as a triology, the third portion of which was never written. *The Amphibians, A Romance of 500,000 Years Hence*, the first novel in the contemplated series, was published in 1924. The novel was a critical success. Its initial premise was a twist on H. G. Wells *The Time Machine* (which fact is acknowledged in the first chapter). A British subject is propelled 500,000 years into the future. Instead of encountering degenerate descendants of mankind, he is placed in contact with several mutated human species whose intelligence is transcendentally beyond ours. One is a furry race of amphibians, entirely feminine in characteristics (though sexless); another is a group of giants known as "The Dwellers."

So far beyond the abilities of today's *homo sapiens* are these civilizations that their motives and actions are virtually incomprehensible to the hero. Even his most gallant feats of valor scarcely minimize the contempt with which these races regard the time traveler. Not only his thought processes and his actions, but his very touch is repulsive to them. Circumstance throws the hero into alliance with the Amphibians in a series of adventures through lands and with creatures spawned from a nightmare. Though a degree of spiritual comradeship develops, romance is no more possible than between a human and an ape.

WRIGHT'S first book published in the United States

was not *The Amphibians*, but a non-fiction tract—*The Sermon on the Mount for Today*, published by Scribner's in 1927; it is an obscure and virtually unknown presentation of his social outlook. However, his second publication in 1928, a novel titled *Deluge*: *A Romance*, took the country by storm. There had been fine stories of another Deluge before, the most notable of them *The Second Deluge* by Garrett P. Serviss. But it, as others, dealt primarily with the broad spectrum of the *physical* side of the disaster. Wright placed his entire stress on the *human* aspect, stressing the efforts by the few survivors to form a primitive social arrangement.

The book, as the introduction clearly reveals, was an attempt to prove that civilization had made man unfit to continue. A passionate disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau, Wright took his cue from *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*, which purported to show that science and art were perverting mankind.

"They [men] had used their boasted intelligence to evade the natural laws of their beings, and they were to reap the fruits of their folly," Wright wrote in *Deluge*. ". . . They had degraded their purblind and toothless bodies. . . . Every natural law that their lives had denied and their lips derided was now released to scourge them. . . . It was not only that they were physically ill-adapted for life on the earth's surface, but the minds of most of them were empty of the most elementary knowledge of their physical environment."

Wright's philosophy was again underscored in a lost-race novel, *The Island of Captain Sparrow*, which had appeared in England and was rushed into print by Cosmopolitan in 1928. As anticipated, riding on the popularity of *Deluge* it enjoyed wide readership. In it, a castaway on an unknown Pacific island witnesses the end of an ancient white race in conflict with descendents of pirates who settled there centuries earlier. The island is also inhabited by Satyrs, hunted by the pirates for food. After a superbly related series of adventures, the castaway and a stranded French girl (the last adult humans on the island) disdain to return to civilization, prefering their elemental "paradise."

Wright was in his glory now. Not only could he preach his "Sermon on the Mount for Today" but he was being well paid and acclaimed for doing so. With alacrity he pushed to completion a sequel to *Deluge* titled *Dawn*. This novel dealt with man's struggle for power (and women) after the waters had receded. An exercise in grim realism against a highly imaginative setting, it

was well done. In it, Wright is revealed as a pro-religionist if anti-scientist.

THE most important short-range influence of *Deluge* upon the literary world was its affect on John Collier. Collier, a fellow British author, had already made his mark with the publication of *His Monkey Wife* in 1930, a satire built around a man's choice of a female chimpanzee as a wife in preference to a woman. Like Wright, he had occupied himself with verse from 1920 to 1930. As a short story writer, Collier was obsessed by fantasy. *Full Circle*, published in 1933 and clearly patterned after *Deluge*, was set in 1995, when the survivors of a long war try to start over again. The story kept a small focus, Collier concentrating on the problems of a few individuals and a single band rather than the broader view of the catastrophe. This technique was to become a standard in science fiction, to be adopted in current times by such authors as John Wyndham and John Christopher. The philosophy of *Deluge* was to receive even wider exposure when it was released as a moving picture under the same title by RKO in 1933.

Its sequel, *Dawn*, did not share its success. Perhaps despite its smoothness it was regarded as an appendage to a tale already told. More likely, issued in the year of the depression, it was forgotten in the flood of economic woes. The depression was also to end Cosmopolitan's book publishing activities and Wright had to find a new publisher. With his reputation, this was no problem. He had written the second in the contemplated trilogy of which *The Amphibians* was the first, titled *The World Below*. Under the latter title, the two were combined and issued by Longmans, Green and Co. in 1929.

While Wright had still been one of their prize possessions, Cosmopolitan had been prone to humor him. They had published several small volumes of his verse, from which they could scarcely have made money, but more important they had issued his translation of Dante's *Inferno* in 1928. Actually, the translation was begun by Sir Walter Scott, the famed novelist and poet, and never completed. Wright finished it. (He would later write *The Life of Sir Walter Scott* and go on to complete Sir Walter Scott's partly done novel *The Seige of Malta*.) The researches and effort Wright put into *Inferno* are reflected in fair measure in *The World Below*.

The second portion of what has been published as *The World Below* parallels in future tense the situations in Dante's *Inferno*.

As Everett F. Bleiler put it in his introduction to Shasta Publishers' reissue in 1949 of *The World Below*: "The hero's descent, the Amphibian psychopomp, the various hells, the legalistic vulturement, the satires on the brilliant but wicked lizards, and the Killers, all recall the *Inferno*."

This was not obvious to the buyers of the book in 1930, predominantly science fiction readers and authors. Writing in the June, 1930, issue of AMAZING STORIES, literary editor Carl Brandt summarized the early adventures of the novel's hero succinctly when he wrote: "He arrives in a strange world where trees scream while they attack, where the hot soil projects rubber-like roots to trip up the intruder, where voiceless froglike monsters are peeled and eaten *a la banana* by gigantic human beings called the "Dwellers", a world where the seas are peopled and controlled by furry human-like yet sexless females who telepathically communicate their thoughts to one another regardless of distance.

