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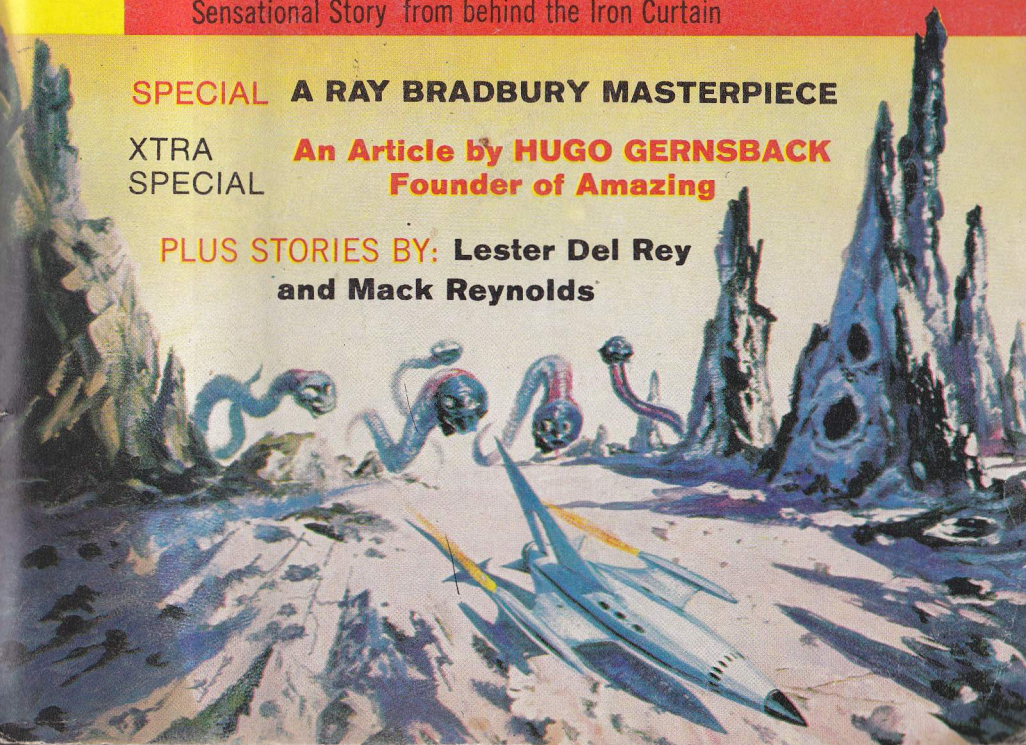

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Amazing stories

DECEMBER, 1967 Vol. 41., No. 5

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CONTINUITY

It is now a little over forty years since Hugo Gernsback founded this magazine. It has been guided by many editorial hands since that time, but the name of its founder has never been forgotten. His name is incorporated in the "Hugo", the annual award given for the best science fiction of the year, and his spirit is in this—and every other—SF magazine.

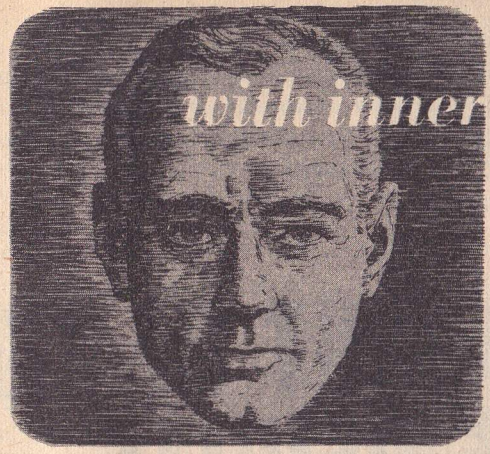
Hugo Gernsback is dead, and we shall miss him. He died in Roosevelt Hospital in New York City, on August 19th, 1967. He was 83 years old. We have every reason to know that he led a very full and happy life. In addition he must have felt a good deal of unspoken pride of accomplishment. There are very few men who have singlehandly shaped and created an entire form of literature, and to have lived to see it grow to a vital fruition.

There is something very science-fictional in the development of science fiction itself. In the early nineteen hundreds Gernsback published an electrical supply catalog that metamorphosed into MODERN ELECTRICS, the first radio magazine. This magazine printed fiction as well, stories that Gernsback dubbed "scientification." In 1911 the editor became writer when he published the first part of his own novel, RALPH, 124C41+. Then, in 1926, modern magazine science fiction was born when the first issue of this magazine was published.

This is not the moment to discuss editorial policies and plans. These matters will be covered in the next issue. At the present time I can say only that, although Hugo Gernsback is gone, his magazine is still with us. We can honor his memory in no greater way than to produce a magazine that he would have enjoyed reading.

THE EDITOR

Editorial by HARRY HARRISON



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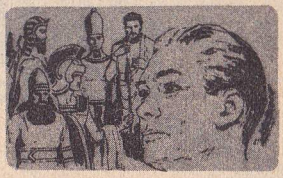

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The forest whispered to itself dwelling on the perfection of its timelessness. And then man the intruder came to shatter the semi-silence—as if anyone, or, anything could touch the inviolability which was Zil!

THE FOREST OF ZIL

KRIS NEVILLE

Illustrated by JEFF JONES

1

ZIL was the first habitable planet found by the earthmen as they swept outward through space from Sol, in ever widening circles, seeking adventure.

Zil was nothing but a forest, and when the scout ship set down, after a journey of three earth weeks, through at least 100 light years of conventional space-time, it set down on the tree tops rather than the surface. It was as though the whole planet were nothing but one great uniform growth, a green ocean of leaves covering everything.

The situation defied a botanist of the expedition, McClair: for in the oxygen richness of the air, one would not expect the plants to survive. McClair rode with the first scout ship, and it was his privilege to first sample the breathability of the atmosphere. Prior analysis proved accurate.

"It's good air," he reported, "and I feel fine."

Word went immediately to the mothership in orbit: success at last!

"There's a breeze, too," said McClair, "the leaves are all moving and they make the strangest sound, a sort of zil, zil, zil, like that, a whispering."

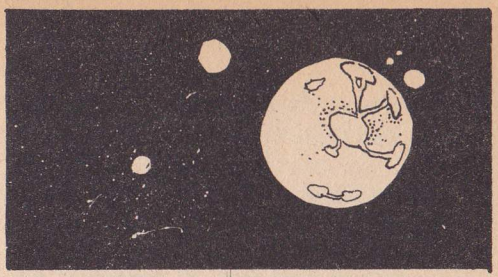
An investigation party, headed

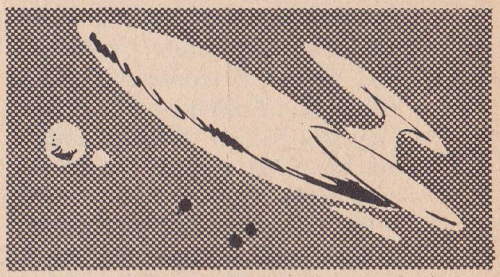
by the botanist, was stationed on the planet. The four men chopped away some of the upper branches of what appeared to be several separate trees and built themselves a structure more resembling a raft than a treehouse. They floated there, far above the surface of the planet, while the botanist continued his studies of the alien mono-ecology.

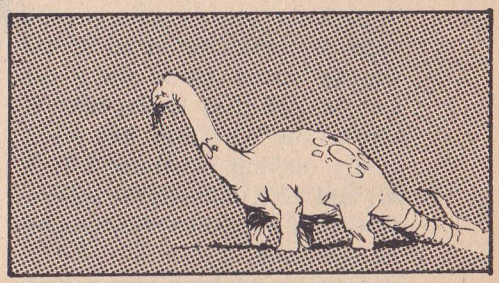
The forest was a continuing source of wonder to McClair, but he was most bemused by its static quality; for the trees appeared nowhere within the circle of his limited exploration through the intertwined branches to bear fruit or show other means of reproducing themselves. All were of an identical species.

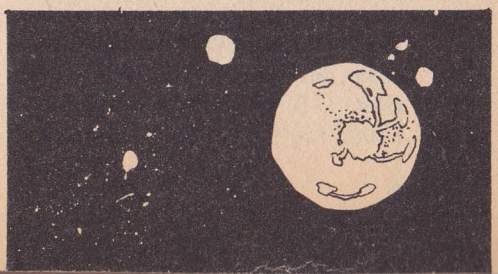
The leaves, broad, green, glossy in the sunlight as though waxed, were no direct counterpart of the leaves of earth trees, and yet there were more similarities than differences. They contained, for example, material positively identified by chemical analysis on the mothership as chlorophyll.

In the atmosphere, storms came and went, and humidity varied while the oxygen content hung at a constant 30 per cent, with nitrogen contributing most of the remainder: no detectible carbon dioxide. It was as though, long ago, the carbon dioxide had been used up and now the forest was locked immobile in time. McClair could fill several notebooks with anom-









alies, but the solution of them defied him.

By the third day, they had penetrated down to the lower branches. At last, Johnson caught the first glimpse of the surface, and he called back: "Dirt, as far as I can see. Nothing but dirt." The three other men joined him. The branches terminated some twenty feet from the surface, and they all peered down through the speckled gloom. "Want to drop down?"

The last descent was accomplished with a rope, and when Johnson found solid footing and the rope went slack, he called up, "Seems safe enough, come on down!"

McClair followed, with Carlson behind him. The fourth man, Reading, remained on the lower branch as an observer.

McClair had expected an endless carpet of dead leaves, but if leaves had fallen, the continuous organic processes had long ago removed them. He bent to the slightly moist earth for a soil sample, and then looked up. Far above, the spreading branches, gently moving, rustling, zil, zil, zil, and for a moment, he was inexplicably overcome with a superstitious fear.

In his immediate view, there were literally hundreds of tree trunks, of varying dimensions, some apparently far older than others. It was as though, with time, the forest had come progressively to dominate the planet, strangling other life forms, until now only the trees remained, total masters of the environment, and they were frozen and timeless.

Time has a different meaning here, thought McClair.

He said: "This might be a rich find for archeologists." He wondered what history might unfold from fossil life hidden in the rich, dark soil.

"We're going to have to clear these trees out first," said Johnson. "With the high oxygen, we might do it with selective burning, what do you think?"

McClair, wondering what effect the sudden introduction of new carbon dioxide would have, as a growth promoter, said, "We're going to have to be pretty damned careful. The whole thing seems so in balance. It might start to collapse, if we interfere."

Aside from their voices, and the zil, zil, zil of the leaves, there were no other sounds. "Let's try that small one over there, first," said McClair, pointing to one of the trees a good distance away. "I think we can drop it part way at least. It's far enough away so it won't be supporting the house."

Johnson brought out the laser and studied the tree a moment. "I'll nick it and then cut."

A moment later, the tree toppled, introducing a new sound, tearing upper branches loose,

showering the ground with twigs and leaves. It hung at a forty-five degree angle, suspended from supporting branches of its neighbors.

"See if you can section it," said McClair. "I want to count the rings." Saying this, he felt again the irrational and superstitious fear, and he was desperately afraid that all the trees were going to prove of the same age—or agelessness.

3

Zil was the first habitable planet found by the earthmen. A thousand balanced terrariums, generations ago, had left Sol, caught in the rigidity of Einsteinian space and time, and now, at last, one had reached a destination where planetary life might once again be possible. The ship itself was weathered by space, and its lifetime could no longer be predicted by its inhabitants: although there was growing fear among them that no time beyond the present, between the stars, remained. It was Zil or disintegration in further transit. So much time had elapsed in the crossing of space that even their language had changed, and the original motivations were lost in antiquity.

The earthmen sent down an exploratory team, and the reports of the giant trees and the breathable atmosphere came back. The order went out to investigate the possibility of clearing a site to permit landing all the cargo of the interstellar ship.

The Captain, this done, turned to his library of ship's logs with a weary sigh. The library extended backward in time beyond the memory of ancestors, and he felt suddenly kinship with long ago earth, surviving now merely in myth, and he removed from the shelf the very first of the log books, describing in the cold and formal phrases he knew so well, farewell to the planetary system of Sol.

He stood at the culmination of some vast, racial memory and dream, which promised the eternal continuity of mankind. The first giant step was taken. All was now assured. Generations from now, when the surface of Zil had been cleared, and mankind had established its mastery of this planet, other interstellar ships, perhaps of improved design, would be launched against the long eternity of the universe. He stood facing an endless beginning.

On the surface, the landing crew felled the first tree.

The Captain studied the blank pages of the book in his hands, wondering why this empty, yellowing volume had been stored at all. He removed the book that had stood beside it, and it, too, was filled mostly with blank pages except for a few entries at the very end of it. These entries, too, were

gone, and he wondered why, reaching for the third early log book, two empty volumes had been so long preserved.

4

On earth, Ed Long, sixteen years old, closed a science fiction book, having just read a story of man's first trip to the moon. The Great Depression had come to trouble affluent America, in the year 1929, but Ed was caught already with dreams of the future in his mind, and he went out into the night air, to look up at the skies, and marvel at the wonders that man would someday, perhaps not in his lifetime, but *someday*, encounter.

At length, his mind overflowing with endless and timeless speculations, he returned to his room and the light there, somewhat hungry after the meager evening meal. Time to study. It could not be avoided further. History was his hardest subject, and there was a test tomorrow. He brought out his school book and wondered for a moment before he settled down to the study why it was that the printed pages were so interleaved with blank ones.

5

The Monk, by candlelight, laboriously produced an illuminated manuscript, caught in the press of the endless compulsion to reproduce the work in front of him before it vanished entirely.

At length, the lateness of the hour took him to his tiny cell and restless sleep, where he lay for a long time haunted by the nightmare that tomorrow no work would remain to be done, it would all, somehow, in the night, get itself copied and then vanish away.

6

In the strange language of the time, Horothrag said, "It would be well to record this transaction beyond the impermanence of memory." He made a mark upon the stone and then another, being somewhat distressed to note that no sooner had one mark been made than the preceding one faded, so that in the end he gave up entirely this useless endeavor.

7

In a time before Horothrag, there were animals and large reptiles of diverse forms, but in time they one by one went away, and soon there was the earth and the endless ocean, but nothing stirred nor moved within its depths and time continued and weathering produced strange effects with no thing to remark upon them.

8

On the distant planet, the forest moved in the warm sunlight to the motion of the gentle breeze, making sounds, zil, zil, zil, and none came to cut its trees:

The End

THE MILLION YEAR PATENT

CHARLES L. HARNESS

Illustrated by JEFF JONES

An ingenious new story by the celebrated author of "The New Reality" (1950) and The Rose *(1953) — now happily available once again, as a paperback, from Roberts & Vinter, Ltd., of London — in which young Bryan Burke challenges no less an authority than Albert Einstein — by suggesting that if* one *interstellar spaceship cannot travel faster than light, then maybe* two *of them can!*

BRYAN BURKE pushed aside his physics book and his slide rule and turned to his father. "How do I go about getting a patent?"

"What on?" said Jim Burke from behind his news tapes.

"Space travel — at speeds faster than light."

"Unpatentable, my boy. Nothing can move faster than light. Einstein settled that centuries ago."

"Einstein was wrong."

"Can you prove it?"

"I think so. All you need is two ships, each traveling toward each other at a speed of more than one-half the speed of light. According to Einstein, all motion is relative. So you can imagine that either ship has zero motion, and the other has all the motion."

"True, I *think.* But where will you find two such ships?"

"It says here in the shipping news, that *Electra,* in dock on Joro, sixth planet of Sirius, will convert to your new Burke drive while taking on cargo and passengers, and then take off for Earth. It also mentions that *Thor,* of Alpha Centauri, will convert to Burke, and drive for Earth. I've just plotted the courses of both ships as part of my homework in Astrogation. Both ships will land here at Washington Terminal on the same day

and at practically the same hour, three years from now . . ."

". . . and with my new drive," said Jim, "each ship would have a velocity of six-tenths the speed of light toward Terra, and a total of 1.2 times the speed of light toward each other. Very interesting, and somehow, of course, impossible."

Bryan's face fell.

"Oh well," said Jim, "at least I'll get you a date with Jack Lane. He's a patent attorney who handles some of my private inventions, outside my research at Pan-Stellar."

The boy brightened. "Just one more question. How long would the patent last?"