"This book is puzzling to a considerable extent. It is vague throughout, yet this very vagueness is not without its charm. It reminds one faintly of *Alice in Wonderland*, in which everything is impossible, yet seems quite true."

The World Below became part of the library of the dyed-in-the-wool collectors. Yet, though some eventually related the second portion to Dante, the debt of *The Amphibians* to A. Merritt's *Moon Pool*—even to the adoption of the title of "Dweller" for an underground alien—was overlooked. More understandably, no one linked the book to *The Night Land*, a strange novel initially issued in 1912. *The Night Land*, deliberately written in 18th-century English, was the work of the near-genius William Hope Hodgson, whose short stories had seen limited circulation in America but whose novels were read only in England. Reprinted in an abridged form in 1921, *The Night Land* contains many elements that appear in *The World Below*.

IT was to be six years before another of Wright's books appeared in America. Meanwhile, *Dream*, a fantasy published only in England in 1931, told of a woman who is projected by a magician a million years back in time to an age in which human-like creatures are completely exterminated by an evolving rat-like mammal. When she returns to the present, she finds that the victor as well as the vanquished disappeared into the evolutionary maw of time.

The loss of the American market was more ego-deflating than

financially damaging to Wright. In 1929 he had scored with a mystery, *The Bell Street Murders*. This was to be followed by *The King Against Anne Bickerton, By Saturday, Arresting Delia*, and a parade of others under the pen name of Sidney Fowler. Sold predominantly in England, these were to prove his bread and butter, while science fiction would henceforth become an avocation.

"The author of *The Deluge* has written for this magazine . . ." the editor of WEIRD TALES stated with pride in a pre-issue announcement of the appearance of *The Rat* (WEIRD TALES, March, 1929). It was the first short story by S. Fowler Wright to appear in the United States. A scientist who makes a rat immortal, then kills a distasteful child who has been bitten by it for fear the bite will grant eternal life to an undesirable.

The Rat was the first of a series of short science fiction stories, collected in 1932 by Jarrolds, London, under the title *The New Gods Lead* (printed in the United States as *Throne of Saturn*, Arkham House, 1949). Taken individually, some of the stories were of consummate artistry. Collectively, they were the assembled testament of Wright's philosophy about the pitfalls of progress and happiness. Here are the points of the plots:

Justice tells of the aged and infirm becoming such an oppressive burden upon the decreasing young (due to birth control) "because the advances of preventive medicine and operative surgery have extended life," that declining penalties are given for killing old people through automobile accidents, and if the victim is over 68 the driver can sue for his loss of time and inconvenience;

This Night related an incident in a world where scientists rule and brides-to-be are pressured to report to the apartment of one of the ruling group prenuptially on the eve of marriage, for the *droit du seigneur*, so that the first child will be of superior caste;

Brain would allow future scientists to have their pick of babies for experimental purposes;

P.N. 40 reaffirms the theory of *The Deluge*, that the superior man should have more than one wife. As in *Deluge*, women should make the selection. Here, machines scientifically select mates but a couple in love escape in a plane to go primitive;

In *Automata*, the practice of birth control brings robot children into popularity. Eventually, the last worker fails to meet his quota and a machine quietly leads him to euthanasia;

Rule has insurance companies taken over by a power play and rates forced down to one-third.

Banks are compelled to lower interest, and all income taxes are abolished;

Choice is a parable of a couple who die and go to heaven. After eons of happiness and perfection they decide that man is better off amidst evil, want, sorrow and degradation than in a perfect state, and ask to be reincarnated.

CRITICS have compared Wright to M. P. Shiel because both had unusual literary styles. That was wrong reasoning. Shiel was vituperatively opposed to religion and blinded by his faith in science. To Shiel, the remedies for most of the world's problems were the elimination of religion and of the Jews. Deep breathing, exercise and a diet of honey and nuts would set everything else right.

Wright, his fanatical opposite, was for religion and was a dedicated foe of scientific progress. Science to Wright, would bring about the "evils" of birth control, selective mating, child experimentation, licentiousness, too many old people, robot children, and eventually machines would either exterminate man or the human breed would seek death because of the absence of spiritual values in a too-comfortable state.

Solution?

He gave the formula in *Power* (Jarrolds, London, 1933) where a young man becomes dictator of England, sweeps aside most existing laws and forbids the passage of new ones. The *elimination* of scientific progress is specifically called for: "Science gives richly; but are they not a devil's gifts at the best? Religion taught standards of conduct, and science offers standards of comfort."

In *Vengeance of Gwa* (Thornton, London) published under the pen name of A. Wingrave in 1935, Wright's obsession against birth control and his compulsion that women should bear more and more children is extended to barren wives, as Bwene, king of a land in a forgotten era of prehistory, is consumed by hatred for his mate because she cannot give him a son. Wright's predeliction for his lead character to be polygamous is again displayed, as is his contempt for all who seek to establish a stable and trouble-free community.

Wright's protestations and philosophy was not confined merely to his fiction. He wrote books on purely political subjects, with titles like *Police and Public* and *Should We Surrender Colonies?* His interest in politics found him in Germany in 1936 when Hitler was readying for conquest. The result was a perceptive work of "fiction" published that year in England as *Prelude in Prague* and in the

United States as *The War of 1938*. It simulated a behind-the-scenes postulation of the circumstances and actual military strategy by which Hitler would overrun Czechoslovakia. It predicted that "Germany might have lit a fire which she could not quench." This early warning of disaster was translated into a dozen European languages. It angered the Nazis, who exerted determined efforts to prevent its sale and distribution. This was S. Fowler Wright's shining moment.