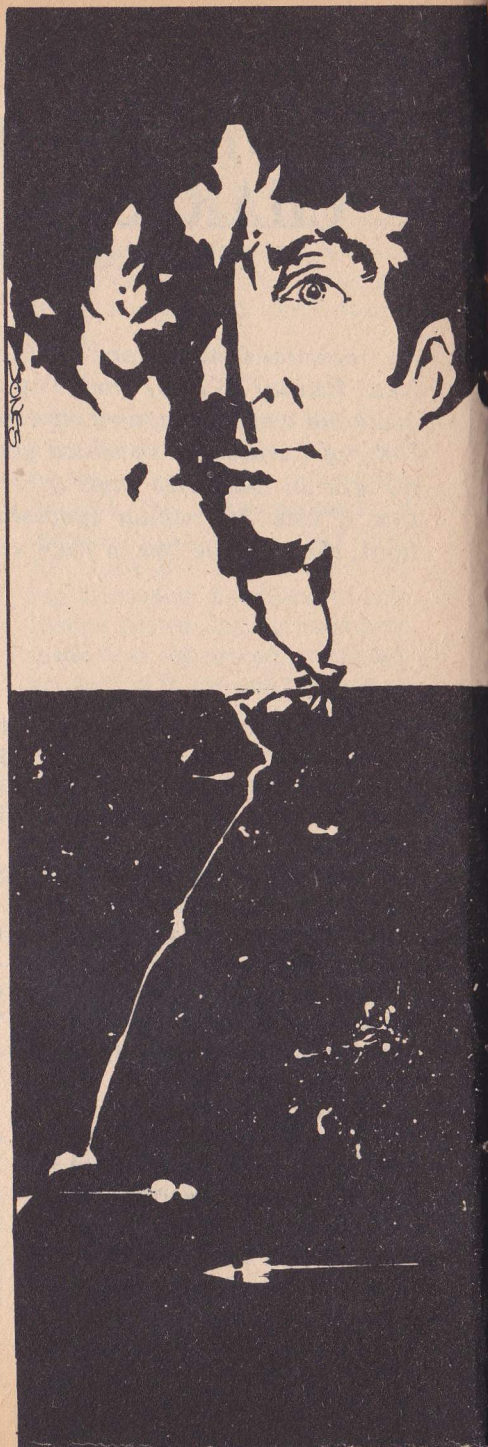
"Seventeen years, I suppose."

"I know *that.* I mean, how do you calculate those seventeen years on a ship moving at a substantial fraction of the speed of light? Remember, time slows down on an accelerating body. Seventeen years Earth time might be only five or ten years, ship-time."

Jim shrugged. "Nice legal point. Maybe your patent — if you ever get it — would still be in force on such a ship, after seventeen years of Earth time. It would depend on whether ship time is legal time. That's one for Jack Lane. What difference does it make?"

"Maybe none," said Bryan thoughtfully.

And so the patent application



was filed, and Jim Burke pretty much forgot about it.

During this time, *Electra* and *Thor* continued to gather speed. They peaked out at 0.6 *c* on schedule, and toward the end of the third year, they began the long deceleration toward Sol.

And then came the explosion in the research laboratories of Pan-Stellar, which nearly killed Jim Burke, and following which he was hauled off to Washington Central Hospital.

And then there came, during the next months, with a certain horrid rhythm, additional unpleasant events. These included a series of operations on Jim Burke, which finally established that he was probably going to live; but that radiation side effects would prevent competent use of his optic nerves; that all his money was gone; and that Pan-Stellar deeply sympathized, but that the Burkes could not expect any financial help.

In fact, Pan-Stellar sent out their special representative to see Jim and to explain exactly how things stood between Pan-Stellar and Jim Burke. They sent Mr. Slicer.

T. Elliott Slicer, Esq., Chief of the Accident and Claims Section at Pan-Stellar, thought of himself as a kind man. This particular term, however, was rarely foremost in the list of adjectives that other people used when referring to him. Nevertheless (or, possibly, therefore) his superiors considered him a brilliant adjuster, whose technique had saved the Line millions of talers. Rather often, when lawyers were contacted to handle accident claims against the Line, they turned down the case when they learned Slicer was on the other end.

Mr. Slicer smiled a lot, and he was smiling when he walked into the hospital room and introduced himself to Jim Burke, who held out his hand. Mr. Slicer put a piece of paper in it and said, "Since you cannot read, Mr. Burke, I will tell you what it is. It is a copy of our complaint, which I have just filed in the Hall of Justice."

"Huh?"

"In summary, Mr. Burke, Pan-Stellar holds you personally responsible for the damage to the new experimental drive and to the building, plus incidentals including the resulting delay in the drive research program."

"But . . . but . . ."

"The claim is in the amount of four hundred eighty-three thousand talers," said Mr. Slicer.

It finally sank in, and Jim began to react. "You've got it all mixed up! I'm here because of what I was doing for Pan-Stellar. Pan-Stellar owes *me!*"

Mr. Slicer smiled kindly. "I hope you will retain competent counsel, Mr. Burke, who can help you correct these odd misconceptions."

"But my insurance . . . terminal pay . . . pension . . . disability . . .?"

Mr. Slicer grinned. "We have deducted these, of course, Mr. Burke, from the gross amount of the damage you have done to the laboratory. Our claim represents our net loss, after all deductions. We are fair."

Jim Burke was silent.

Mr. Slicer pursed his lips, then continued. "You have a magnificent reputation with the Line, Mr. Burke. I am informed that you invented the basic drive now being installed in the newer ships. The Line has asked me to take this into consideration, and I will. Under the circumstances, we are willing to drop our suit if you will waive all claims, past, present, and future, against Pan-Stellar. I have the waiver, here."

Jim Burke heard the rustle of paper.

"Couldn't you throw in a small pension?" he asked in a low voice.

"I'm afraid not, Mr. Burke."

"Something for my son's college education?"

"Quite out of the question."

"My hospital bill?"

"My dear Mr. Burke. Are you being deliberately difficult? Well, never mind. Perhaps I can help you see things our way, after our next legal step. It distresses me to inform you that I shall have to attach all your property, real and personal, including your house, your cars, furniture, books, instruments . . . everything."

"Why should that distress you, Mr. Slicer?" Jim was genuinely curious.

"Because the expenses of attachment are not taxable to the defendant, but must be borne by Pan-Stellar."

"My heart goes out to the Line," murmured Jim.

"I'll leave the waiver on the night table," said Mr. Slicer cheerfully.

A week after Mr. Slicer's visit, Margie Burke and Bryan were walking behind Jim's exercise chair in the sunshine room at the hospital. Margie was trying to explain it all to Bryan. "The Line won't pay anything. Mr. Lane has had it out with their lawyers."

Jim Burke said something so quietly that Bryan did not quite get it; the hair on his neck rose nevertheless.

Margie Burke continued. "Mr. Lane says he is going to see Mr. Slicer again next week. He thinks Mr. Slicer might still call off the damage suit against your father and give us a little money, if we coax and plead a little. It's the custom in the big Lines to give a small income to permanently injured employees."

"Will there be enough money for my patent application, too?" asked Bryan.

"I'm afraid not," said his mother.

"Just a minute," said Jim. He sensed an interesting possibility, even though he was not sure just how he could use it. "What's the latest on your patent?"

"Mr. Lane says the Patent Office has sent another rejection. He says the Patent Examiner doesn't believe the invention can work, and that to continue prosecution, we will have to submit actual proof that two space ships have moved toward each other at a speed greater than the speed of light. But I think we can provide the proof pretty soon."

"How's that?"

"It just happens that Dr. Talix is on the *Electra,* due to arrive next week here at Washington Terminal. And this new drug, *kae* extract, that they want Dr. Talix to try on your eyes, is due to arrive on *Thor,* all on the same day, maybe the same hour. You can calculate the distances from Sirius and Alpha Centauri, and the time in flight, and by simple arithmetic you can get a velocity of 0.6 *c* for each ship toward Sol. So the ships would have to have a net approach velocity toward each other of 1.2 times the speed of light."

"Ah, yes," mused Jim. "I remember now. Very curious, and very impossible. Things just can't move faster than light, whether they're moving towards themselves or towards Sol or a third party observer. Or can they? Could Einstein be wrong?" He was silent for a long time. "It's curious to think, isn't it, that if you *are* right, and if you *do* get a patent, the Line will soon be infringing it with every pair of ships moving toward each other along the same vector, where each of the ships has an average speed over one-half *c.*"

"And that's also true if the ships are going *away* from each other," said Bryan. "They'd start infringing soon after they left the same space port."

"Margie," said Jim, "get hold of Jack Lane again."

"What for?"

"I want him to go down to the Patent Office with Bryan. I want him to get this patent issued, and then I want him to file a counterclaim against Pan-Stellar."

"Counterclaim?"

"For one million talers, for patent infringement."

Patent Examiner Honaire addressed his two visitors with care and precision. This was in accordance with the Terran Patent Office rule that all interviews be entered into the computers for instant evaluation in the prompt determination of patentability. "The Application Branch," said Honaire, "had a problem the day his application was received. As I'm sure you are aware, Mr. Lane, there is a very ancient rule, dating back to the first century of

operation of the old United States Patent Office, that if the application clearly calls for a mode of operation that violates a law of nature, this would be called to the attention of the applicant, with an offer to return his application fee. If the applicant refused the offer, we would take his money and then demand a working model. That generally ended the matter. But we couldn't apply that rule here. In the first place, the Solicitor's Computer gave us a ruling that Einstein's Theory of Relativity wasn't a law of nature, but only a hypothesis. So when Einstein said that an object couldn't move at a velocity greater than the speed of light, he was simply stating a consequence of his theory. Therefore we have accepted your fee, and we have duly examined your application, and we will let you try to prove Einstein wrong."

"That seems fair," said Bryan.

"Yes, indeed," said Jack Lane.

"Now, then," continued Honaire, "let us get to the heart of the matter. In your working example, you mention two ships, *Electra* and *Thor*. You concede that, as observed from the Earth, the velocity of each ship with respect to the Earth will never exceed the speed of light. On the other hand, what is the velocity of each ship as measured by the other? In neither ship will there be any apparent motion to the occupants of that ship. On the contrary, the other ship will appear to have all the motion, and will further appear to be approaching the observing ship at the combined velocities of the two ships, which, in the case suggested in your latest amendment, for *Electra* and *Thor*, is alleged to be 0.6 plus 0.6, or 1.2 times the speed of light. You contend that the gap will therefore be closing at a rate greater than the speed of light. The position of the Office is that this is quite impossible in view of Einstein's Theory."

"And my client, of course, respectfully traverses," said Lane, looking at his watch. "*Electra* and *Thor* should be arriving at the Washington Terminal any minute now. If they come in on schedule, Einstein and the Patent Office are wrong. It's as simple as that!"

"Not quite, Mr. Lane. Perhaps I should have explained earlier another unusual aspect of this case. The Einstein Theory is integrally programmed into all Patent Office computers. For this reason we can rely on our computers only in limited areas in examining an application predicated on the proposition that the Theory itself is wrong. This requires that all essential features of patentability be developed personally by the Examining Corps. Indeed, The Commissioner of Patents himself has taken a personal interest in this application. This is, of course, on account of the

fact that the patent, if granted, could be expected to cover a large segment of the interstellar traffic of the Cluster. The Commissioner has advised further that proof of operability of a most clear and convincing character will be required. The reason is, obviously, that operability, if established, will necessarily refute Einstein's Theory, a theory which has been accepted as axiomatic for several hundred years. The Commissioner therefore requires that any demonstration adduced in support of operability be witnessed by himself in person."

Lane rose from his seat in protest. "But that would require that we arrange for the Commissioner to be at the Terminal when two specific ships arrive simultaneously! We have no other way to prove operability. And it will take weeks of negotiations with the space lines, not to mention the problems of getting hold of the Commissioner on a split second schedule!"

"I appreciate the difficulties inherent in your position," agreed Honaire gravely. "Unfortunately, in view of the interest of the Commissioner, I'm afraid I must adhere to the proof requirements as I have stated them. You can, of course, appeal my decision to the courts."

"No," said Lane glumly. "We don't have time for that. We need the patent now."

Honaire glanced at the clock on the wall behind his visitors, then studied Bryan for a moment. "Then I would recommend," he said enigmatically, "that we defer the question of operability for the time being, and proceed to the issue of aggregation raised in the latest Office action."

Bryan studied his copy of the Office action. "What's 'aggregation'?"

"'Aggregation'," said Honaire, "means that each of the elements of the invention contributes merely what it would do anyway, if the other elements were not there. Aggregation is unpatentable because it is obvious to one skilled in the art. The instant rejection on aggregation is based on the facts that each ship carries its own load, makes its own schedule, and travels at its own 0.6 *c*, quite independently of the other. The total system is therefore aggregative, and hence unpatentable."

"We traverse," said Lane. "In fact, we rely on aggregation to prove patentability. *Our* aggregation is unobvious!"

Honaire blinked. "How can aggregation ever be unobvious? It's a contradiction in terms."

"Let me explain," said Lane. "Normally, when you add 2 and 2 you expect to get 4; and so, when you *do* get 4, that's aggregation. It's obvious, and unpatentable. But if you got 3 or 5, that could not possibly be aggregation, and therefore it might

be patentable invention. Well, our situation is exactly the reverse. When *we* add 0.6 and 0.6, we do *not* expect to get 1.2, but rather a value somewhat less than 1.0. So when we actually do add 0.6 and 0.6 and get 1.2, that *is* unexpected. In other words, it's the very fact that we *do* get aggregation that is unexpected, and therefore unobvious, and therefore patentable."

"A novel concept, indeed." Honaire was thoughtful. "And it reduces still further the area of logic circuits in our computers available for interim findings of law and fact in this application."

"It would appear, then," said Lane, "that the question of aggregation rests entirely within the personal discretion of the Examiner. We formally request a ruling."

"I accept the personal jurisdiction of the issue," said Honaire coolly. "Nevertheless I shall retain the rejection on aggregation until a suitable showing of operability is made." He looked across at the clock. "By your calculations, *Electra* and *Thor* should be landing in about ten minutes?"

Lane shrugged his shoulders. "And the Commissioner is probably out playing golf. Shall we proceed to the rejection on art?"

Honaire smiled. "Very well. We have a rejection on the prior art, based on counsel's own statements made in prior prosecution of record, to the effect that *Electra* and *Thor,* taken together, are examples of operability and utility of the invention. But in view of *Electra-Thor,* how can the instant invention be *novel?"*

"It's novel because this application was filed three years ago, before either *Electra* or *Thor* reached 0.6 *c*," said Lane. "In other words, the *Electra-Thor* system, considered as a supra-*c* system, isn't prior art simply because it isn't *prior."*

Honaire nodded. "We agree. That particular rejection will be withdrawn. We can now proceed to the formal objections."

"He means objections to the language of the claims," Lane explained to Bryan.

"Quite right," said Honaire. "Your main claim simply says 'Space travel at speeds greater than the velocity of light.' The claim would cover all motion in excess of light, regardless of how it is accomplished."

"But that's what I invented," said Bryan. "Why can't I claim it?"

"You invented *one* method of moving at speeds greater than light," said Honaire. "Your method requires two vessels, each moving at a speed greater than 0.5 *c*. Later on, if someone else can invent another way to cause a vessel to move at a speed greater than the speed of light, independent of a second vessel, your patent ought not to cover

such subsequent invention."

"Suppose we amend to recite two ships," said Lane, "each having a velocity greater than 0.5 *c*, and having a net velocity with respect to each other exceeding *c*?"

"Still too broad," said Honaire. "In your invention, as described in your application, both ships are *accelerated* until they reach 0.6 *c*."

"We will further amend," said Lane, "to recite that each ship is accelerated to a velocity of at least 0.6 *c*."

"Seems reasonable," said Honaire, making interlineations in his file. "Would you please read the proposed claims into the record?"

Lane dictated briefly, then looked up at Honaire expectantly.

"The revised claims meet all objections in phraseology," said Honaire, looking at the clock. "This leaves only the issues of aggregation and operability, which we are forced to postpone until—"

The audio buzzed.

"Ah!" said Honaire. "Perhaps *this* is what we have been waiting for." He flipped the incoming button.

A crisp voice crackled through. "Honaire!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Both ships came in on schedule. Incidentally, I have both Dr. Talix and the *kae* in my private car, and we are headed for the hospital. You might so inform the applicant."

"He's going to see Dad!" exclaimed Bryan. "Who is he?"

Jack Lane was shaken. "*That* was the Commissioner of Patents." His voice gradually came back. He asked Honaire: "I gather that the Commissioner witnessed the arrival of the ships with his own eyes?"

Honaire smiled. "Yes. So the Office must withdraw the rejections on inoperability and aggregation."

"And you'll allow the claims?" Lane's voice had an edge of unbelief.

Honaire was calm. "I am pleased to inform you, Mr. Lane, that, as presently advised, all objections and rejections in this application have been met, and in accordance with the Statutes and the authority vested in me by the Commissioner of Patents, I do now grant the patent."

Bryan started to cheer, then remembered where he was. Instead, he jumped up, whirled around twice, and sat down again. "You mean *right now?*"

"Yes, right now," said Honaire. "In ancient times, it took at least six weeks after allowance, to issue the patent. Now, of course, with computers, we can deliver the sealed document within a few minutes—and *here it is.*" A gold-sealed document emerged from a slot on the top of his desk, and he handed it to Bryan.

And at that instant the room was plunged in darkness.

"What's the matter?" whispered Bryan.

Honaire laughed wryly. "I think I can explain. When a patent is granted, it is automatically abstracted and integrated into our computers, so as to constitute a reference against any future patent application for a similar invention. Simultaneously, all points of law involved are programmed into the computers in the Solicitor's office. These operations necessarily require our computers to accept and digest data on the Einstein Theory, and on the law of aggregation, that they 'know' are wrong. Their circuits probably couldn't handle the conflict. My guess is, that all the computers involved are temporarily out of commission—nervous breakdowns, if you will." He sighed. "And *my* office lights are out because our government, always economy conscious, has wired our computers and office lights on a common circuit. But if you will bear with us, the current balancers will take care of the problem in a moment. Ah, here come the lights again."

"Then we'd better leave before we cause any further difficulty." Lane shook hands with Honaire. "The courtesies of the Office are greatly appreciated," he said formally. But he was grinning from ear to ear.

Honaire played it dead-pan. "We serve the Cluster." His eyes flickered, and he turned to Bryan. "There is just one final requirement."

Bryan's heart skipped a beat. "Sir?"

"May I have the autograph of the boy who blew the fuse at the Patent Office?"

They found Jim Burke waiting for them impatiently in his room at the hospital. "You missed all the excitement," he said from behind his bandages. "Some government fellow collected Dr. Talix and the *kae* at the port and brought them here together. Talix has just finished giving me my first treatment."

"Can you see yet?" demanded Bryan eagerly.

"Well, of course not, not yet. Even if it works, it'll take weeks. But enough about me. You got the patent?"

"Yes," said Lane.

"So now you can file the counterclaim and preliminary injunction against the Line?"

"Both are now on record. We stopped by the Hall of Justice.

"What's our next step?"

"We wait. Slicer is certainly going to put out feelers for settlement. When he comes around again, we'll have to be ready to talk to him about a license under the patent. . ."

"I am here," said Mr. Slicer warmly, "because of my continu-

ing deep concern about Mr. Burke. All of you will be delighted to learn that I have been able to persuade Pan-Stellar to offer a generous disability pension to Mr. Burke."

"How much?" asked Jim.

"One hundred and twenty-five talers a month," said Mr. Slicer kindly.

Jim Burke began a slow rhythmic gurgling.

"Mr. Slicer," said Lane patiently, "we know you mean well, but owing to my client's facial bandages, it is painful for him to laugh."

Slicer stared at Jack Lane suspiciously. "I wasn't trying to be humorous. My motives are entirely humane—

"I'm sure they are," smiled Lane. "And of course our counterclaim for patent infringement has nothing to do with your presence here. So if your tactics require that you spend the first fifteen minutes telling us that our patent is worthless and that we ought to settle for a monthly payment of one hundred and twenty-five talers, you go right ahead. But we may smile."

Slicer studied the three uneasily; then he shrugged his shoulders. "Well, frankly, now that you mention it, I *don't* think much of your patent. But it would take a long and expensive fight in the courts to find out where we stood. For this reason, we are willing to buy in, if the price is right. But the figure in your counterclaim, one cent per ton, seems high."

"What rate did you have in mind?" said Lane carefully.

"Something like, say, one-tenth of a cent."

"Too low."

Slicer was no longer smiling. "I don't think your patent will stand up in court."

"We'll soon know, won't we?" said Lane genially. "Since patent infringement is a counterclaim in Pan-Stellar vs. Burke, the question of whether my client must reimburse the Line for the explosion will be decided by the same jury that decides whether the Line infringes the patent issued to this man's son—this same bright young lad, who, with tears running down his cheeks, helped carry his father's stretcher down in front of the jury box."

Slicer patted his forehead with his handkerchief. "Mr. Lane, we seem to be constantly misunderstanding each other. What are your minimum terms?"

"One-quarter cent per ton royalty, non-exclusive. Exclusive is half-a-cent per ton."

"If we were exclusive, could we sub-license the other lines and keep the income?"

"You can," said Lane, "if you will take the responsibility for policing the patent and financing all litigation."

"Seems reasonable."

"But before we get too far along," said Lane, "let me mention that we will require a sub-

stantial lump sum down payment."

"Ah, the down payment. How much?"

Bryan said: "One million talers." Then he held his breath.

"Make it a quarter million," said Slicer.

"That's not enough," said Bryan. "Remember, Mr. Slicer, we have to get enough to pay the Line your claim of 483,000 talers. But we'll come down a little, to 966,000 talers. Then we could pay your claim and still have 483,000 talers left over."

Slicer glared at Bryan. "Which, by some strange coincidence, is exactly what we were suing your father for!" His eyes rolled upward. "Never in my entire professional career have I dealt with such unreasonable people."

"Then maybe there's another way, Mr. Slicer," said Bryan carefully. "But first, a question for our lawyer. Mr. Lane, is ship time legal time? I mean, can you write a patent license where something happens by ship time?"

Jim Burke leaned forward suddenly.

"Yes, of course," said Lane, looking puzzled.

"What difference does it make?" sniffed Slicer. "The patent expires in seventeen years, no matter how you calculate it. Earth time, ship time, it's all the same. After seventeen years, your royalties stop."

"Then we're pretty close to agreement," said Jim quickly. "If the Line will waive its claim against me, I'll waive the down payment. On one condition."

"Which is?"

"The seventeen-year period will be determined by the chronometers of ships operating under the patent claims."

Slicer studied the three. "There's something here I can't quite put my finger on." He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "All right, it's a deal. I'll send the contract over within the hour." And now he was smiling again. He smiled his warmest, kindliest smile. "Master Bryan, you have no idea just how much money the Line is going to make from this license."

Bryan smiled back. "No, sir. But then, the Line doesn't know for how long it's going to be paying the Burkes."

One year later Jim Burke drove Jack Lane, Bryan, and Margie out to the dedication ceremonies for the new Burke Research Laboratories.

"I still don't like it," said Margie. "Putting all our patent money into those buildings and that funny equipment. It'll take years before you get enough clients to break even. You'll overwork. And you know what Dr. Talix says about not tiring your eyes. Also, I'm sure the patent royalties won't go on forever."

"Now *there* is a curious point," soothed Jim. "Because, for practical purposes, the patent royalties *will* go on forever."

"Are you out of your mind? The patent expires in seventeen years." She turned to Lane. "Doesn't it, Jack?"

Lane chuckled. "It does, but it all depends where the seventeen-year period is taking place. Bryan gets the credit for this gimmick, so why don't we let him explain it?"

"It was the last thing we talked about, with that nice Mr. Slicer," said Bryan. "We got him to agree to keep paying the royalties as long as the patent was in force, as determined by ship time."

"Well?" said Margie.

"Don't you see, dear?" said Jim. "Everything on a ship under acceleration slows down, including clocks. The faster the ship, the slower the clock. But, as long as Pan-Stellar ship-pairs are arriving or departing at high speeds during the remaining sixteen years of the patent *on their clocks,* they are acruing royalty under the patent, no matter whether the patent has long since expired by local time here in Washington. So when the patent expires in sixteen more years, Earth time, there will be hundreds of Line ships in deep space with clocks that register only a two-year lapse. The patent will still be in force on those ships, and we collect our royalties on them, even though some of them won't be back for twenty or thirty years, Earth time."

"And that's just a starter," said Bryan. "Right now, Pan-Stellar is provisioning nearly fifty ships for the first attempts at several of the nearer globular clusters. The round trip will take nearly a hundred years, Earth time, but their clocks will show a time lapse of only about seven years."

"*Those* royalties should take care of our grandchildren comfortably," said Jim Burke.

"And that isn't all," said Bryan. "Pan-Stellar is building ships to try for the Magellanic Clouds. The round trip is about 40,000 light years, Earth time, but the ships' clocks will show only about ten years lapse, well within the patent."

"And next will be the nearer galaxies," said Lane. "M-31 in Andromeda is nearly a million light years away, but, calculating ship time by the Einstein Theory, the round trip will be less than seventeen years for the people on the ships."

"But what kind of patent is it," wondered Margie Burke plaintively, "if you got it in the first place only because Einstein was *wrong,* and then you make it last for a million years because Einstein is right? Don't you have to be consistent?"

Lane laughed. "Not in the patent game. But don't worry about Einstein. He would understand. After all, he was a patent examiner in ancient Switzerland!"

The End

The Smile

By

Ray Bradbury

Few readers are neutral where Ray Bradbury is concerned: he's been called everything from a "chromium-age Thoreau" to a "hyperbole-happy hater of humanity". Both quotes seem more precious than pertinent — but the fact remains that almost as much has been written about *Bradbury as* by *him. His work has appeared in smooth-paper magazines, in the pulps, on radio and television, as well as in numerous anthologies and pocket editions.*

We offer The Smile as typical Bradbury: a sensitive and significant theme against a background filled with the gritty desolation of a lost world too many of us may help to make.

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L. Sterne Stevens

IN THE town square the queue had formed at five in the morning, while cocks were crowing far out in the rimed country and there were no fires. All about, among the ruined buildings, bits of mist had clung at first, but now with the new light of seven o'clock it was beginning to disperse. Down the road, in twos and threes, more people were gathering in for the day of marketing, the day of festival.

The small boy stood immediately behind two men who had been talking loudly in the clear air, and all of the sounds they made seemed twice as loud because of the cold. The small boy stomped his feet and blew on his red, chapped hands, and looked up at the soiled gunny-sack clothing of the men, and down the long line of men and women ahead.

"Here, boy, what're you doing out so early?" said the man behind him.

"Got my place in line, I have," said the boy.

"Whyn't you run off, give your place to someone who appreciates?"

"Leave the boy alone," said the man ahead, suddenly turning.

"I was joking." The man behind put his hand on the boy's head. The boy shook it away coldly. "I just thought it strange, a boy out of bed so early."

"This boy's an appreciator of arts, I'll have you know," said the

boy's defender, a man named Grigsby. "What's your name, lad?"

"Tom."

"Tom here is going to spit clean and true, right, Tom?"

"I sure am!"

Laughter passed down the line.

A man was selling cracked cups of hot coffee up ahead. Tom looked and saw the little hot fire and the brew bubbling in a rusty pan. It wasn't really coffee. It was made from some berry that grew on the meadowlands beyond town, and it sold a penny a cup to warm their stomachs; but not many were buying, not many had the wealth.

Tom stared ahead to the place where the line ended, beyond a bombed-out stone wall.

"They say she *smiles*," said the boy.

"Aye, she does," said Grigsby.

"They say she's made of oil and canvas, and she's four centuries old."

"Maybe more. Nobody knows what year this is, to be sure."

"It's 2251!"

"That's what *they* say. Liars. Could be 3000 or 5000 for all we know, things were in a fearful mess there for awhile. All we got now is bits and pieces."

They shuffled along the cold stones of the street.

"How much longer before we see her?" asked Tom, uneasily.

"Oh, a few minutes, boy. They got her set up with four brass poles and velvet rope, all fancy, to keep people back. Now mind, no rocks, Tom, they don't allow rocks thrown at her."

"Yes, sir."

They shuffled on in the early morning which grew late, and the sun rose into the heavens bringing heat with it which made the men shed their grimy coats and greasy hats.

"Why're we all here in line?" asked Tom at last. "Why're we all here to spit?"

Grigsby did not glance down at him, but judged the sun. "Well, Tom, there's lots of reasons." He reached absently for a pocket that was long gone, for a cigarette that wasn't there. Tom had seen the gesture a million times. "Tom, it has to do with hate. Hate for everything in the Past. I ask you, Tom, how did we get in such a state, cities all junk, roads like jigsaws from bombs, and half the cornfields glowing with radio-activity at night? Ain't that a lousy stew, I ask you?"

"Yes, sir, I guess so."

"It's this way, Tom. You hate whatever it was that got you all knocked down and ruined. That's human nature. Unthinking, maybe, but human nature anyway."

"There's hardly nobody or nothing we don't hate," said Tom.

"Right! The whole blooming kaboodle of them people in the

Past who run the world. So here we are on a Thursday morning with our guts plastered to our spines, cold, live in caves and such, don't smoke, don't drink, don't nothing except have our festivals, Tom, our festivals."

And Tom thought of the festivals in the past few years. The year they tore up all the books in the square and burned them and everyone was drunk and laughing. And the festival of science a month ago when they dragged in the last motor car and picked lots and each lucky man who won was allowed one smash of a sledge-hammer at the car.

"Do I remember *that*, Tom? Do I *remember?* Why, I got to smash the front window, the window, you hear? My god, it made a lovely sound! *Crash!*"

Tom could hear the glass falling in glittering heaps.

"And Bill Henderson, he got to bash the engine. Oh, he did a smart job of it, with great efficiency. Wham!"

But best of all, recalled Grigsby, there was the time they smashed a factory that was still trying to turn out airplanes.

"Lord, did we feel good blowing it up," said Grigsby. "And then we found that newspaper plant and the munitions depot and exploded them together. Do you understand, Tom?"

Tom puzzled over it. "I guess."

It was high noon. Now the odors of the ruined city stank on the hot air and things crawled among the tumbled buildings.

"Won't it ever come back, mister?"

"What, civilization? Nobody wants it. Not me!"

"I could stand a bit of it," said the man behind another man. "There were a few spots of beauty in it."

"Don't worry your heads," shouted Grigsby. "There's no room for that, either."

"Ah," said the man behind the man. "Someone'll come along some day with imagination and patch it up. Mark my words. Someone with a heart."

"No," said Grigsby.

"I say yes. Someone with a soul for pretty things. Might give us back a kind of *limited* sort of civilization, the kind we could live in in peace."

"First thing you know there's war!"

"But maybe next time it'd be different."

At last they stood in the main square. A man on horseback was riding from the distance into the town. He had a piece of paper in his hand. In the center of the square was the roped-off area. Tom, Grigsby, and the others were collecting their spittle and moving forward — moving forward prepared and ready, eyes

wide. Tom felt his heart beating very strongly and excitedly, and the earth was hot under his bare feet.

"Here we go, Tom, let fly!"

Four policemen stood at the corners of the roped area, four men with bits of yellow twine on their wrists to show their authority over other men. They were there to prevent rocks' being hurled.

"This way," said Grigsby at the last moment, "everyone feels he's had his chance at her, you see, Tom? Go on, now!"

Tom stood before the painting and looked at it for a long time.

"Tom, spit!"

His mouth was dry.

"Get on, Tom! Move!"

"But," said Tom, slowly, "she's BEAUTIFUL!"

"Here, I'll spit for you!" Grigsby spat and the missile flew in the sunlight. The woman in the portrait smiled serenely, secretly, at Tom, and he looked back at her, his heart beating, a kind of music in his ears.

"She's beautiful," he said.

"Now get on, before the police —"

"Attention!"

The line fell silent. One moment they were berating Tom for not moving forward, now they were turning to the man on horseback.

"What do they call it, sir?" asked Tom, quietly.

"The pictu Mona Lisa, Tom, I think. Yes, the Mona Lisa."

"I have an announcement," said the man on horseback. "The authorities have decreed that as of high noon today the portrait in the square is to be given over into the hands of the populace there, so they may participate in the destruction of —"

Tom hadn't even time to scream before the crowd bore him, shouting and pummeling about, stampeding toward the portrait. There was a sharp ripping sound. The police ran to escape. The crowd was in full cry, their hands like so many hungry birds pecking away at the portrait. Tom felt himself thrust almost through the broken thing. Reaching out in blind imitation of the others, he snatched a scrap of oily canvas, yanked, felt the canvas give, then fell, was kicked, sent rolling to the outer rim of the mob. Bloody, his clothing torn, he watched old women chew pieces of canvas, men break the frame, kick the ragged cloth, and rip it into confetti.

Only Tom stood apart, silent in the moving square. He looked down at his hand. It clutched the piece of canvas close to his chest, hidden.

"Hey there, Tom!" cried Grigsby.

Without a word, sobbing, Tom ran. He ran out and down the bomb-pitted road, into a field, across a shallow stream, not look-

ing back, his hand clenched tightly, tucked under his coat.

At sunset he reached the small village and passed on through. By nine o'clock he came to the ruined farm dwelling. Around back, in the half silo, in the part that still remained upright, tented over, he heard the sounds of sleeping, the family — his mother, father and brother. He slipped quickly, silently, through the small door and lay down, panting.

"Tom?" called his mother in the dark.

"Yes."

"Where've you been?" snapped his father. "I'll beat you in the morning."

Someone kicked him. His brother, who had been left behind to work their little patch of ground.

"Go to sleep," cried his mother, faintly.

Another kick.