The most persuasive advocate of political views allied to Wright's during the '30s was Ayn Rand, destined to establish her own cult centered around the philosophy promoted in her books *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. She published in 1938 a short novel title *Anthem*, in which a man and woman flee a controlled society to return to primitivism and individualism. This was one of the earliest expressions of Rand's philosophy, that the individual should work for himself and not for the group. Both Wright and Rand feared collective action of any sort, and championed a system, if it can be called that, of near-anarchy. Both felt that the price of technological progress was serfdom.

THE same year as *Anthem*, the appearance of Wright's *The Adventure of Wyndham Smith* showed fundamental similarities so close that it was *too* coincidental to have been planned. This novel epitomized Wright's writing strengths and weaknesses. He displays again his remarkable facility for getting the reader immediately into the situation, his logical inventiveness and a poetic style. The hero finds that he has been snatched into the future to offer arguments as to why the five million humans of that day (the figure is kept constant by birth control), who are enjoying unparalleled harmony and good living, should *not* commit mass euthanasia. Two-thirds of the novel is spent on the pros and cons of the matter. All remonstrations prove unavailing and humanity incinerates itself, (except for a handy contrary-minded female). The last portion of the story builds with considerable power as the last two remaining humans find themselves a cave, some friendly dogs, and survive a grim chase by automata which have been built to hunt animals by scent.

The voices of Wright and Rand, preaching a complete reversal of scientific and sociological development, were indeed eloquent ones. But their audience, confined mainly to science fiction readers, had an even more persuasive spokesman for the other side. He was Olaf Stapeldon, au-

thor of *Last and First Men* (1931), whose thundering prose and towering imagination were at their peak when *The Star Maker* appeared in 1937. Stapeldon preached the community of man, the most daring evolution of body and spirit, and the ultimate of the cosmic mind. An admitted socialist, Stapeldon personified everything Wright hated and feared. Neither would have more than a minute effect upon the course of real events, but in the science fiction microcosm Stapeldon's view would triumph through acceptance of his conviction that man was destined to colonize the galaxy. This principle was adopted as an order of faith by the bulk of the writers of that period.

Wright ceased his private fight until the public one of World War II ended. Then in 1946, a group of his short stories was collected in a petite edition titled *The Witchfinder*. It contained one of the most skillful of his stories, *Original Sin* (providing the reader had no objection to endless variations on a theme): A utopia is attained where "There is no disease. There is no dirt. There is no hunger or thirst. There is no pain. There is enough for all of all things that a man can need, so that there is no cause either to envy or hate, either to strive or long." "Naturally," under such a set-up, man wants out. The entire human race agrees to end it all. Two people, a man and a woman conspire to live on. All humans but they and one girl are dead. The man is about to inject the girl with the fatal needle. He hesitates and suggests she need not die. His woman companion reaches over and drives the needle home.

"Should we survive, and found a new race," the man records, "we ought to make a better world than it was before. But it seemed to me that it was a bad start."

THIS was the beginning of a mild Wright revival. Anthologists Raymond J. Healy and J. Francis McComas selected his short story, *Brain*, for *Adventures in Time and Space*. Arkham House published *The Throne of Saturn*. Many of Wright's short stories were selected for anthology appearances. Shasta reissued *The World Below* in a handsome autographed edition. This led GALAXY NOVELS to release the work as two separate paperbacks.

When the two novels that made up *The World Below* were first combined, the British edition preceded the American by some months, and critics in England had already come to grips with some of Wright's theories. The result was a special preface to the American edition stating: "My aim in writing was to offer

an imagination only. I was not concerned with an argument."

Twenty years later, his work was largely accepted on that basis. But was that the way Wright really wanted it? Had time mellowed if not erased his anti-scientific militancy?

The answer was swiftly forthcoming in *Spiders' War,* published by Abelard Press in 1954. It was a sequel to *Dream.* Marguerite Cranleigh, the girl who had previously been shunted into the past, now arranges with the same Magician to be sent into the future. To lend vitriol to his satire on our civilization, Wright makes one of the most savage comparisons in all of man's literature. Upon the arrival of the girl in the future she is captured by a leading figure in a semi-rural, near-primitive society. He decides (at her suggestion) to take her for a wife. Since he is already married, he facilitates things by driving a dagger into his wife's stomach, and cutting her into roasts on which the couple dine for the next few weeks. This is nothing extraordinary in this culture. Wright then sets out to prove that *this* civilization is morally and spiritually *superior* to our own.

Why?

We have birth control. We have taxes. We kill people with automobiles. We permit the working poor to outvote the minority rich. We sanction scientific progress.

The years brought no softening of Wright's views. When Groff Conklin, who had used *Automata* in his anthology *Science-Fiction Thinking Machines,* asked Wright if he had a story involving mutants, he got a surprising result. Instead of suggesting an old story, Wright penned an original—*The Better Choice.* It was a fantasy in which a woman is changed into a cat for "kicks."

How did she find it?

"She had had the time of her life. She had teased dogs. She had stolen food without fear of criminal law. She had had adventures upon the tiles."

When the time comes to change back she approaches the window where her husband is watching.

"There was so little to return to: so very much to resign. He saw her turn and leap back into the night."

AS far as the field of science fiction is concerned, Wright passed on some of the techniques he borrowed and sharpened. The evidence is very strong that John Collier owes to Wright not only the inspiration for *Full Circle,* but the format of sophisticated presentation of the shocking which has built for his stories a deserved reputation. Among the magazine science fiction writers, Jack Williamson, particularly in

the story *The Moon Era* (WONDER STORIES, Feb., 1933) is in considerable debt to Wright. It is also quite possible that even Ayn Rand was influenced to use the science fiction media for her theories because of its effectiveness with Wright's related concepts.