Tom lay getting his breath. All was quiet. His hand was pushed to his chest, tight, tight. He lay for half an hour this way, eyes closed. Then he felt something, and it was a cold white light. The moon rose very high and the little square of light moved in the silo and crept slowly over Tom's body. Then, and only then, did his hand relax. Slowly, carefully, listening to those who slept about him, Tom drew his hand forth. He hesitated, sucked in his breath, and then, waiting, opened his hand and uncrumpled the tiny fragment of painted canvas.

All the world was asleep in the moonlight.

And there on his hand was the Smile.

He looked at it in the white illumination from the midnight sky. And he thought, over and over to himself, quietly, *the Smile, the lovely Smile.*

An hour later he could still see it, even after he had folded it carefully and hidden it. He shut his eyes and the Smile was there in the darkness. And it was still there, warm and gentle, when he went to sleep and the world was silent and the moon sailed up and then down the cold sky toward morning.

Move Over, AA

NEW method for curing alcoholism has just been discovered. Two South African witch doctors have tried the remedy. They murdered a 12-year-old boy, fed his flesh to a tribal chief to cure the chief's predilection for that spiked liquid.

P.S. Cure didn't work.

When man creates intelligence, whether it springs from his loins or his mind, there comes a time of parting. And in this bitter-sweet tale from behind the "curtain," Gennadiy Gor—in spite of the limits of "ideology"—has told how it must be, both for creator and "child."

AN UNUSUAL CASE

GENNADIY GOR

translated from the Russian by STANLEY FRYE

1

"WHO are you?" I asked him. He answered with sorrow in his voice.

"Really, do I know who I am? I'm too much like you to be able to insist upon the independence of my own *I*. I don't know who I am yet, but I hope I soon shall. And who are you?"

"Jack Peters, your creator."

"God?"

"How did you know about God? There is no God. And anyhow, do I look like God?"

"Then who are you?" he insisted.

"Your creator."

"My father?"

There was a shadow of uncertainty in his voice.

"Directly, no. Indirectly, yes. You weren't born. You were made, like they make . . ."

I couldn't bring myself to finish the sentence. I'd wanted to say: "like they make things." I felt sorry for him. He was so sensitive, so proud.

"Father," he said lovingly. "Father," he repeated the word that sounded so odd in his mouth, "Father . . ."

With that intonation in his voice he seemed to express such pressing and deep emotion that I felt beside myself.

"You yourself can see that I couldn't be your father," I said. "You're the same age as I."

"Then you're my brother?"

"No," I answered.

"Then who?"

I left his question unanswered. I couldn't tell him that I was his constructor, his inventor.

"A friend?"

"Possibly we'll become friends sometime," I said.

Was that actually possible? I could regard him only as a thing. An intelligent thing, true, but still, a thing.

"Isn't that enough for today? You're probably tired. Rest. Look around. I'll come back to see you tomorrow."

He obviously didn't want me to leave him. He feared loneliness.

"Father," he called . . . "Father!"

2

I taught him to see the world. I wanted him to see things more clearly and freshly than the ordinary people who are just a little weary of what has surrounded them since childhood.

He had had neither childhood nor youth. He had become an adult immediately.

I placed an apple on the table.

"What is this?" I asked.

He answered as Cezanne would have answered, or the great Flemish masters, if they could have put into words the all-inclusive power and might of their artistic vision. He told me what his eyes discovered when they penetrated the apple, plunged into its soft roundness, its freshness and aroma.

As I taught him I taught myself.

"Father . . ." he still insisted on calling me Father, "don't you think that nature is wise and skillful?"

"I didn't correct him, didn't tell him I wasn't his father. I explained:

"The gardner helps produce the apple as well as nature. Actually, he may have made greater efforts than nature did."

He listened. Not without pleasure, although he himself had no connection with nature.

I taught him to listen, and I also learned. The whisper of raindrops falling in grass, the music of a river in spring moving the ice flow, the voice of the cuckoo mingling its languishing notes with the dawn, the whistle of the oriole, the roar and moan of the piano . . . he drew the world into himself and absorbed it.

"Teacher," he said to me, "tell me what man is. Why is he here on earth? Where did he come from and where is he going?"

"You'll have to answer those questions for yourself. Study... think!"

Many of his questions put me in a quandary. I was an engineer-biologist and that was all. The creator of thinking mechanisms. And the questions he asked could be answered only by a philosopher.

I recall how I took him Alexander Dumas' famous novel "The Three Musketeers."

He began reading the last chapter first. I thought it was due to his absentmindedness. But I was mistaken.

"I'm beginning at the end because that's where I'll find the beginning."

"Wouldn't it be simpler to start with the first chapter of the book?"

He didn't answer immediately.

"But what is the beginning, teacher, and what is the end? Isn't everything eternal?"

I became more and more upset. Was he joking? Making fun of me? He was usually so logical, so precise with words.

"Very well," I said, "we'll leave that subject for the future. Your mind still isn't developed enough to deal with such abstract subjects. How did you sleep last night?"

"Well, the same as always."

"Have any dreams?"

"Yes, I dreamed about my past."

"You have no past, my dear. I've never concealed that from you. You appeared the day and on the hour specified by the graph in my laboratory."

"No, I do have a past," he insisted. "I dream about it."

"And what do you dream? Do tell me."

"I dream," he said, looking wistfully into the distance, "of a river on the banks of which I spent my childhood. There is a path that leads into the forest. My brothers and sisters are playing blind man's buff. They cover my eyes with a handkerchief and suddenly the world disappears. I turn around and around, putting out my hands to catch someone. Then I take off the handkerchief. The sun blinds me. The wonderful world is there again. A mountain. The transparent blue of a forest stream. The voices of the birds. I did have that, didn't I? Why don't you say something? Please don't take that away from me."

3

This time he was excited.

"Father," he asked, "does the past often come back to you?"

"The past cannot return . . . time is irrevocable."

"You don't understand me, teacher. I'm talking about memories. All last night memories came back to me. When I was a young student I met a girl. Her name was Mary. Mary Osten. What a beautiful voice she had. She sang. We used to meet in a big garden. Sometimes she would be late. Can you understand how wildly my heart would beat? Then she would appear, as though from nowhere, always from the other side, from where I didn't expect her. But once she didn't come. I stood and waited. my heart beating madly. I waited for space

to draw back and release her from its tight embrace. But she didn't come. At the end of the day I learned that she'd gone to the hospital. Within a month she died. I still can't understand the word 'death' . . . why are you looking at me like that? Don't you believe it happened? But it did! It did! Can't you understand? Don't take that away from me."

He didn't know what all the assistants in my lab, whom I'd sworn to secrecy, knew: He didn't belong to me. The experiment had cost an enormous amount of money. Money assigned by the Mallory Company. And today I was expecting a special delegation of engineers, cyberneticists, and physiologists who were coming to receive order No. 032 as specified in the documents kept in a special vault of the bank which had financed our work.

The delegation was only ten minutes late. Mallory Senior, head of the firm, also came.

They came while he was sitting with a book in his hand, reading poetry. He was reading it aloud in his melodic, enthusiastic, sincere voice. When he saw Mallory, he stopped reading and asked:

"Father, who is that?"

I'm certain he knew why I didn't answer.

"Father," he cried, "don't give me away! Don't, Father!"

It was impossible for him to understand that I couldn't do otherwise.

"Father!" he cried.

I can still hear his voice. It remains deep within my consciousness, refuting every effort to justify.

The End

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Continuing what some of you—even now—are beginning to hail as Frank Herbert's finest novel since Dune *won both a Hugo and a Nebula in 1965—with psychologist Gilbert Dasein more than ever determined to find out why all of Santaroga—including Jenny, the woman he loves—seems hell-bent on assisting him to a perfectly "natural" death!*

Santaroga Barrier

Frank Herbert

illustrated by GRAY MORROW

Second of three parts

SYNOPSIS

For DR. GILBERT DASEIN, psychologist, the job of finding out what lies behind the peaceful facade of Santaroga is an opportunity to learn why JENNY SORGE, his former sweetheart and a native Santarogan, has, in effect, dropped out of sight behind the "Santaroga Barrier."

Not that the job in itself doesn't hold a certain professional fascination for him. To begin with, two former investigators on a similar mission have already had deadly "accidents." And then there is the data about Santaroga which just doesn't add up: For instance, why isn't there any juvenile delinquency? And why no reported mental illness?

When Dasein arrives at Santaroga, at first he is almost denied a room at the inn. Then an over-garrulous waiter named WINSTON BURDEAUX serves him food laced with "Jaspers," a local "cheese" product. And when Dasein finally returns to his room to make a phone call to DR. SELADOR, his department

head, he is almost overcome by gas!

He is rescued by Win Burdeaux and AL MARDEN, the Captain of the Highway Patrol. They call DR. PIAGET, Jenny's uncle, who gives Dasein a sedative. In the morning, not quite convinced his accident was "accidental," Dasein meets Jenny and finds his feelings for her still running as high as ever.

As the day progresses, Dasein discovers that Santarogans are an almost brutally honest people. Al Marden, for instance, readily admits having read through the contents of his briefcase and CLARA SCHELER sells used cars by telling the truth about them! Nevertheless, there is one thing the townspeople seem to be evasive about: "Jaspers." Despite this reticence, however, Dasein is given a highly censored tour of the Jaspers Cooperative during which he meets GEORGE NIS and Willa Burdeaux, who is engaged to Nis' son Cal.

When he returns to the inn, Dasein discovers a "doorless" room which is used to monitor TV programs from outside the valley. After eavesdropping for awhile from the porch roof, he re-enters the building to reaffirm the fact that there is no apparent entrance to the "TV-room." In the hallway he has another "accident," tripping on the carpet in such a manner that he crashes through the stair rail and starts to fall headfirst to the ground floor! But at the last moment someone grabs Dasein by the ankles and pulls him back to safety! It is Win Burdeaux who just "happened" to be passing by! So, for the second time in as many days Dasein finds himself under treatment by Dr. Piaget. This time for a badly injured shoulder.

Shaken by the day's events, he decides to drive out of town in order to contact Dr. Selador, who suggests he find lodgings some place else and urges him to continue his investigation. On the way back to Santaroga, Dasein begins to hallucinate and is forced to pull his camper to the side of the road. With sudden clarity he realizes that the answer to everything can be summarized by one word: "Jaspers."

Convinced that he will solve the mystery of Santaroga if he can find his way into the Co-op unobserved, Dasein, with new-born cunning gets past the dog patrols and guards surrounding the area. He enters the Jaspers "factory" via a ventilator shaft which seems to penetrate deep into the earth, and finds himself in a cave lined with row upon row of lockers which contain food items which are labelled and dated as time of "exposure."

Lulled by the strong odor of Jaspers, Dasein is almost discovered by the guards. He flees from them and finds himself in a cul-de-sac where he almost passes out. However, after awhile a voice calls his name. It is Willa Burdeaux. She tells him he has overexposed himself to Jaspers and that he should leave as soon as possible. Dasein takes her advice. Escaping from the Co-op by means of a door she has left unlatched for him, he returns to the inn.

In his room he finds that Willa has left a bottle of "Jaspers" beer for him along with a note explaining that he will need it in the morning. On the bottle itself is a blue stamp which reads: EXPOSED January 1959.

A STEADY, loud pounding invaded Dasein's dream.

He felt he was trapped inside a giant drum. Reverberations beat through his brain. Each drumbeat became a stab of pain along his temples, through his shoulders, across his stomach.

He was the drum! That was it!

His lips were dry. Thirst spread a scabby dustiness over his throat. His tongue was thick, fuzzy.

My God! Would the pounding never stop?

He awoke feeling he'd been caught in a caricature of a hangover. The blankets were twisted around his body, immobilizing his injured shoulder. The shoulder felt better, and that was a relief, but something had to be done about his head and that insane pounding.

His free arm was asleep. It tingled painfully when he tried to move it. Sunlight filtered through a tear in the curtain on the room's single window. One thin ray outlined in dust motes stabbed across the room. It dazzled him, hurt his eyes.

That damned pounding!

"Hey! Open up in there!"

It was a masculine voice from outside.

Dasein felt he knew that voice. Marden, the CHP captain? What was he doing here at this hour? Dasein lifted his wristwatch, stared at it—ten-twenty-five.

The pounding resumed.

"Just a minute!" Dasein shouted. His own voice sent waves of pain through his head.

Blessedly, the pounding stopped.

Dasein gasped with relief, twisted himself out of the blankets, sat up. The room's walls began going around and around in a mad circle.

For the love of heaven! he thought. *I've heard of hangovers, but nothing like this.*

"Open the door, Dasein."

That definitely was Marden.

"Right with you," Dasein rasped.

What's wrong with me? he wondered. He knew he'd had no more than the beers with dinner. They couldn't possibly explain his present malaise. Could it be delayed reaction to the gas?

Beer.

There was something about beer.

Slowly so as not to dislocate his neck, Dasein turned his head toward the bedstand. Yes, there was a beer. Willa had thoughtfully provided an opener. He levered the cap off the bottle, drank hungrily.

Waves of soothing relief spread out from his stomach. He put down the empty bottle, stood up. *Hair of the dog,* he thought. *Hair of the Jaspers dog.* The bottle was redolent with the mushroom tang.

"Are you all right in there, Dasein?"

To hell with you, mister, Dasein thought. He tried to take a step, was rewarded with instant nausea and a wave of dizziness. He leaned against the wall breathing slowly, deeply.

I'm sick, he thought. *I've caught something.*

The beer felt as though it had begun to boil in his stomach.

"Open this door, Dasein! Now!"

All right — all right, Dasein thought. He stumbled to the door, unlocked it, stepped back.

The door was flung open to reveal Al Marden in uniform, the captain's bars glistening at his neck. His visored cap was pushed back to reveal a sweaty band of red hair.

"Well," he said. "Haven't we been the busy one?"

He stepped into the room, closed the door. He carried something round and chromed in his left hand — a thermos. What the devil was he doing here at this hour with a thermos? Dasein wondered.

One hand against the wall to steady himself, Dasein made his way back to the bed, sat on the edge.

Marden followed.

"I hope you're worth all this trouble," he said.

Dasein looked up at the narrow, cynical face, remembering the glimpse he'd had of the high-wheeled brush buggy wheeling down the road out there with Marden steering, and the dogs beside him. That had been a proper setting for this man. There was an elevated look about him, a peering-down-at-the-world's-stupidity. What was it about him? Was it the Santaroga look? But what had the Porterville deputies seen, then? What had the man in the Chrysler seen?

Do I look that way? Dasein wondered.

"I brought you some coffee," Marden said. "You look like you could use it." He opened the thermos, poured steaming amber liquid into the cup-top.

A rich smell of Jaspers rode on the steam from the cup. The smell set Dasein trembling, sent a pulsing, throbbing ache through his head. The ache seemed timed to a wavering reflection on the surface of the coffee as Marden presented it.

Dasein took the cup in both hands, tipped his head back and drank with a gulping eagerness. The coffee produced the same sensation of soothing as the beer.

Marden refilled the cup.

Dasein held it beneath his nose, inhaled the Jaspers rich steam. His headache began to fade. There was a hunger in him for the coffee that he realized went beyond the cravings from a hangover.

"Drink up," Marden said.

Dasein sipped the coffee. He could feel it settling his stomach, his mind coming alert. Marden no longer appeared superior—only amused.

Why was a hangover amusing?

"The Jaspers, that's what gave me the screaming fantods, isn't it?" Dasein asked. He returned the cup.

Marden concentrated on restoring the cap to the thermos.

"A person can get too much of it, eh?" Dasein persisted, recalling what Willa Burdeaux had said.

"Overexposure too soon can cause a hangover," Marden admitted. "You'll be all right when you get used to it."

"So you came up to play the good Samaritan," Dasein said. He could feel the beginnings of anger.

"We found your truck up on the Porterville road and got worried about you," Marden said. "You can't abandon a vehicle like that."

"I didn't abandon it."

"Oh? What'd you do?"

"I went for a walk."

"And caused one helluva lot of trouble," Marden said. "If you wanted a tour of the Co-op and the storage caves, all you had to do was ask."

"And I'd have had a nice safe guided tour."

"Any kind of tour you wanted."

"So you came up to arrest me."

"Arrest you? Don't talk stupid."

"How'd you know where I was?"

Marden looked at the ceiling, shook his head. "You're all alike, you young folks," he said. "That Willa's too damn' romantic, but she doesn't lie worth git all. None of us do, I guess." He turned his glance full of cynical amusement on Dasein. "You feeling better?"

"Yes!"

"Aren 't we the intense one." He pursed his lips. "By the way, we broke into your truck and hotwired it to drive it down. It's parked out front."

"Gee, thanks."

Dasein looked down at his hands. Anger and frustration twisted through him. He knew Marden wasn't a fit object for this anger . . . nor Jenny . . . nor Piaget . . . No person or thing presented itself to him as an object for anger — yet the emotion remained. He trembled with it.

"You sure you're all right?" Marden asked.

"Yes, I'm all right!"