As for Wright's philosophy, kindness is not in order. He was far, far from the first to put such ideas on paper. *Citizen 504* by C. H. Palmer, which appeared in the Dec., 1896, issue of THE ARGOSY, needs only the transposition of the by-line to be a perfect S. Fowler Wright "beware of progress" story.

Ever since the turn of the century the anti-Utopia and the anti-scientific story have become so prevalent that Chad Walsh could write an entire book on the subject (*From Utopia to Nightmare*, 1962) and barely skim the surface of the subject. The world did not *need* Wright to tell it that overstressing science could prove disastrous.

Therein lies the crux of the matter. Most anti-Utopian writers were warning against the *misuse* of science, not propagandizing for an end to progress. They were afraid that if technology outstripped morality, man might not only enslave but destroy himself. But Wright was not afraid of war. He expresses his feelings in the lines: "The worst wars have their heroic side." In fact, war, to him, was a desirable thing if it was only severe enough to return the survivors to a primitive state.

Basically, Wright *was afraid that man might make it.*

And, in making it, there would probably have to be planned parenthood to control the population increase. Rather than agree to *that*, Wright would forego heaven, and that is precisely what he advocated.

What do we call a man who asks a couple in Paradise, with eternal life ahead (*The Choice*), to drop all that and insist on reincarnation (and a chance to add to the population) with the following promise: "You will know remorse and shame. You will desire things which you cannot reach, or you will find your gains to be worthless. You will know pain that is more dreadful than sorrow, and sorrow that is more dreadful than pain. You will do evil to others, and you will suffer evil continually. At the last, you will die miserably, facing the curtain of death without assurance of immortality."

What do we call a man who derives his greatest inspiration from endlessly recasting Dante's *Inferno*, and who even titles his greatest book *The World Below?*

The devil's disciple?

THE END

"Of course I'm sure the planet's uninhabited!"

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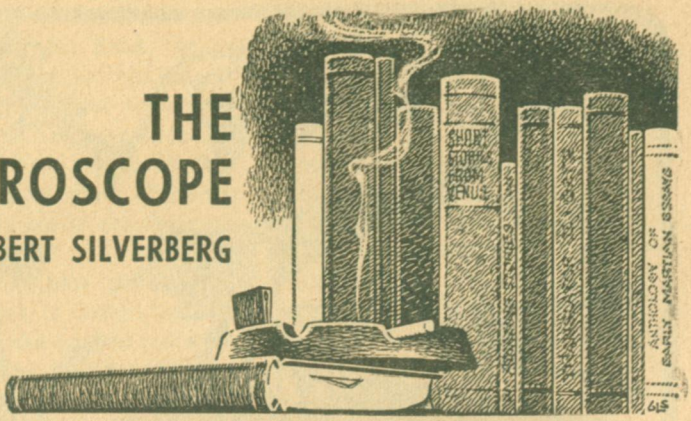


Three Science Fiction Novels by John Taine: the Time Stream, The Greatest Adventure, The Purple Sapphire. *532 pages. Dover Books, paperbound, $2.00.*

The name of John Taine is rarely heard these days in discussions of the great science fiction writers. Time seems to have eroded his reputation, for a couple of decades ago he was regarded with the highest esteem, but many modern readers have never so much as heard of him.

At least under that name. "John Taine" was the pseudonym of Eric Temple Bell (1883-1960), Professor of Mathematics at the California Institute of Technology, whose highly readable books on mathematics are still widely acclaimed. Dr. Bell had a most unprofessional knack for story-telling, and his sense of narrative flow combined with his background as a professional scientist to make him almost uniquely qualified to write excellent science fiction. Among modern writers, his closest counterpart is probably Fred Hoyle, the astronomer whose hobby is writing first-class scientific thrillers.

John Taine wrote about a dozen science fiction books. Most of them were originally published in the 1920's and 1930's in hardcover form, since Taine does not appear to have been aware of the science fiction magazines of his day until his writing career was well launched. (One novel, *1287*, appeared as a serial in *Astounding* in 1935 and has never been reprinted as a book.) After World War II, there was a brief but intensive Taine revival; many of his best novels were reissued by the short-lived semi-

professional book publishers of that era, two early and previously unpublished works were offered for the first time, and a number of his books were reprinted by a science fiction magazine, *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*. Today, though, hardly any John Taine books seem to be in print, and this bulky Dover volume is highly welcome—even if it does duplicate an already available Taine novel.

That one is *The Greatest Adventure*, of 1929 vintage, which Ace Books reprinted a few years ago. Not the greatest of Taine's books, it does display his crisp style, his genial good humor, and his soaring imagination. The basic theme is a familiar one, and was even then: a sailor returning from the Antarctic brings the dried body of a baby dinosaur home, provoking a brilliant and independently wealthy scientist to launch a private expedition to the South Polar Regions to see what's what. The book has its dated aspects; nobody launches private Antarctic expeditions any more, independently wealthy scientists of the Eric Lane school went out with Herbert Hoover, so far as adult fiction goes, and the brilliant scientist's lovely daughter, present here, is another stereotype that no longer clutters published pages. Despite these conventionalized characters, the story has life and force, and offers some provocative ideas as well as some roaring adventure. (Taine seemed fascinated by dinosaurs; someone ought to reprint his much greater novel, *Before the Dawn*, whose protagonists are almost entirely saurian.)