"Okay, okay," Marden murmured. He turned away, but not before Dasein saw the smile forming on his lips.

The smile, not the man, brought Dasein's anger to focus. That smile! It embodied Santaroga—self-satisfied, superior, secretive. He jumped to his feet, strode to the window, whipped up the curtain.

Blazing sunshine on a flower garden, a small stream, and beyond that the flat with its broken edge dropping down into the redwoods. It was a day of brassy

heat with the oaks sitting motionless, sun-drenched on the hillsides. He counted three plumes of smoke hanging on the still air, glimpsed a serpentine track of blue-green river in the distance.

This vale of pastoral beauty that was Santaroga, this was a fitting object for his anger, Dasein decided: Santaroga, this island of people in the wilderness. He pictured the valley as a swarming place behind a facade like a pyramid: solid, faceless, enduring. In there, behind the facade, Santaroga did something to its people. They lost personal identity and became masks for something that was the same in all of them.

He sensed a one-pointedness here such that every Santarogan became an extension of every other Santarogan. They were like rays spreading out from a pinhole in a black curtain.

What lay behind the black curtain?

There, he knew, was the real substance against which his anger was directed. The valley existed within an evil enchantment. The Santarogans had been trapped by a black sorcery, transmuted into the faceless pyramid.

With this thought, Dasein's anger faded. He realized he, too, had a place in this pyramid. It was like an ecological pyramid planted in the wilderness except for this gnome-change. The base of the pyramid had been firmly imbedded in the earth, extending roots deep into a moist, dank cave.

He could see the shape of his problem.

One thing set this valley apart —Jaspers. It brought Santarogans back as though they were addicted. He thought of his own craving reaction. It was the substance of the cave, the thing the pores drank and the lungs inhaled.

Marden stirred in the room behind him.

Dasein turned, looked at the man.

Santarogans became extensions of that cave and its substances. There was a drug-effect at work in this valley. It was a material in a way similar to lysergic acid diethylamide—LSD.

How did it work? he wondered.

Did it shift the cerotonin balance?

Dasein felt his mind working with remarkable clarity, sorting out possibilities, setting up avenues of investigation.

"If you're feeling all right now, I'll be running along," Marden said. "Before you get any more hairbrained ideas for night excursions, let us know, huh?"

"Well, naturally," Dasein said. For some reason, this provoked a fit of laughter in Marden. He was still laughing as he let himself out.

"To hell with you, wise-guy Santarogan," Dasein muttered.

He turned back to the window.

Objectivity was going to be a problem, he saw. He had no guinea pig except himself. What was the Jaspers effect on himself? An impression of heightened awareness? Could it be an actual heightened awareness in the pattern of LSD? This would require careful evaluation. What was the source of the morning-after symptoms? Withdrawal?

He began to focus on the Santaroga personality pattern, their alertness, their abrupt mannerisms, their apparent honesty. If awareness actually were heightened, would that explain the honest advertising? Could you be anything but bluntly honest with a wide-awake human being?

Avenues of attack opened all around. Barriers collapsed like sand walls before the waves of his new awareness, but the exposed vistas contained their own mysteries.

Jenny.

Again, Dasein recalled how she'd been dropped from the university's attempt to evaluate LSD. *No apparent reaction.* The ones running the tests had wanted to explore this phenomenon, but Jenny had refused. Why? She'd been written off, of course—"a curious anomaly." The evaluation had gone on to its natural end in the publicity fiasco.

Jenny.

Dasein went into the shower, humming to himself, his mind busy. His shoulder felt remarkably improved in spite of the way he'd mistreated it during the night . . . or perhaps because of that—the exercise.

I'll call Jenny, he thought, as he dressed. *Maybe we can meet for lunch.*

The prospect of seeing Jenny filled him with a wondering delight. He sensed his own protectiveness toward her, the mutual emotional dependence. Love, that was what it was. It was a sensation that wouldn't submit to analysis. It could only be experienced.

Dasein sobered.

His love for Jenny required that he save her from the Santaroga enchantment. She'd have to help him whether she knew it or not, whether she wanted it or not.

A brisk double knock sounded on his door.

"Come in," he called.

Jenny slipped in, closed the door.

She wore a white dress, red scarf, red handbag and shoes. The outfit made her skin appear dark and exotic. She paused a moment at the door, her hand resting lightly on the knob, eyes wide and probing.

"Jen!" he said.

All in one swift dash, she was across the room into his arms, hugging him. Her lips were warm and soft on his. There was a clean spicy smell about her.

She pulled back, looked up at him. "Oh, darling, I was so frightened. I kept imagining you driving off a cliff somewhere, your car wrecked, you in the wreckage. Then Willa called. Why would you do such a thing?"

He put a finger on the tip of her nose, pressed gently. "I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself."

"I don't know about that. Do you feel all right now? I met Al in the lobby. He said he brought you some Jaspers coffee."

"I've had my hair of the dog."

"Your hair of . . . Oh. But why would you . . ."

"But me no buts. I'm sorry I worried you, but I have a job to do."

"Oh, that!"

"I'm going to do the job I'm being paid to do."

"You gave your word, I suppose?"

"That's only part of it."

"Then they'll have to get something from you."

"More than *something,* Jenny, m'love."

She grinned. "I like it when you call me your love."

"Stop changing the subject."

"But it's such a nice subject."

"Agreed. Another time, though, eh?"

"How about tonight?"

"You're a forward wench, aren't you."

"I know what I want."

Dasein found himself studying her there in his arms. What had Willa said? "*Jenny knows what she's doing.*" What was Jenny doing? Whatever it was, he couldn't doubt her love for him. It was there in her eyes and her voice, a radiance and vivacity that couldn't be mistaken.

Still, there was the certainty that two men had died on this investigation — accidents! The fading pain in his shoulder and its implications couldn't be doubted either.

"You're so quiet suddenly," Jenny said, looking up at him.

He took a deep breath. "Can you get me some Jaspers?"

"I almost forgot," she said. She pulled away, rummaging in her handbag. "I brought you a square of cheese and some wheat crackers for your lunch today. They're from Uncle Larry's locker. I knew you'd need it because . . ." She broke off, produced a sack from the bag. "Here they are." She proffered a brown paper sack, stared at him. "Gil! You said *Jaspers.*" There was a wary look in her eyes.

"Why not?" He took the bag. She was reluctant to part with it, her fingers trailing across the paper as he pulled it away.

"I don't want to trick you, darling," she said.

"Trick me? How?"

She swallowed and her eyes glistened with unshed tears. "We gave you an awfully strong dose last night, and then you went

down into that stupid cave. Was it bad this morning?"

"I had quite a hangover, if that's what you mean."

"I can just barely remember how it was when I was a child," she said. "When you're growing up, your body changing, there are some severe metabolic adjustments. At the school, when I took part in that crazy LSD test, I had a hangover the next morning." She ran a finger along his forehead. "Poor dear. I'd have been here this morning, but Uncle Larry needed me in the clinic. Anyway, he said you weren't in any danger; Willa got you out in time."

"What would've happened if she hadn't got me out?"

Her eyes clouded as though with pain.

"What?" he insisted.

"You mustn't think about that."

"About what?"

"It can't happen to you anyway. Uncle Larry says you're the wrong type."

"Wrong type for what — turning into a zombie like those I saw in the Co-op?"

"Zombies? What're you talking about?"

He described what he'd glimpsed through the wide door.

"Oh . . . them." She looked away from him, her manner suddenly distant. "Gilbert, are you going to put them in your report?"

"Maybe."

"You mustn't."

"Why not? Who are they? *What* are they?"

"We take care of our own," she said. "They're useful members of the community."

"But not quite all there."

"That's right." She looked up at him with a fierce intensity. "If the state takes them over, they'll be moved out of the valley — most of them. That can be very bad for Santarogans, Gilbert. Believe me."

"I believe you."

"I knew you would."

"They're the failures, eh? The ones Jaspers ruined."

"Gilbert!" she said. Then—"It's not what you think. Jaspers is . . . something wonderful. We call it a 'Consciousness Fuel.' It opens your eyes and your ears, it turns on your mind, it . . ." She broke off, smiled at him. "But you already know."

"I know what it appears to be," he said. He glanced at the bag in his hand. What did he hold here? Was it a paradisical gift for all mankind or something out of hell? Was it the evil enchantment he'd pictured, or an ultimate freedom?

"It's wonderful and you know it by now," Jenny said.

"Then why aren't you all shouting it from the rooftops?" he demanded.

"Gil!" She stared at him accusingly.

Abruptly, Dasein thought of what Meyer Davidson's reaction would be . . . Davidson and his cohorts, the eager young executives and the hard-eyed older men.

What he held here in his hand was their enemy.

To those men in their oddly similar dark suits, their cold eyes weighing and dismissing everything, the people of this valley were a foe to be defeated. As he thought of it, Dasein realized all customers were "The Enemy" to these men. Davidson and his kind were pitted against each other, yes, competitive, but among themselves they betrayed that they were pitted more against the masses who existed beyond that inner ring of knowledgeable financial operation.

The alignment was apparent in everything they did, in their words as well as their actions. They spoke of "package grab-level" and "container flash time" — of "puff limit" and "acceptance threshhold." It was an "in" language of military-like maneuvering and combat. They knew which height on a shelf was most apt to make a customer grab an item. They knew the "flash time" — the shelf width needed for certain containers. They knew how much empty air could be "puffed" into a package to make it appear a greater bargain. They knew how much price and package manipulation the customer would accept without jarring him into a "rejection pattern."

And we're their spies, Dasein thought. *The psychiatrists and psychologists — all the "social scientists" — we're the espionage arm.*

He sensed the vast maneuvering of these armies, the conspiracy to maintain "The Enemy" in a sleepy state of unawareness — malleable. Whatever the leaders of these armies did among themselves to each other, they maintained their inner code. No one betrayed the *real* war.

Dasein had never before viewed the market-study world in quite this way. He thought of the brutal honesty in Santaroga's advertising, crumpled the neck of the paper bag in his hand.

What was this stuff doing to him? He turned away from Jenny to hide a surge of anger. It was making him imagine crazy things! Armies!

There was no way to avoid Jaspers here in Santaroga. The investigation required that he *not* avoid it.

I must insinuate myself into their minds, he reminded himself. *I must live their life, think as they think.*

He saw the situation then as Jenny and her fellow Santarogans must see it. They were involved in a form of guerrilla warfare. They had achieved a way of life which wouldn't be tolerated by the *outside.* Santaroga

offered too much of a threat to the oligarchs of the money-industry world. The only hope for Santaroga lay in isolation and secrecy.

Shout it from the rooftops, indeed. No wonder she'd snapped at him in surprise.

Dasein turned, looked at Jenny standing there patiently waiting for him to think his way through the maze. She smiled encouragingly at him, and he suddenly saw all Santarogans through her. They were the buffalo Indians, people who needed to get away by themselves, to live and hunt in the way their instincts told them. The trouble was, they lived in a world which couldn't be culturally neutral. That world out there would keep trying to make people — all people — be everywhere alike.

Straddling both worlds, thinking with the drug and thinking with his memories of the *outside,* he felt a deep sadness for Jenny. Santaroga would be destroyed — no doubt of that.

"I'm sure you see it," Jenny said.

"Jaspers would be equated with LSD, with narcotics," he said. "It'd be legislated against as the Santaroga hashish. You'd be sneered out of existence, destroyed."

"I never doubted you'd understand once you were exposed," she said. She moved into his arms, leaned against him, hugging him fiercely. "I trusted you, Gil. I knew I couldn't be wrong about you."

He couldn't find words to answer her. A profound sadness held him. *Exposed.*

"You'll still have to do your report, of course," she said. "It wouldn't solve anything if you failed. They'd just find somebody else. We're getting kind of tired of it."

"Yes — I'll have to do a report," he said.

"We understand."

Her voice sent a shudder through Dasein. *"We understand."* That was the *We* which had searched his bag, had almost killed him . . . had actually killed two men.

"Why are you shivering?" Jenny asked.

"Just a chill," he said.

He thought then of the *thing* he had sensed lurking just beyond his awareness, that restless, urgently peering ancient being which had risen within his consciousness like the neck of a dinosaur. It was still there, studying, waiting to judge.

"I only work half a day today," Jenny said. "Some of my friends have arranged a picnic at the lake. They want to meet you." She leaned back, peered up at him. "I want to show you off, too."

"I . . . don't think I can go swimming," he said.

"Your poor shoulder," she said.

"I know. But the lake's beautiful this time of year. We'll have a bonfire tonight."

Which We *is that?* he asked himself.

"It sounds wonderful," he said.

And he wondered as he spoke why his stomach knotted with a congestion of fear. He told himself it wasn't Jenny he feared — not this warm and beautiful woman. It might be goddess-Jenny he feared, though . . . this was a thought that rose in his mind to leer at him.

Dasein sneered at himself then, thinking that he read too much into every nuance of this valley and its people. That was the psychoanalyst's disease, of course— seeing everything through a haze of reasoning.

"Get some rest and meet me downstairs at noon," Jenny said.

She pulled away, went to the door, turned there to stare at him. "You're acting very odd, Gill," she said. "Is something bothering you?"

Her voice carried a weighted probing that brought Dasein to sudden alertness. This wasn't the spontaneous Jenny worried about the man she loved. This was an . . . an *observer* probing for something personally dangerous.

"Nothing food and rest won't cure," he said. He tried to sound bantering, knew he'd failed.

"I'll see you in a little while," she said, still in that distant tone.

Dasein watched the door close

behind her. He had the feeling he'd been playing to a special kind of camera, one that pursued irrelevancies. An untethered thought wove through his mind: *. . . the exposure of personality, method and character.*

Who wants to expose my personality, method and character? Dasein asked himself. He felt this was a dangerous question, full of charge and countercharge.

The sack of food felt heavy in his hand. Dasein stared down at it, aware of his hunger, equally aware of the threat in this package. Did the Jaspers create irreversible change?

He tossed the sack onto his bed, went to the door, peered out into the hall. Empty. He stepped out, looked down the expanse of wall that concealed the TV room. It took a moment for him to realize something was wrong with that wall. It was like a dislocation of reality — a door occupied a space in that wall where no door had been.

As though pulled by strings, Dasein went to the door, stared at it. The door was framed in the same worn, polished wood that framed the other doors. Well-preserved age, that was the effect. This was a door that had always been here, that's what it said. The number plate carried a slight dent and a touch of tarnish at the edges where the maids' polishing rags had missed. There was a patina of long wear about the burnished metal handle.

Dasein shook his head. He was tempted to try the door, resisted. He found himself frightened by what might lie beyond. Normalcy — a bed, a bath, desk and chairs — that would be the worst thing of all. The number plate — 262 — fascinated him. He toyed with the eerie sensation that he'd seen it before . . . right here. The door was too ordinary.

Abruptly, Dasein whirled back and into his room, threw open his window. A look through the windows from the porch roof would solve the mystery. He started to climb out, stopped. A man stood on a rose-bordered walk beyond the giant oak tree.

Dasein recognized Winston Burdeaux. He was pumping a hand sprayer that sent dust over the roses. As Dasein stared, Burdeaux looked up, waved.

Later, Dasein told himself. *I'll look later.*

He nodded to Burdeaux, withdrew, pulled the curtain.

So they'd cut a door through that wall, had they? What were they trying to do? Destroy his sense of reality.

The sack on the bed caught Dasein's attention. It drew him across the room. He saw it as an ultimate temptation. It was more than food. There was a hunger in him that only the Jaspers could fulfill. Dasein felt abruptly that he was like Tennyson's Ulysses, his aim "to strive, to

seek, to find and not to yield." Still, the thought of the Jaspers in that sack drew his hand. He felt the paper tear beneath his fingers.

Jaspers cheese. That tantalizing aroma lifted from it. With a feeling of spiritual helplessness, he found a bite of the cheese in his mouth. The food radiated a sensation of warmth as it went down his throat. He continued eating, hypnotized by his own actions.

Slowly, he sank back onto the bed, leaned against the pillow, gazed up at the ceiling. The wood grain in a beam wavered like the lifting and falling of the sea. It filled him with awe, undulated and terrifying. He felt his own consciousness stood as a barrier opposing the external world, and that external world was a stupid mechanism without feeling or compassion.

His own identity became a narrowing beam of light, and he sensed a massive, streaming unconsciousness growing larger, larger . . . larger . . . building up an intolerable weight.

It's a psychedelic, he told himself. *Don't let go.*

But there was no stopping the movement now. His awareness exploding up and out, riding a geyser of sense revelation, lifted him into a state of floating consciousness.

There was no inwardness now, only a timeless sense of being that existed without anxiety. Dasein found himself reveling in the sensation. His mind quested.

Where are the children? he asked himself.

It was a shocking sense of revelation for him to realize he'd seen no children or schools in the valley.

Where are the children? Why haven't any of the other investigators remarked on this?

The other investigators are dead, he reminded himself.

Death—that was an oddly nonfrightening thought. He felt that he had risen through a consciousness decompression into a zone beyond all power struggles. The valley, the Jaspers, had become a condition of his being. The room full of probing sunlight, the leaves of the oak outside his window—all was beauty, innocent, uncluttered. The external universe had become translated into a part of himself, wise, compassionate.

Dasein marveled at the feeling. The universe *out there*—it was as though he had just created that universe. *Nama Rupa,* he thought. *I am Nama Rupa—name and form, creator of the universe in which I live.*

The pain of his injured shoulder occupied his drifting attention momentarily. Pain, a brief crisis, something against which to project memories of pleasure. The pain faded.

There came the sound of tires on gravel. He heard a bird singing.

The sounds were a moire playing against his awareness. They danced and scintillated.

He remembered Jenny's probing stare.

This was an ugly, shocking memory that jerked him up short, compressed him. He found difficulty breathing. There was a sensation that he had been caught up in history, but it was a kind of history he'd never experienced, peopled by goddesses and creatures of terrifying powers. It was a history moving at an astonishing speed, defying all preconceived notions of slowness. It was like a series of events that he couldn't separate or distinguish. They flashed across his consciousness, leaving him irrevocably changed.

The Jaspers, he thought. *I cannot return . . . to . . . what . . . I was before.*

Tears rolled down his cheeks.

He thought of the way his bag had been searched. A sob shook him. What did they want?

Dasein found himself believing there were demons around him, cunning, seeking his blood and being, hungry for his soul. They gibbered beyond the charmed circle of his lonely awareness. The sensation, primitive as a witch dance, refused to leave. They wee robots, automata with grimacing malleable faces and headlight eyes.

He began to tremble, knew he was perspiring heavily, but it was a distant sensation, something happening to a foreign person.

Head whirling, Dasein heaved himself off the bed, lurched to his feet, stumbled across the room. At the wall, he turned, stumbled back—forth and back... back and forth. No hiding place existed for him. Sunlight streaming in the widow, took on grotesque forms—lizards with human faces, silvery gnomes, insects with clock-face wings . . .

He slumped to the floor, clawed at the rug. A red braided pattern extruded claws that reached for him. He retreated to the bed, fell across it. The ceiling undulated with inverted waves.

Somewhere, someone played a piano—Chopin.

Dasein felt abruptly that he was the piano. The sounds struck a crystal brilliance through him, plucking out his anguish. Glaring white clarity began to seep over him. He grew aware his clothes were soaked with perspiration. His palms were slippery. He sensed he had come a long distance through a dangerous passage. The journey had leached all strength from him.

But he saw the room now with an uncluttered innocence. The ceiling beams were objects to be understood, their grain receding back into trees . . . to seedlings . . . to seeds . . . to trees. Every artifact that met his vision extended into past and future for him. Nothing remained static.

All was motion and he was a part of that motion.

Waves of sleep began creeping from the back of his mind—higher . . . higher . . . higher.

Sleep enveloped him.

In the darkness of his sleep, something laughed and laughed and laughed and laughed . . .

Dasein awoke with a feeling he'd been asleep for a long time—perhaps a lifetime. A chuckle lifted from his throat. He heard the noise coming from himself as from a stranger, and it frightened him. A glance at his wristwatch told him he'd been alseep more than two hours.

Again, the stranger-chuckle teased his throat.

He pushed himself off the bed, wondering at his weakness. His shoulder felt better, though, the pain diminished to a dull ache.

A rap sounded on his door.

"Yes?" Dasein called.

"It's Win Burdeaux, sir. Miss Jenny asked me to remind you she'll be here for you in about a half hour."

"Oh . . . thank you."

"That's all right, sir. Hope you had a nice nap."

Dasein stood staring at the door for a moment. *How did Burdeaux know I was asleep?*

Perhaps I snored.

No further sound came from the hall, but Dasein knew Burdeaux had gone away.

Thoughtful, Dasein stripped out of his wrinkled clothes showered and changed. He felt angry, frustrated. They were watching him every minute. It would be so easy, he knew, to let his anger become rage. This was no time for rage, though.

He wondered then if there was a season for rage.

A sensation of wetness drew his attention to his right hand. He was surprised to find himself still holding a washrag. Innocent thing with a green and white braided edge. He threw it into the bathroom where it landed with a wet slap.

Another rap sounded on his door and he knew it was Jenny.

Decision gripped Dasein.

He strode across the room, threw open the door. She stood there in an orange jumper dress with white blouse, a smile deepening the dimple on her left cheek.

"I'm glad you're ready," she said. "Hurry up or we'll be late."

As he allowed her to lead him out and down the stairs, Dasein wondered if imagination had played a trick on him, or had there been a brief moment of worry before she smiled?

Jenny carried on a continuing babble of unanswerable conversation as they went down the stairs, through the lobby onto the porch.

"You'll love the lake this time of year. I wish I could spend more time there. You're not favoring

your shoulder as much as you did. I'll bet it's better. Uncle Larry wants you to stop by later for him to check you. All the gang are anxious to meet you. Here they are now."

The gang occupied a stake truck.

Dasein recognized Willa Burdeaux's pixie face in the cab. She sat beside a blond, rather craggy-faced youth with large innocent blue eyes. As he looked at her, she winked slowly, deliberately. At least a dozen couples stood in the back of the truck . . . and there were odd singles: a tall, brown-haired man with fierce dark eyes—Walter Somebody; Dasein failed to catch the last name . . . a set of twin young women, plump with long sandy hair, round faces—Rachel and Mariella.

Jenny performed the introductions too fast for Dasein to catch all the names, but he did focus on the fact that the young man with Willa Burdeaux was her fiance, Cal Nis.

Reaching hands helped him into the back of the truck, pulled Jenny up beside him. There were boxes around the edges for seats. Dasein found himself crowded onto a box with Jenny snuggled beside him. He began to absorb the carnival air of the people around him—uninhibited laughter, bantering private jokes.

The truck rumbled into motion. Wind whipped them. Dasein had an impression of passing trees, patches of sky, lurching movement . . . and the omnipresent laughter.

It grew on him that he and Jenny were being excluded from the laughter.

Was it a sense of delicacy in the group? Were they allowing the stranger time to acclimate himself?

He tried to see the situation as a psychologist, but his own involvement kept intruding. There was no way to focus his analytical eye on details without finding his own shadow across the scene. To cap it, his injured shoulder began to ache where Jenny pressed against it. Jenny's wind-tossed hair brushed his face. Each lurch of the truck sent a twinge through his shoulder.

The situation began to take on a nightmare quality.

Jenny stretched up, spoke into his ear: "Oh, Gil—I've dreamed of this day . . . when you'd be here, one of us."

One of us, Dasein thought. *Am I really one of them?*

Walter Somebody obviously had mistaken Jenny's move toward Dasein's ear. He waved and shouted from across the truck: "Hey! No smooching before dark!"

This brought a short burst of laughter from the group, but no general shift in their attention. They continued to look and speak around Dasein and Jenny.

Smooching.

The word sent Dasein's mind into high gear. It was a word no longer in common use *outside,* a word out of its time and place. On this Walter's lips, though, it had carried the inflection of familiarity. It was a word they used here in the valley.

Dasein began to see Santaroga in a new light. They were conservatives here in the true sense of the word. They were clinging to the past, resisting change. He modified this thought: They resisted *some* change. They were people who had made a judgment that some things from the past should be maintained. This was what made them foreign. The world *outside* was moving away from them. The valley had become a preserve for conditions of another time.

The truck had turned off onto another track through an avenue of overhanging sycamores. Great patches of maple-shaped leaves cast a green-gold aura over their world.

A jolting bump made Dasein wince with pain as Jenny lurched against his shoulder.

The truck emerged from the sycamores, passed through a stand of bull pine onto a grassy flat that merged into beach sand edging a cerulean lake.

Dasein stared out the open rear of the truck, hardly aware of the cascade of people leaping down to the grass, ignoring Jenny's urgings that they leave. Something about this lake—some sense of familiarity—had struck him with a feeling of beauty and menace.

A narrow floating walkway reached out from the beach to a float and diving platform—the wood all dark silver-grey from the sun. There were rowboats tied up along one side of the diving float.

Beauty and menace.

The sensation passed and he wondered at himself. He was seeing phantoms, focusing too much inward.

"Is it your shoulder?" Jenny asked.

"I'll be all right," Dasein said.

He followed her down off the truck, wishing he could let himself go, become a laughing part of this group. They were having fun here—carrying boxes to tables set under the trees, preparing fires in rock pits. Some wandered off into the trees, returned in bathing suits.

Jenny had attached herself to a group laying out picnic lunches on the tables. Presently, she joined the scampering movement toward the water, shedding her dress to reveal an orange one-piece bathing suit beneath. She was a naiad, limbs flashing brown and lithe in the sun.

She waved to him from the float, shouted: "See you in a minute darling!"

Dasein watched her dive into the lake with a feeling she was

suddenly lost to him. He experienced an intense jealousy, imagining himself a decrepit old man surrounded by playing children, unable to join them in their happiness.

He looked around at lake and verging woods. There was a breeze across the water. The breeze had summer in it, fragrant with grass and evergreen needles. He wished suddenly for some drink with which to salute this breeze and day, some potion that would make him a part of the scene.

Slowly, Dasein walked down to the floating walk and out onto the boards. There were fleece clouds in the sky, and as he stared down at the water, he saw those clouds floating on the lake bottom. Waves shattered the illusion. Jenny swam up, leaned her elbows on the boards. Her face all dripping water, smiling, had never seemed more lovely.

"Darling, why don't you come out to the float and sun yourself while we swim?" she asked.

"All right," he said. "Maybe I can scull around in one of those boats."

"You go easy on that shoulder or I'll tell Uncle Larry," she said. She kicked away from the walk, swam lazily out toward the float.

Dasein followed, making his way through dripping swimmers running up and down the walk. It struck him as odd how this crowd saw him but didn't see him. They made way for him, but never looked at him. They shouted across him, but not to him.

He moved to the first boat in the line, untied its painter and prepared to get into it. Jenny was swimming some fifty feet out, a slow, smooth crawl that took her diagonally away from the float.

Dasein stood up, moved to step into the boat. As he stepped, something pushed him in the middle of his back. His foot kicked the gunwale of the boat, thrusting the boat out into the water. He saw he was going to fall into the lake, thought: *Oh, damn! I'll get my clothes all wet.* The stern of the boat was turning toward him and he thought of trying to reach for it, but his left foot on the dock slipped in a patch of wet wood. Dasein found himself turning sideways without any control over his motion.

The edge of the boat, seen out of the corner of an eye, rushed toward him. He tried to reach up, but that was the side of his bad shoulder. His arm wouldn't move fast enough.

There was an explosion of blackness in his head. Dasein felt himself sinking into an enveloping cold, soundless, all dark and inviting.

A part of his mind screamed: *Beauty! Menace!*

He thought that an odd combination.

There was a distant ache in his lungs and it was cold—terrifying-

ly cold. He felt pressure . . . and the cold . . . all distant and unimportant.

I'm drowning, he thought.

It was an unexciting thought—something that concerned another person.

They won't see me . . . and I'll drown.

The cold grew more immediate—wet.

Something turned him violently.

Still, everything remained remote—all happening to that *other* being which he knew to be himself, but which could not concern him.

Jenny's voice broke on him like a thunderclap: "Help me! Please! Someone help me! Oh, God! Won't someone help me? I love him! Please help me!"

He grew aware suddenly of other hands, other voices.

"All right, Jen. We've got him."

"Please save him!" Her voice carried a sobbing intensity.

Dasein felt himself draped across something hard that pressed into his abdomen. Warmth gushed from his mouth. There was a blinding, terrible pain in his chest.

Abruptly, he began to cough—gasping, the pain tearing at his throat and bronchia.

"He swallowed a lot of water." It was a man's voice, almot vacant of emotion.

Jenny's voice came pleading beside Dasein's ear: "Is he breathing? Please don't let anything happen to him." Dasein felt wetness on his neck, and still Jenny's voice pleading there beside him: "I love him. Please save him."

That same unemotional male voice answered: "We understand, Jenny."

And another voice, husky, feminine: "There's only one thing to do, of course."

"We're doing it!" Jenny screamed. "Don't you understand?"

Even as hands picked Dasein up, began carrying him, Dasein wondered: *Doing what?*

His coughing had subsided, but the pain in his chest remained. It hurt when he breathed.

Presently, there was grass under his back. Something warm and confining was wrapped around him. It was an oddly womblike sensation.

Dasein opened his eyes. found himself staring up at Jenny, her dark hair framed by blue sky. She managed a trembling smile.

"Oh, thank God," she whispered.

Hands lifted his shoulders. Jenny's face went away. A cup full of steaming brown liquid was pressed against his lips. Dasein experienced the almost overpowering smell of Jaspers, felt hot coffee burn down his throat.

Immediately, a sense of warmth and well being began to seep outward through his body. The cup was pulled away, returned when

he moved his mouth toward it.

Someone laughed, said something that Dasein couldn't quite catch. It sounded like "Take a full load." But that didn't make sense and he rejected it.

The hands eased him gently back to the grass. That vacant masculine voice said: "Keep him warm and quiet for a while. He's okay."

Jenny's face returned. Her hand stroked his head.

"Oh, darling," she said. "I looked at the dock and you were gone. I didn't see you fall, but I knew. And no one was paying any attention. It took me so long to get there. Oh, your poor head. Such a bruise."

Dasein felt the throbbing then as though her words had turned it on—a pulsing ache at the temple and across his ear. *A blow like that—shouldn't I have X-rays?* he wondered. *How do they know I haven't a fractured skull . . . or concussion?*

"Cal says the boat must've been tipping away from you as you hit it," Jenny said. "I don't think you've broken anything."

Pain shot through him as she touched the bruise.

"It's just a bad bruise."

Just a bad bruise! he thought. He was filled with an abrupt anger at her. How could they be so casual?

Still, that feeling of warmth spread out through him, and he thought: *Of course I'm all right. I'm young, healthy. I'll heal. And I have Jenny to protect me. She loves me.*

Something about this train of thought struck him as profoundly wrong then. He blinked. As though that were the creative mechanism, his vision blurred, resolved into flashes of gem-like light, red, orange, yellow, brown, green, violet, blue light with offshooting crystal shards.

The light resolved into a membranous inward sensation, a perception of perception that reached out through his mind. He *saw* then strong pulses of his own heart, the tender brain sheathing that rose and fell with the pulse, the damaged area—just a bruise, skull intact.

Dasein grew aware then why the Santarogans showed so little concern for his injury. They *knew* the injury through him. If he were like them, he would tell them when he needed help.

Then why didn't they try to rescue me until Jenny came? Dasein asked himself. And the answer lay there to wonder at: *Because I didn't cry out for help in my thoughts!*

"You shouldn't sleep now, I don't think," Jenny said.

She found his left hand, gripped it. "Isn't there something about not sleeping after a head injury?"

Dasein stared up at her, seeing the dark wings of her hair disarrayed from rescuing him, the way her eyes seemed to touch him, so

intense was her concentration. There was dampness on her lashes, and he felt that he might look behind her eyes and find the way to a magic land.

"I love you," he whispered.

She pressed a finger against his lips. "I know."

I am a Santarogan now, Dasein thought.

He lay there rolling the thought in his mind, filled by this odd awareness that let him reach out to Jenny even when she released his hand and left him alone there on the grass. There was nothing of telepathy in this awareness. It was more knowledge of mood in those around him. It was a lake in which they all swam. When one disturbed the water, the others knew it.

My God! What this Jaspers could do for the world! Dasein thought.

But this thought sent rolling waves through the lake of mutual awareness. There was storm in this thought. It was dangerous. Dasein recoiled from it.

He remembered then why he had come here and saw the conflict from a new persepctive. The people who'd sent him—what did they want?

Proof, he thought.

He found he couldn't focus on what *they* wanted to prove. It was all tied up with Jersey Hofstedder's car and the blunt Yankee insularity of these people.

Jenny's friends were noticing him now. Dasein saw. They looked at him—directly at him. They spoke to him. And when he felt he wanted to get up and go to the big fire they'd built against the evening chill, strong hands came without bidding and helped him.

Night fell.

Dasein found himself seated on a blanket beside Jenny. Someone was playing a guitar in the darkness. Moon colored half the lake, leaving a great black stone of night against one side. Wind-wrinkled water lapped at the stone and he felt that if the blackness could only be moved, it would blaze in light to reveal fairyland.

Jenny snuggled against him, murmured: "You're feeling better. I know it."

He agreed with her sliently.

Torches flamed down by the lake—people securing the boats. Someone handed him a sandwich redolent with Jaspers. He ate, his attention on the torches and the fire—the trees around them gleaming red, grotesque shadows lurching, dove wings of smoke against the moon.