The Dover book also includes *The Purple Sapphire*, first published in 1924, a tale of adventure in Tibet, very much in a Talbot Mundy-Rider Haggard vein. Once again, the framework is dated, the adventures themselves convincing, exciting, and stimulating. But the prize of the book is its opening work, *The Time Stream*, an undeniable classic of science fiction that may well have been the first parallel-world novel ever written. It was serialized in Hugo Gernsback's old *Wonder Stories* in 1931-2 and was reprinted in 1946 in a small book edition now quite rare; this is the first chance today's readers have had to discover it. Overlook it at your peril. The complex story is haunting, poetic, unforgettable, with an emotional depth and power that must have seemed startling to science fiction readers of thirty years ago, because it still seems that way today. Those who lament the loss of a "sense of wonder" in today's science fiction have their best ammunition here, for *The Time Stream* is a wonderful yarn in the literal sense of that word,

studded with set-pieces that start the spine tingling with that grand thrill that far-ranging science fiction alone produces. (Chapter XV is a stunning example.) I find it difficult not to quote whole paragraphs to illustrate the power of the book. *The Time Stream* is a triumph of the creative imagination; its two companions in this omnibus are walloping good adventure stories. All in all, one of the year's most important reprints.

Astounding Tales of Space and Time, *edited by John W. Campbell, Jr. 190 pages. Berkley Books 50¢.*

Here's another slice from the jumbo *Astounding Science Fiction Anthology* published by Simon & Schuster in 1951. Eight stories, first printed between 1940 and 1948, of which number all are worth re-reading and a couple are pretty special.

The one that would justify buying the book on its own is T. L. Sherred's 1947 "E For Effort," one of the most extraordinary first stories in s-f history. (Sherred published a few more that were nearly as good, five or six years later, and then vanished from our ken.) Sherred begins by giving his characters a single gadget, a camera that will take movies of any past event anywhere on Earth—and develops this initial premise to its full implications, wringing every single aspect from it before he's through. The story's textbook example of what a science fiction story ought to be—the *complete* exploration of an outlandish but plausibly presented idea.

Another important item is the lead story, Eric Frank Russell's "Hobbyist"—one of Russell's best stories, which is saying a great deal for it. Russell is present a second time in the book with a lesser though hardly negligible story, "Late Night Final." Also on hand are Jack Williamson, Theodore Sturgeon, Murray Leinster, and H. B. Fyfe, all of them with pretty good offerings that don't match their top-drawer work. (The Sturgeon one in particular, with its raw tide of sentimentality, is an unhappy resurrection, displaying Sturgeon's characteristic excesses and not much of his characteristic skill.)

Index to the Science Fiction Magazines, *compiled and published by Al Lewis. (1825 Greenfield Ave., Los Angeles 25, California.) 1961, 41 pages, 60¢. 1962, 54 pages, 75¢. 1963, 62 pages, 75¢.*

Readers who are bibliographically-minded, or who just want to have some way of locating favorite stories in their shelves of back number magazines, should lose no time acquiring this invaluable set of publications. Here, mimeographed with ele-

gant clarity, editor Al Lewis presents a breakdown of the contents of the science fiction and fantasy magazines in just about every imaginable way: stories are indexed by title and by author, the table of contents of each issue of every magazine is listed, pseudonyms are exposed, stories published in series are enumerated, and even the book reviews are indexed. (Both *Amazing* and *Fantastic* are included, of course—as well as British s-f magazines.) Want a list of Fritz Leiber's Gray Mouser yarns? Page 32, 1963 volume. Do you wonder what "Christopher Anvil" 's real name is? See page 39. Interested in knowing how many issues of *Amazing Stories* have been published to date? It's on page 5. (The answer, incidentally, is 397 through December of 1963).

One significant feature of these important and useful annual index volumes is that they're going to stay in print indefinitely; when the first editions are sold out, Lewis produces another batch. The 1961 index, for instance, is already in a second edition, and probably the 1962 book will shortly see one. The index for 1964 is due to appear in June or July. I've worn my copies of the first three dog-eared already. Congratulations are in order for the diligent compiler of this important reference work.

Tommorow Times Four, *edited by Damon Knight. 176 pages. Gold Medal Books, 50¢.*

The resourceful Damon has dug four stories from magazine files here: two of them old, two of them newish, and all of them very much worth reading. The oldest one is Heinlein's "The Roads Must Roll," of 1940—a hard, crisp, powerful story of labor problems in the transportation industry of the future, and a very good reason why Heinlein's debut in our field was such an explosive one. (This was one of his first published stories.) From 1944 comes C. L. Moore's novelet, "No Woman Born," the sensitive, moving, and technically awesome story of the night-club singer whose fire-seared body is replaced by a robot housing. Richard McKenna's 1958 "The Night of Hoggy Darn" is an interplanetary tale in the modern manner, popping with exciting ideas and exciting plot-twists. And Avram Davidson's "The Sources of the Nile," from 1960, is a weird and wonderful thing which defies easy summary.

One fascinating thing about this lively book is that its four stories are all definitely science fiction, yet each is wholly unlike any other in mood, technique, tone, approach. Taken together, they vividly demonstrate the wide reach of science fiction.

(*Continued from page 5*)
munications theory deals with the same problem—how to maximize the amount of information conveyed in a message without using a code so elaborate that the least mistake can cause the entire message to be misunderstood. An engineer would say that a competent poet uses codes of very low redundancy. So already I have some justification for the claim I am going to make later, that far from being alien to the traditional arts, science is one of their foundation stones.

But we haven't yet defined poetry. Rhyme and meter alone don't make it. If those were all that counted, Edgar Guest would be a poet and T. S. Eliot not. A. E. Housman, you recall, used this test. He would recite something mentally while shaving. If it made the whiskers stand up, it was poetry. I think that is about as good a criterion as any. So does Robert Graves.

However, it leads to some seeming paradoxes. A certain amount of what is called prose will do the same thing to us. Remember the scene in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where the narrator sails past a warship shelling the African coast, though nothing of man is to be seen? "In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent." There are enough other examples to show that no natural division exists between poetry and prose. We separate them arbitrarily, but any living process, such as literature is, will always spill over manmade frontiers.

And then there are mathematical theorems which have as much conciseness, beauty, and exaltation to offer as any poem. Of course, only mathematicians understand them. But then, not everybody understands Yeats or cummings, and this does not detract from the quality of their work. Pure mathematics has a highly developed esthetic sense. It is not considered enough simply to prove a theorem. The proof should be elegant, as mathematicians say—that is, have a cleanness of logic entirely analogous to the cleanness of a good style with words. Furthermore, the concepts of mathematics can be as emotionally meaningful as the concepts of poetry. Cantor's alephs, his orders of infinity where each is infinitely higher than the previous one, give the same sense of vastness and inhuman splendor as the Book of Job.

I seriously think that only tradition and convenience keep us from regarding mathematics and poetry as two facets of the same thing. But then, should we exclude science itself? Let us examine that case.

Certainly the findings and the-

orizings of science today are quite unbelievably wonderful. Consider a few astronomical data. Our sun is about 93 million miles away from us. Light takes eight minutes to get from there to here. But light takes more than four years to reach the next nearest star. One light-year is almost six trillion miles. This great Catherine's wheel of a galaxy in which we live is 100,000 light-years across. It is composed of something like a hundred billion stars. Though interstellar space is a harder vacuum than we have produced in the laboratory—it holds only about one atom per cubic centimeter—the galaxy is so big that there may be enough gas in this hollowness to equal the mass of all the stars.

Go out one winter night and look at Orion. In it there is a glowing nebula where the gas and dust are thicker, and where stars are forming: new suns being kindled as we sit here, with planets on which life will begin to stir half a billion years hence. Or look at Andromeda. With the naked eye you can see a dim cloudiness which the telescope reveals as another galaxy like our own, fiery nucleus and spiral arms. But the light by which you see it departed nearly two million years ago. The total number of galaxies within range of the Mount Palomar telescope is estimated at a million million. The thought of a universe so huge and strange and beautiful affects me as much as any poem.

Turning to the very small, we find the same intricate mystery. Not long ago I came upon a photograph—strictly speaking, an electron micrograph, but in any event a picture taken with a camera—of a molecule. The molecule was DNA, the material from which chromosomes are built up, the stuff of heredity and indeed of life itself. We have all seen other photographs, which resemble meteors and bursting stars; but what they show is the shattering of atoms and the phoenix-like birth of new structures that are still ill understood, still a challenge to our powers of comprehension.

IN my study I keep an object given me by a different kind of scientist. It is a chunk of yellow flint, chipped out in approximately the shape of a thick arrowhead, about a foot long, a so-called hand ax. It was not made by Homo Sapiens but by a Neanderthal man of the Acheulian period, perhaps 100,000 years ago. I often heft that ax and wonder what thoughts went through the oddly shaped brain of the being who made it. Or I look out the window to where a lizard sits under a rosemary bush and reflect how the lizard is my brother, compared to our eons-removed

common ancestry with the bush —and still we *are* kin to the plants, as of three or four billion years ago when life began on Earth.

So it is certainly tempting to call science a kind of poetry. But we had better resist the temptation. After all, the language of science is not integral to it. You could rephrase a scientific report any way you chose, as long as you stayed accurate, and it would not affect the meaning. This is impossible with a poem or a mathematical demonstration. Science is more analogous to the visual arts than the verbal ones, and even that analogy is a little strained.

Nevertheless, science is a creative activity. Furthermore, it is the characteristic one of our era. The last really first-rank poets (in my opinion, anyhow) are now dead or very old; the last major painters and composers lie still further back in time. I don't feel especially apologetic about this. No epoch is good at everything. The future will regard with high respect the men who first mapped the galaxy and the chromosome: the same respect as we afford the Greeks who first experimented with democracy and carried sculpture as far as it has ever gone. The beauty of our scientific work will endure after the theories are superseded, just as the work of Newton in the eighteenth century and Maxwell in the nineteenth is still beautiful. In any event, whether we like it or not, the creative energy of man in the mid-twentieth century has gone almost entirely into science.

But why, then, is there not a scientifically conscious formal art? When the creative energy of the dying Roman Empire went into religion, it brought forth not only new modes of thought, but fresh and vital arts: especially a new literature in the West, a new architecture and mosaic in the East. Why is science not inspiring us in a similar fashion?

Perhaps it is producing its own visual art. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for the human hand to paint anything as lovely as a good astronomical photograph of the Veil Nebula in Cygnus. I do not propose to go into that question, though, but will simply ask why there is so little scientific poetry. Again, I use "poetry" in a broad sense, as synonymous with the very best literature regardless of format.

If C. P. Snow is right, part of the trouble lies in the alienation between his two cultures, the scientific and the humanistic. I think he exaggerates the gap. But to the extent that it exists, I am inclined to blame the humanists.

Of course, there are a great

many abysmally ignorant engineers and cookbook scientists who can't even put a decent English sentence together. That's why we have to employ such numbers of tech writers. But all the true scientists I have ever met, men and women who are doing original, important work in their particular fields of discovery, have a broad humanistic education. They know perfectly well who Thucydides was and who Jouvenel is; they listen with understanding to Beethoven and jazz alike; they are intensely concerned with the problems man faces in this hour of nuclear and population explosions.

On the other hand, the typical professor of liberal arts—not every one by a long shot, but the typical one—has no idea who William Rowan Hamilton was or who Freeman Dyson is; couldn't fight his way out of a high school chemistry course, let alone some basic quantum theory; and worse, doesn't care, is downright proud of his ignorance. There is no excuse for that. A humanist should be interested in what humanity is doing, and appreciative of it. He need not be familiar with every technical detail, any more than you need to perform stress analyses to understand architecture. But there can be no understanding of anything without knowledge of its fundamental principles.