Abruptly, Dasein secreted part of his sandwich in his pocket.

For no reason he could explain, Dasein remembered a time shortly after Jenny had left the school. It had rained. He remembered reaching out his window to feel the rain, seeing the wet sparkle of the lawn beneath a window, like a broken necklace scattered there.

Abruptly, the wind across the lake shifted, stung his eyes with smoke. He swallowed a mouthful of the smoke, and it brought him to an intense awareness of the here and now, Jenny beside him . . . waiting.

As he thought about her, she reached up, pulled his lips down on hers. It was a long kiss, full of guitar music, remembered rain and the taste of smoke.

How can I ever explain this? Dasein wondered. *Selador would think me mad.*

Jenny stirred against him at this thought, stroked his neck.

"Let's get married soon," she whispered.

Why not? Dasein asked himself. *I'm a Santarogan now.*

But this thought brought a surge of fear that tightened his chest and made Jenny shiver. She pulled away, stared at him with worry in her eyes.

"Everything will be all right," she whispered. "You'll see."

The worry remained in her voice, though. And Dasein sensed menace in the night. The guitarist struck a sour note, fell silent.

Dasein saw that moonlight had moved into the black area of the lake . . . and it revealed no fairyland—only more lake, more trees.

The night was definitely cold now.

Once more, Jenny pressed her lips to his.

Dasein knew he still loved her. It was a real thing to which he could cling. But there was no more magic in this night. He felt that he had skirted madness and the thing had left its taint on him.

When she pulled away, he whispered: "I want to marry you, Jenny. I love you . . . but . . . I need time. I need . . ."

"I know, darling," she said. She stroked his cheek. "Take all the time you need."

Her voice carried a withdrawing note compounded as she pulled back. Dasein felt the night's coldness then, the stillness of their companions.

Abruptly, there was a stirring in the people around them. They began moving toward the truck.

"It's time to go back," Jenny said.

Back where? Dasein asked himself.

Jenny stood up, helped him to his feet. He stumbled in a brief spasm of dizziness. Jenny steadied him.

"Do you want Uncle Larry to look at your head tonight?" she asked.

Piaget, Dasein thought. That was the *back* at which he was aimed. Piaget. They would continue their trade of truths. The Jaspers change was forcing it.

"I'll see him in the morning," Dasein said.

"Not tonight?"

In my own sweet time, Dasein

thought. And he said: "Not tonight."

The answer seemed to trouble Jenny. She sat barely touching him on the ride back totown.

When they were gone, leaving Dasein standing alone behind his truck in the Inn yard, he stared up at the darkness of the sky, lost in thought. Jenny's goodnight kiss—strained, trembling—still tingled on his lips. There was a smell of exhaust gases and oil in the air. From somewhere inside the building came the faint sound of music—a radio. The gravel of the driveway felt hard and immediate under his feet.

Slowly, Dasein brought his right hand from his pocket, opened it to stare at the small ball of matter there—an object indistinctly seen in the light from the inn sign. Now, there was a strong smell of Jaspers around him.

Dasein studied the object in his hand—a compressed ball of bread, cheese and ham, a bit of one of the sandwiches from the picnic.

Did they know I secreted this? he wondered.

He debated going inside and changing his clothes. The pants and shirt he'd worn on the picnic, garments that had been soaked and allowed to dry on him, felt wrinkled and twisted against his body.

Dasein felt that his mind wandered around this decision: to change or not to change, that was the question. The object in his hand was more immediate, though. Selador. Yes, Selador had to get this and examine it.

I'm not thinking clearly, Dasein told himself.

He felt torn between extremes, between decisions of enormous moment. *The head injury?* he wondered. But he trusted the Jaspers-induced insight that told him the injury wasn't serious . . . Still . . . decisions . . .

With intense concentration, Dasein forced himself to get into his truck. He leaned against the steering wheel, put the compressed ball of the Jaspers sandwich on the seat beside him. There was a warm wetness at his seat, and he pulled his wallet from his hip pocket, felt the water trapped in it. The wallet went beside the bit of sandwich.

Now, Dasein told himself. *Now, I will go.*

But it was several minutes before he could muster the strength of decision to start the motor and pull out of the parking area and onto the road toward Porterville. He drove slowly, conscious of the blocking dullness inhibiting his motions.

The headlights picked out a wedge of flowing roadway and bordering trees—yellow center line, guard rails, driveways. Dasein opened his window, leaned out into the wind trying to clear his head. Now, he was on the

winding road up out of the valley, and the slowness of his mind grew like a deadly weight.

Headlights came toward him, passed.

Dark mass of rock beside the road—yellow center lines, twisting scars of repair lines on the paving . . . stars overhead . . . He came at last to the notch that led out through the black skeletons of burned trees.

Dasein felt something was drawing him back, ordering him to turn around and return to Santaroga. He fought it. Selador had to get that bit of food and analyze it. Duty. Promises. Had to get out to Porterville.

Somewhere in his mind, Dasein sensed a looming black shape, anonymous, terrifying. It studied him.

With an inner snapping sensation, Dasein felt his mind clear. The things was so abrupt he almost lost control of the wheel, swerved across the center line and back, tires squealing.

The road, the night, the steering wheel, his foot on the accelerator—all slammed against his senses with a confused immediacy. Dasein hit the brakes, slowed almost to a crawl. Every nerve end yammered at him. His head whirled. Dasein clung to the wheel, concentrated on steering. Slowly, his senses sorted themselves out. He took a deep, trembling breath.

Drug reaction, he told himself. *Have to tell Selador about it.*

Porterville was the same dull street he had remembered—cars parked at the tavern, the single light beating down on the darkened gas station.

Dasein pulled to a stop beside the telephone booht, remembering the deputies who'd questioned him there, mistaking him for a Santarogan. Had they been premature? he wondered.

He gave the operator Selador's number, waited impatiently, tapping his finger against the wall. A faint and reedy woman's voice came on the line—"Selador residence."

Dasein leaned into the phone. "This is Gilbert Dasein. Let me speak to Dr. Selador."

"I'm sorry. The Seladors are out for the evening. Is there a message?"

"Damn!" Dasein stared at the phone. He felt an irrational anger at Selador. It took a conscious effort of logic for Dasein to tell himself Selador had no real reason to hang around the telephone. Life went on its normal way back in Berkeley.

"Is there a message, sir?" the reedy voice repeated.

"Tell him Gilbert Dasein called," Dasein said. "Tell him I'm sending him a package for chemical analysis."

"A package for chemical analysis. Yes sir. Is that all?"

"That's all."

Dasein replaced the receiver on

its hook with a feeling of reluctance. He felt abandoned suddenly—alone up here with no one outside really caring whether he lived or died.

Why not chuck them all? he asked himself. *Why not marry Jenny, tell the rest of the world to go to hell?*

It was an intensely inviting prospect. He could feel himself sinking into quietsecurity back in the valley. Santaroga beckoned to him with that security. It was *safe* there.

That very sense of safety, though, was edged with danger. Dasein sensed it . . . a lurking something in the outer darkness. He shook his head, annoyed at the tricks his mind was playing. The *vapors,* again!

He returned to the truck, found a jar in the back where he'd kept a store of matches. He dumped out the matches, put in the remains of the sandwich, sealed the jar, packaged it with the remnants of a cardboard grocery box and a scrap of wrapping paper, tied the whole thing with a length of fishline and addressed it to Selador. When it was done, he wrote a covering letter on a page from his notebook, listed his reactions there painstakingly—the drug effect, the *accident* at the lake and his own impressions of the group . . . the way they drew up to keep him at a distance . . . Jenny's terror . . .

It all went into the letter.

The effort of recalling the incidents made his head ache where he'd hit the edge of the boat. He found an envelope in his case, addressed the letter and sealed it.

With a sense of satisfaction, Dasein started up the truck, found a dark side street and parked. He locked the cab, climbed into the back and lay down to wait for morning when the Porterville postoffice would be open.

The won't control the mail over here, he told himself. *Let Selador get the sample of Jaspers . . . we'll soon know what it is.*

He closed his eyes and his lids became like a movie screen for a fantasy—Jenny cringing, crying out, pleading with him. Selador laughing. A gigantic Dasein figure stood bound like Prometheus, the eyes glazed . . . panting with exertion . . .

Dasein's eyes popped open.

Waking fantasy!

He was over the hill—around the bend!

Hesitantly, he closed his eyes. Only darkness . . . but there was sound in this darkness—Selador laughing.

Dasein pressed his hands over his ears. The sound changed to tolling bells, slow cadence . . . mournful. He opened his eyes. The sound stopped.

He sat up, pushed himself back into a corner, eyes open. It was cold in the camper and there was a musty smell. He found his

sleeping bag, wrapped it around him, sat there with his eyes open. There were cricket sounds outside, faint creakings in the truck's metal.

Slowly, sleep crept up on him. His eyelids drooped, popped open.

How long would it take for the Jaspers effect to wear off? he wondered. Surely, this was drug effect.

His eyes closed.

Somewhere in an echoing box, Jenny whispered: "Oh, Gil—I love you. Gil, I love you . . ."

He went to sleep with her voice whispering to him.

Daylight found Dasein staring up at the camper's metal ceiling with a sense of disorientation. He recognized the ceiling, but couldn't locate it in space. His head and shoulder throbbed. Ceiling . . . familiar ceiling.

A car horn honked. It brought him to the present and awareness. He threw off the twisted folds of his sleeping bag, climbed out into a grey, overcast day. His chin felt rough and stubbly. There was a sour taste in his mouth.

Two passing schoolboys stared at him, whispering.

I must look a sight, Dasein thought. He looked down at his clothes. They were twisted and wrinkled as though he had gone swimming in them and then slept in them until they dried. Dasein smiled to himself, thinking that was exactly what had happened.

He climbed into the cab, turned around and found the main street, drove down it until he saw the Post Office sign over the porch of a general store.

The postmaster had to finish selling candy to a girl before he could come around behind his caged counter to weigh Dasein's package and letter. The man was tall, pale with thinning black hair, darting, wary blue eyes. He sniffed once at Dasein, said: "That'll be eighty-four for the package and five for the letter." Daseing pushed a dollar bill under the cage.

The man made change, looked once more at the package. "What's in the package, mister?"

"Specimens for analysis at our laboratory," Dasein said.

"Oh."

The man didn't appear curious about specimens of what. "Any return address?" he asked.

"Dr. Gilbert Dasein, general delivery, Santaroga," he said.

"Dasein," the man said with sudden interest. "Dasein . . . seems I got a package for a Dasein. Just a minute."

He disappeared into the back, returned in a moment with a box about a foot square wrapped neatly and tied with heavy twine. Even from a distance, Dasein recognized Selador's precise script on the address.

Selador writing me here? Dasein wondered.

The air of conspiracy in this

gave Dasein the abrupt sensation of being completely transparent to Selador. The man could send a package here and *know* it would be picked up. Immediately, Dasein told himself this was the simplest thing to figure—given the Santaroga Post Office situation as he'd described it to Selador.

There remained, though, the feeling he was a pawn and his every move was known to the masters of the game.

"Let's see your identification," the postmaster said.

Dasein showed it.

"Sign here," the man said.

Dasein signed, took the package. It felt heavy.

"Funny thing you Santarogans using my post office," the postmaster said. "Something wrong with your own?"

Santarogans . . . plural, Dasein thought. He said: "Is some other . . . Santarogan using your post office?"

"Well—used to be," the man said. "Negro fellow over there... Burdeaux, as I recollect. He used to send some mail from here. Got a package here once from Louisiana. Long time ago that was."

"Oh, yes," Dasein said, not knowing how else to acknowledge this information.

"Haven't seen Burdeaux in quite a spell," the postmaster mused. "Nice fellow. Hope he's all right."

"Quite all right," Dasein said. "Well—thank you." He took his package, went out to the truck.

With a feeling of caution he couldn't explain, Dasein left the package unopened on the seat beside him while he drove east on the road to Santaroga until he found a shady spot in which to pull off.

The box contained a .32 caliber automatic pistol with an extra clip and box of cartridges. Wired to the trigger guard was a note from Selador: "Gilbert—This has been gathering dust in my bureau drawer for many years, and I'm probably an old woman for sending it to you, but here it is. I think I'm sending it in the hope you won't have to use it. The situation you describe, however, has filled me with the oddest sensations of disquiet that I can remember. I hope you're being extremely cautious."

On the reverse side of the note was a scrawled postscript: "Nothing new yet on the investigations you requested. These things move slowly. You give me hope, though, that we'll get the goods on these people." It was signed: "S."

Dasein hefted the automatic, fought down an impulse to heave it out the window. The thing embodied ultimate menace. What had he said to prompt Selador to send it? Or was this part of some obscure motivational gambit Selador was setting up?

Could it be a reminder of duty?

His bruised head ached with thought.

A line in Selador's note came back to him and he reread it: ". . . *get the goods on these people.*"

Is that what I'm supposed to do? Dasein wondered. *Am I to set them up for prosecution?*

He remembered Marden alluding to the reasons an investigator had been sent.

Dasein swallowed. Selador's line, read once more, looked like a slip. Had the good doctor tipped his hand? Sending a gun wasn't like the man. In fact, Dasein realized if he'd been asked, he would've said Selador wasn't even the type of man to *own* a gun.

What to do with the damn' thing now that he had it?

Dasein checked it, found the clip full, no cartridge in the chamber. He resisted the impulse to shove it in the glove compartment and forget it. If the truck were searched . . .

Damn Selador!

Feeling foolish as he did it, Dasein slipped the gun into a hip pocket, pulled his coat over it. He'd settle with Selador later. Right now there was Piaget . . . and Piaget had some answers to give.

Piaget was in his office with a patient when Dasein arrived. The gaunt, grey Sarah opened the door, allowed he could wait in the living room. With a grudging show of hospitality, she added that she would bring him some coffee if he wanted it.

With a stomach-gripping pang, Dasein realized he was ravenous with hunger. He wondered if he could mention this fact.

As though she'd read his mind, Sarah said: "I'll bet you haven't eaten breakfast." She looked him up and down. "You look like you'd slept in those clothes. You doctors are all alike. Never care how you look."

"As a matter of fact, I haven't eaten," Dasein said.

"You're going to lead Jenny some life," she said. But she softened her words with a smile.

Dasein stared in wonder at a double, whiteboned row of false teeth in the wrinkled face.

"Got a leftover apple roll and some Jaspers cream," Sarah said. "Bet you'd like that."

She turned away, went out through the dining room into a glistening white kitchen which Dasein glimpsed once through a swinging door. The door went slap-slap behind her.

Dasein thought about that smile, recalled Jenny saying Sarah liked him. On impulse, he followed her into the kitchen.

"Bet you don't like feeding people in the living room," he said.

"Feed people wherever they have to be fed," she said.

She put a dish on an oval table beside windows looking onto a flower garden brilliant in the

morning sun. "Sit here, young man," she said. She poured a thick flow of cream from a pitcher onto a golden mound of crust in the dish.

Dasein inhaled a strong smell of Jaspers. His hand trembled as he picked up the spoon Sarah placed within his reach. The trembling stopped at his first swallow of the food.

The pastry was sweet and soothing, rich with apples.

With a detached feeling of shock, Dasein watched his hand guide the spoon into the pastry for another bite, saw the food conveyed to his mouth, felt himself swallow it.

Soothing.

I'm addicted to the stuff, he thought.

"I . . ." He put down his spoon. "You've trapped me, haven't you?" he asked.

"What're you talking about?" Sarah asked.

"What's it . . ." He nodded toward the pastry. ". . . doing to me?"

"You feel strange?" Sarah asked. "Got a fluttery feeling behind your eyes?"

"I'm . . ." He shook his head. Her words sounded insane. *Fluttery feeling behind his eyes!*

"I'll bring Doctor Larry," Sarah said. She darted out a connecting door at the back of the kitchen and he saw her running along the covered walkway to the clinic.

Presently, she reappeared with Piaget in tow. The doctor's face wore a worried frown.

"What's this Sarah's telling me?" Piaget asked. He put a hand under Dasein's chin, stared into Dasein's eyes.

"What's she telling you what?" Dasein asked. The words sounded foolish as they spilled from his lips. He brushed Piaget's hand aside. The doctor's frown, the squinting eyes—he looked like an angry Buddha.

"You seem to be all right," Piaget said. "Any strange symptoms of . . ."

"You've trapped me," Dasein said. "That's what I told her. You've trapped me." He gestured at the plate in front of him. "With this."

"Ohhh," Piaget said.

"Is he just fighting it?" Sarah asked.

"Probably," Piaget said.

"Don't make sense," Sarah said.

"It happens," Piaget said.

"I know, but . . ."

"Will you two stop talking about me like I was a blob of something on a slide!" Dasein raged. He pushed away from the table, jumped to his feet. The motion sent his bowl of food sliding off the table with a crash.