ONE cannot escape this duty by calling science "cold, inhuman, blind to the higher truths." It isn't, except to the extent that every discipline—including art—must necessarily leave most of the real world out of consideration. Furthermore, with due respect for the genius of the late William Faulkner, I wonder if exploring Mars may not prove a more important adventure, an adventure from which we will gain more comprehension of ourselves as well as our place in the universe, than exploring Southern degeneracy. I wonder if we may not learn more about the human condition from experiments with psychedelic drugs than from even the most exquisite secondary uses of corncobs.

Whether or not you agree with such polemics, you may admit that perhaps one reason for the lack of a scientifically oriented poetry is the refusal of most potential poets to have anything to do with science. They would rather retreat into their own little preciosities. And poetry isolated from life, from human activity, has always become a mere pastime for mandarins.

You might object that Freud, and psychoanalysis generally, has had an enormous effect on modern literature. This is true. I am not sure that the effect has been good, but let us not argue

side issues. What I want to raise is a doubt that psychoanalysis is scientific. Freud himself, at least in his younger and less dogmatic days, regarded his theories as provisional—a stopgap until a true physical-chemical-biological picture of the mind could be built up. There is no satisfactory proof for the concepts of psychoanalysis. In fact, current experimental evidence seems to point in the other direction. Insanity, for example, is probably a set of organic diseases which claim their victims regardless of what Father said to Mother when anybody was six years old. The rate of cures claimed by analysis is no higher than the rate of spontaneous recovery. The fact that some people feel better after seeing an analyst proves nothing. Religion, Marxism, and stamp collecting have helped others just as much.

Before you get too outraged, I hasten to admit that psychoanalysis has given us some deep and valuable insights. My claim is merely that they are not scientific; they are akin to the insights of poetry. Psychoanalysis is not a science but an art.

With that parenthesis out of the way, let's see what literature actually has been based on the scientific enterprise.

Our first thought is of Jules Verne. Had he been a great writer, instead of simply a clever and sprightly one, he would be the perfect example of what I am getting at. His characters dealt with the technological realities of their period and revelled in the excitement of its burgeoning science. I think it no accident that Verne is still read, still influential, while many an intrinsically better writer—William Dean Howells, for instance—survives only in English departments. The respectable authors treated of matters which are now dead and gone. Verne reflected adventurous enthusiasm, which is as eternal as the agony of a Lear or the rapture of a Juliet.

H. G. WELLS had more gifts. His imaginative stories were only a small portion of his work, and not one that he himself regarded very highly. Yet, though his mundane novels are still worth reading, it is significant that he is remembered chiefly for his science fiction. Some of it comes close to poetry, like the grim and eerie scene at the end of the world, under the dying sun, in *The Time Machine.*

Rudyard Kipling was far too intelligent and alive to hold aloof from technology and science. He loved them. The spirit of the industrial age has nowhere been better expressed than in his long poem *McAndrews' Hymn*—

Lord, Thou hast made this world below the shadow of a dream,

An' taught by time, I tak' it so
—exceptin' always Steam.
From coupler-flange to spindle-guide I see Thy Hand, O God—
Predestination in the stride o' you connectin'-rod.
John Calvin might ha' forged the same—enorrmous, certain, slow—

Ay, wrought it in the furnace-flame—*my* "Institutio." I would also like to remind you of his ode *To the True Romance*, his superb futuristic stories *With the Night Mail* and *As Easy As A. B. C.*— and much else, a considerable percentage of his whole output. Kipling was one of the last true poets, and he was not ashamed to understand science and derive inspiration from it.

His Danish contemporary and admirer, Johannes V. Jensen, took the same attitude. Besides a number of popular scientific books, Jensen wrote an archeological novel, *The Long Journey*, which was a major reason for his receiving the Nobel Prize. In his historical *The Fall of the King* there is a stunning poem, nominally prose but absolutely a poem, in which the motifs of ancient Nordic myth blend with geology and astronomy to make one stupendous, delirious vision of cosmic dread.

Some of the better French novels early in this century were straight science fiction, by J. H. Rosny. His *La Guerre du Feu*, another archeological tale, is genuinely epic in scope and style. Of recent years, Vercors has further explored the possibilities of this genre.

Among Americans we have, of course, Sinclair Lewis' *Arrowsmith*, which is the story of a research scientist. Robinson Jeffers drew heavily on science for his philosophy and a great deal of his imagery. To a lesser extent, so did Robert Frost. We might also recall that the popular contemporary novelist Ernest Gann deals very capably with technological realities. I could go on citing examples, but they would get harder and harder to find and the number would never get large.

We are driven back to the question, "Why?" If science is an important motif which has been much neglected, and if this neglect is one reason for the decline in quality of "serious" literature, why have so few people done anything about it?

Well, there is one class of writers who have been trying, the science fiction authors. In many, if not all of their better works, science is integral to the plot and the motivations. I do not mean that the characters in a good science fiction story are, or should be, cold-blooded. Fiction is usually about people, and we want to explore the human psyche in sci-

ence fiction just as much as we do in any other kind of writing. The point is that twentieth century man doesn't think like tenth century man, or even very much like nineteenth century man, and this change is going to continue in the future. Too many otherwise talented authors seem quite unconscious of that fact. But no competent writer of science fiction ever forgets it.

I DO not claim that science fiction is great literature. Hardly any of it is, and a lot is pretty awful. Nor do I claim that it is the literary form of tomorrow. I doubt that exceedingly. All I am trying to get across is that science fiction does have one virtue, one lesson to teach: its acceptance of science as a legitimate human activity; its attempts to re-examine the human condition in radically changed environments, under the light of radically new factual knowledge.

The best full-time science fiction writers are good by any standard: not in the same league as Shakespeare or Conrad, but more interesting and often more stirring than the average contemporary novelist. Probably the closest to a true poet within this field was the late Olaf Stapledon. The immensities of time and space with which he dealt, the skill with which he built up a sense of their reality, the tough-minded compassion with which he regarded all life everywhere, are to me deeply moving. I recommend to you, if you don't know them, his *Last and First Men*, which chronicles the entire future of the human race; its sequel *The Star Maker*, in which the story of *Last and First Men* is synopsized in a paragraph; and a small-scale, down-to-earth romance, *Sirius*, about a dog with human intelligence, this also has a lot to say about man.

Arthur Clarke sometimes writes in the mood of Stapledon —his novel *Childhood's End*, for instance—and sometimes in the more cool, conscious fashion that many science fiction authors favor. But the latter approach is not necessarily without esthetic values. Robert Heinlein once put into a story a description of what it feels like to study out a basic scientific problem. The writing is not immortal but the fact it relates is. "He enjoyed the controlled and cerebral ecstasy of the impersonal seeker for the elusive truth. The emotions felt in the throbbing thalamus were permitted only to form a sensuous obbligato for the cold flame of cortical activity. For the time being, he was sane, more nearly completely sane than most men ever achieve at any time." The story, by the way, appeared in September, 1940, and dealt with an atomic power plant.

John W. Campbell, now the editor of ANALOG, wrote a number of tales in his youth which reflected the sheer joy of technical accomplishment. But he also wrote in a poetic vein, for instance the unforgettable *Twilight*, a version of the human race dying gently, puzzled, wistful, among its too perfect machines which have left man no purpose whatsoever. Today Ray Bradbury is likewise a bit of a poet in his science fiction. His attitude toward the modern world seems primarily one of disgust, but he does realize that science and technology affect us in ways more profound than merely supplying the gadgets we use. Clifford Simak has written some fine, evocative stories, occasionally hinting at the utter strangeness of other planets, occasionally returning to his own Midwestern earth. Jack Vance paints the vivid, adventurous aspect of science and discovery with a gorgeous brush. What does it really feel like to be on an alien world, among hues and shapes never seen on Earth, under a red sun and three moons? Vance knows. Fritz Leiber has a comparable sense for the exotic and exciting.

THERE are others just as good, but I will only mention two who are unusual, in that they probe character more deeply than anyone else in the field. These are Theodore Sturgeon and Algis Budrys.

Sturgeon, a long-time practitioner of the art, is equally at home with a bulldozer, an electronic circuit, and a human mind. He has the poet's gift of the smiting, absolutely right phrase. That may be those paragraphs of brooding horror with which *It* opens; or the unspoken cry of a man to his love, as he falls into death, "Grace, Grace, treasure me in your cupped hands . . . ;" or simply a girl "tossing her searchlight hair back on her shoulders." In all such cases, and they are many, Sturgeon's words leap out of the page as they leap out of Homer. And in addition, he has an understanding of people, multiple kinds of people, which is always sympathetic but rarely too sentimental.

Budrys is younger; his style is clear and uncluttered, without going in for any very unusual word combinations; he would rather deal with the darknesses in us than the sunnier aspect which Sturgeon prefers—though he is not morbid. Most of his work has simply been better-than-average science fiction. However, his last three novels should have gotten wider attention than they did.

Who? starts out as a straightforward problem in identity. A man returns home, so mutilated

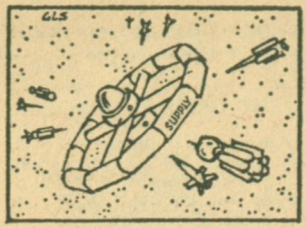
in an accident that his face and most of his body had to be rebuilt in metal. Is he really the man he claims to be, or a spy planted by the Russians? Subtly, as the story progresses, the emphasis shifts. In the end, as Anthony Boucher has pointed out, you realize that the question never was the melodramatic "Who is he?" but the unanswerable "Who am I?" More recently Budrys has published a strange, difficult, but highly interesting book called *Rogue Moon*. On the surface it is about a lethal object encountered in the course of Lunar exploration; but there are numerous levels of meaning below that surface, and the symbolism is often effective enough to rank at least as minor poetry.

I HAVE dealt with these two at such length because I wanted to get specific about my claim, that in the living realities of science and technology there are unlimited resources for the modern writer and poet. Of course, it would be foolish to demand that everyone write science fiction, or odes to the Big Dipper, or any such obvious thing. I would like to see more of our leading writers do precisely that. But it is far from essential to a literary renaissance. What is essential, I think, is that they incorporate into their works a comprehension of what men today are discovering and creating in the actual world. The effort will reward them with broad new vistas.

Allow me a personal example, to show how even a writer like me, who has no special pretensions, can use these concepts. Not long ago I published a mystery, *Murder Bound*—not science fiction, but a fairly standard detective story, set principally along the San Francisco waterfront. At one point the hero is going aboard a docked ship; later he is on that ship as it puts out to sea. In both cases I wanted an atmosphere of uncanniness, a feeling that anything might happen at any moment but whatever it was would be sinister. In both cases, therefore, I simply gave a paragraph to reflect on a few facts of oceanography: the size, the age, and the inhumanness of the sea, epitomized by half a dozen scientific data but cast in language that reflected his awe and loneliness.

Anyhow, that was my intention. Quite possibly the attempt fell flat on its face. That's for the readers to judge. But whether I pulled it off or not, I do claim that the idea itself was good, and that the body of modern knowledge is loaded with such ideas for anyone who cares to use them. This world today is not the drab treadmill populated with self-pitying neurotics that you

(*Continued on page 130*)



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(Continued from page 126)

read about in the fashionable novels. Anything but that! I agree it is a terrifying place. The fountains of the great deep are being broken up. But never have man's horizons been wider or his hopes higher. With all its savagery, the twentieth century is well worth living in.

I frankly believe that the spirit of our age finds one of its noblest expressions in the scientific enterprise, and that writers and poets do wrong to ignore it. Science does not have to be our only source of inspiration. But it is one of the sources that we cannot fail to draw on if we wish to write true poetry—or anything else that we can hope the future will remember.

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