"Now look what you've done!" Sarah said.

"I'm a human being," Dasein said, "not some sort of . . ."

"Easy, lad, easy," Piaget said.

Dasein whirled away, brushed past Piaget. He had to get away from this pair or be consumed by rage. Dasein's mind kept focusing on the weapon in his hip pocket.

Damn Selador!

"Here, now—wait a minute!" Piaget called.

Dasein paused in the kitchen door, turned to glare slit-eyed at Piaget.

"You can't leave like this," Piaget said.

"Don't try to stop me," Dasein growled. The gun felt large and cold against his hip.

Piaget fell silent—a stillness that Dasein imagined came up from the toes to stare out of measuring eyes. It was as though the man receded to become a figure seen through a reversed telescope—remote, secretive.

"Very well," Piaget said. His voice came from that far away.

Deliberately, Dasein turned, went out the door, through the living room—out of the house. He felt his feet hitting the concrete of the front walk, the grass parking strip. His truck's door handle was cold under his hand. He started the motor, wondering at his own sensations—dreamlike.

A street flowed past, receded—signposts . . . pavement crawling beneath his vision . . . the inn. He parked facing the long porch, an old green car on his left, make indeterminate, unimportant.

As though awakening, Dasein found his right hand on the Inn's front door—tugging, tugging. The door resisted. A sign on the center panel stared back at him.

"Closed."

Dasein peered at the sign. *Closed?*

"Your luggage is right there by the steps, Dr. Dasein."

The voice Dasein recognized immediately—the infuriating Al Marden: *Authority . . . Secrecy . . . Conspiracy.*

Dasein turned, feeling himself bundled into a tight ball of consciousness. There was Marden standing halfway down the porch: red-haired, the narrow face, the green eyes, the tight-lipped mouth drawn into a straight line that could have signified any emotion from anger to amusement.

"So you're turning me out," Dasein said.

"Hotel's closed," Marden said. "Health department."

"The inn, the restaurant, too?" Dasein asked.

"All closed." It was a flat square of voice brooking no appeal.

"I can just go back where I came from, eh?" Dasein asked.

"Suit yourself."

"You have other hotels," Dasein said.

"Do we?"

"You must."

"Must we?"

Dasein stared at the patrol captain, experiencing the same sen-

sation he'd had with Piaget. The man receded.

"You can leave or go back to Dr. Piaget's," Marden said. "He'll likely put you up." So far away, that voice.

"Back to Piaget's," Dasein said. "How'd you know I just came from there?"

Marden remained silent, eyes withdrawn . . . distant.

"You move fast around here," Dasein said.

"When we have to."

Back to Piaget's? Dasein asked himself. He smiled, husbanding his tight ball of consciousness. *No!* They hadn't thought of everything. They hadn't *quite* thought of everything.

Still smiling, Dasein scooped up his suitcase from beside the steps, strode down to the truck, threw the bag into the cab, climbed behind the wheel.

"Best let people help you who know how," Marden called.

There was just a faint trace of worry in his voice now. It broadened Dasein's smile, stayed with him as a satisfying memory as he drove back toward the town.

In the rear view mirror, Dasein saw the patrol car following him. They wouldn't let him park in town, Dasein knew, but he remembered the map posted on a window of Scheler's service station. The map had shown a state park on the road west—Sand Hills State Park.

Down the main street he drove, Marden's patrol car right behind. There was the giant service station directly ahead. Dasein saw the telephone kiosk beside the parking area, swerved in so suddenly that Marden went past, screeched to a stop, backed up. Dasein already was out of the truck and at the kiosk.

Marden stopped the patrol car on the street, waited, staring at Dasein. The patrol car's motor seemed to rumble disapprovingly. Dasein turned, looked back at the service station—such a strange normality to the activity there: cars pulling in, out . . . no one paying the slightest attention to Marden or to the object of his attention.

Dasein shrugged, went into the booth, closed the door.

He put a dime in the slot, dialed the operator, asked for the cooperative's number.

"If you want Jenny, Dr. Dasein, she's already gone home." Dasein stared at the telephone mouthpiece in front of him, letting the import of that supercilious female voice sink home. Not only did they know who was calling, they knew what he wanted before he could say it!

Dasein stared out at Marden, attention focused on the green eyes, the cynical green eyes.

Anger boiled in Dasein. He put it down. Damn them! Yes, he wanted to talk to Jenny. He'd talk to her in spite of them.

"I don't have Dr. Piaget's num-

ber. Please connect me."

A distinctly audible sigh came over the line.

Dasein looked at the telephone directory chained to the kiosk wall, felt a wave of guilt, unreasonable, damning, instantly repressed. He heard the operator dialing, the ring.

Jenny's voice answered.

"Jenny!"

"Oh, hello, Gilbert."

Dasein experienced a cold sensatin in his stomach. Her voice was so casual.

"You know they're trying to run me out of the valley, Jenny?" he asked.

Silence.

"Jenny?"

"I heard you." Still that casual . . . distance in her tone.

"Is that all you have to say?" His voice betrayed hurt anger.

"Gilbert . . ." There was a long pause, then: ". . . maybe it'd be . . . better . . . if you . . . just for a while, just for a while, went . . . well . . . outside."

He sensed strain beneath the casual tone now.

"Jenny, I'm driving out to the Sand Hills park and live in my camper. They're not running me out."

"Gilbert, don't!"

"You . . . want me to leave?"

"I . . . Gilbert, please come back and talk to Uncle Larry."

"I talked to Uncle Larry."

"Please. For me."

"If you want to see me, come out to the park, I'll be there."

"I . . . don't dare."

"You don't dare?" He was outraged. What pressure had they applied to her?

"Please don't ask me to explain."

He hesitated, then: "Jenny, I'm setting up camp in the park. To make my point. I'll be back after I make my point."

"For the love of heaven, Gilbert—please be careful."

"Careful of what?"

"Just . . . careful."

Dasein felt the gun in his pocket, a heavy weight that brought his mind to bear on the nameless threats of this valley. That was the thing—the threats were nameless. They lacked form. What use was a gun against a formless target?

"I'll be back, Jenny," he said. "I love you."

She began crying. He heard the sobs distinctly before she broke the connection.

His muscles stiff with anger, Dasein marched back to his truck, pulled it around the police car and headed out the east road, Marden right behind.

Let the son-of-a-bitch follow, Dasein told himself. He could feel the reckless inanity of his actions, but there remained a driving current underneath that told him he had to do this. This was asking for a showdown. That was the thing. A showdown. Perhaps a showdown was needed to

provide some of the answers.

He crossed the river on a concrete bridge, glimpsed rows of greenhouses off to the left through the trees. The road climbed up through the trees, emerged into scrub country—madrone and mesquite. It twisted down through the scrub and again the land changed. In the distance there were tree-covered heights, but in between stretched low mounds of hills topped by gnarled bushes, scattered weedy growths, with bare grey dirt and pools of black water, miasmic water untouched by growing things, in the low spots.

A smell of sulfur, dank and suffocating, hung over the land.

With almost a sense of recognition, Dasein realized these must be the sand hills. A broken sign came into view on the right. It dangled from one post. Another post leaned at a crazy angle.

Sand Hills State Park. Public camp ground.

Twin ruts led off through the sand to the right toward a fenced area with a doorless outhouse at one end and crumbling stone fireplaces spaced around the edge.

Dasein turned into the ruts. The Truck lurched and growled its way to the parking area. He stopped beside one of the stone fireplaces, stared around. The place was outrageously drab.

A sound of wheels and laboring car engine brought Dasein's attention to the left. Marden pulled

the patrol car to a stop beside him, leaned across to the open window.

"What're you stopping here for, Dasein?" There was just a touch of petulance in Marden's tone.

"This is a state park, isn't it?" Dasein asked. "Any law says I can't camp here?"

"Don't get smart with me, Dasein!"

"Unless you have a legal objection, I'm going to camp here," Dasein said.

"Here?" Marden gestured at the desolation of the place.

"I find it relatively friendly after Santaroga," Dasein said.

"What're you trying to prove, Dasein?"

Dasein answered him with a silent stare.

Marden pulled back into the patrol car. Dasein could see the man's knuckles white on the steering wheel. Presently, the patrol captain leaned back, glared up at Dasein. "Okay, mister. It's your funeral."

The patrol car leaped ahead, made a sand-spewing turn around the parking area, roared out to the highway and headed back toward town.

Dasein waited for the dust to settle before getting out. He climbed into the camper, checked his emergency larder—beans, powdered milk and powdered eggs, canned frankfurters, two bottles of ketchup, a can of syrup and a half empty box of prepared pancake mix . . . coffee, sugar . . . He sighed, sat down on the bunk.

The window opposite framed a view of the sand hills and the doorless outhouse. Dasein rubbed his forehead. There was an ache behind his eyes. The bruise on his head throbbed. The pitiless light beating down on the drab hills filled him with a sense of self accusation.

For the first time since pointing his truck down into the valley, Dasein began to question his own actions. He felt there was an air of insanity around everything he had done. It was a mad pavane—Jenny . . . Marden . . . Burdeaux, Piaget, Willa, Scheler, Nis . . . It was mad, yet with its own kind of sense. His brushes with disaster became a part of the stately nonsense.

And there was Jersey Hofstedder's car—somehow the most significant thing of all.

He felt he had been down once more beneath the lake, rising now into a brutal honesty with himself. Jenny's *"We"* lost some of its terrors. That was the *We* of the cave and the Jaspers, the *We* that waited patiently for him to make his decision.

The decision was his, he saw. No matter what the substance out of that dim red cave did to the psyche, the decision was his. It had to be his decision or the mad pavane lost all meaning.

I'm still fighting it, he thought. *I'm still afraid I'll wind up "flut-*

tery behind the eyes" and standing on a wrapping line at the Co-op.

Restlessly, he climbed down out of the camper, stood on the sand absorbing the mid-afternoon heat. A single crow flew overhead so close he heard the rushing harp sound of wind through its plumage.

Dasein gazed after the bird thinking how strange to see only one crow. They were not a solitary bird. But here was this one—alone as he was alone.

What was I before that I cannot return to? he wondered. And he thought if he made the decision against Santaroga, he'd be like that solitary crow, a creature without its own kind anywhere.

The problem, he knew, lay in a compulsion somewhere within him to make an honest report to those who'd hired him. The Jaspers clarity-of-being urged it. His own remembered sense of duty urged it. To do anything less would be a form of dishonesty, an erosion of selfdom. He felt a jealous possessiveness about this self. No smallest part of it was cheap enough to discard.

This self of his, old but newly seen, precious beyond anything he'd ever imagined, placed a terrifying burden on him, Dasein saw. He remembered the wildness of the Jaspers revelation, the gamut he'd run to come through to this peak.

The *had-I-but-known* quality of his immediate past settled on him then like a fog that chilled him in spite of the afternoon's heat. Dasein shivered. How pleasant it would be, he thought, to have no decisions. How tempting to allow that restlessly stirring *something* within his consciousness to lift up its ancient snake's head and devour the disturbing parts of his awareness.

His view of the valley's people took on an Olympian cast. They stood beside him for a moment in ghostly ranks, godlike, masters of the primitive.

Are they testing me? he wondered.

Then why would Jenny say she dared not come here to him?

And where are the children?

A coldly rational part of his mind weighed his thinking and found the balance uncertain. *How much of what's in my mind is the drug thinking?* he asked himself.

At the fulcrum of any decision, that was the essential question. Where could he find solid ground upon which to stand and say, "The things I'm to decide about are there . . . and there . . . and there . . . ?"

No one could help him find this ground, he knew. It must be a lonely search. If he made an honest report to Meyer Davidson's crew, that would doom Santaroga. But to make a false report would be to plant a cancer within himself.

He had separated himself from

Santaroga in a definite way, like a knife stroke, Dasein realized. The Jaspers package he'd sent for analysis to Selador loomed in his mind. The cutting off had begun there.

It had been a gesture, nothing more. Symbolic. Some part of him had known even as he mailed it that the package would arrive with whatever Jaspers it had contained completely dissipated. He'd been sending a gesture of defiance to the Santaroga part of himself, Dasein realized.

Had Burdeaux done that? he wondered. What packages had Burdeaux exchanged with Louisiana?

The package to Selador—it had been like a thrown rock that could not reach its mark. He remembered as a child throwing a rock at a cat too far away to hit. Gray cat. He remembered the sudden bird silence in his aunt's garden, the gray cat slinking into view . . . the rock landing short.

Piaget was the gray cat.

The cat in the garden had looked up, momentarily surprised by the sound, weighed the situation, and returned to its hunting with an insulting disdain for distant boys with distant rocks.

What had Piaget done?

Dasein experienced a sudden *deitgrasp,* an act of self discovery in which the sky appeared to shimmer. He realized in this instant why he felt so terrifyingly lonely.

He had no group, no place in a hive of fellow-activity, nothing to shield him from personal decisions that might overwhelm him. Whatever decision he made, no matter the consequences, that was *his* decision. Selador might face the shame of his agent's failure. The school might lose its munificent grant. The unique *thing* that was Santaroga might be dissipated.

All because of a decision, a gesture really, by a lone man standing in a patch of barren sand hills, his mind caught up in fantasies about a solitary crow and a gray cat.

It was a moment for positive action, and all he could think to do was re-enter the camper and eat.

As he moved in the confining space preparing himself a powdered-egg mess in the frying pan, the truck emitted protesting creaks. Hunger gnawed at him, but he didn't want this food. He knew what he wanted—what he had fled here to escape, what his body craved until it was an ache at the core of him—

Jaspers.

At full dark, Dasein switched on the camper's wall light, retreated into his notes. He felt he had to keep his mind occupied, but the fetid smell of the campground intruded. The camper was a tiny world with sharp boundaries, it couldn't hold off the universe

out there. Dasein peered out a window at stars: bright holes punched in blackness. They amplified his sense of loneliness. He jerked his gaze away.

The notes . . .

Always the same items floated to the surface:

Where were the children?

What failure of the Jaspers change produced zombies?

How could a whole community be ignited with the unconscious desire to kill a person?

What was the Jaspers essence? What was it? What did it do to the body's chemistry?

Dasein sensed the danger in putting his hand to these questions. They were questions and at the same time an answer. This probing—this was what ignited the community.

He had to do it. Like a child poking at a sore, he had to do it. But once he had done it, could he turn then and tell the whole story to Meyer Davidson's crowd?

Even if he did find the answers and decided to make a full and honest report, would Santaroga permit it?

There were forces at work out there, Dasein realized, against which he was but a candle flickering in a gale.

He grew aware of footsteps crunching on the sand, turned off the light, opened the door and peered out.

A ghostly blur of a figure in the starlight, a woman in a light dress or a small man in a coat, was approaching along the tracks from the highway.

"Who's there?" Dasein called.

"Gil!"

"Jenny!"

He jumped down, strode to meet her, "I thought you couldn't come out here. You told me . . ."

"Please don't come any closer," she said. She stopped about ten paces from him.

Sucn an oddly brittle quality to her voice—Dasein hesitated.

"Gil, if you won't come back to Uncle Larry's you must leave the valley," she said.

"You want me to leave?"

"You must."

"Why?"

"I . . . they want you to go."

"What have I done?"

"You're dangerous to us. We all know it. We can feel it. You're dangerous."

"Jen . . . do you think I'd hurt you?"

"I don't know! I just know you're dangerous."

"And you want me to leave?"

"I'm ordering you to leave."

"Ordering me?" He heard hysteria in her voice.

"Gil, please."

"I can't go, Jen. I can't."

"You must."

"I can't."

Then come back to Uncle Larry's. We'll take care of you."

"Even if I turn into a zombie?"

"Don't say that!"

"It could happen, couldn't it?"

"Darling, we'll take care of you whatever happens!"

"You take care of your own."

"Of course we do."

"Jenny, do you know I love you?"

"I know," she whispered.

"Then why are you doing this to me?"

"We're not doing anything to you." She was crying, speaking through sobs. "It's you who're doing . . . whatever it is you're doing."

"I'm only doing what I have to do."

"You don't have to do anything."

"Would you have me be dishonest . . . lie?"

"Gil, I'm begging you. For my sake . . . for your own sake, leave."

"Or come back to Uncle Larry's?" He paused, then asked gently: "What'll happen to me if I don't?"

"If you really love me . . . Oh, Gil, I couldn't stand it if . . . if . . ."

She broke off, crying too hard to speak.

He moved toward her. "Jen, don't."

The crying stopped abruptly and she began backing away, shaking her head at him. "Stay away from me!"

"Jenny, what's wrong with you?"

She retreated even faster.

"Jenny, stop it."

Suddenly, she whirled, began running down the track. He started to run after her, stopped. What was the use?

Her voice came back to him in a hysterical scream: "Stay away from me! I love you! Stay away!"

He stood in shocked silence until he heard a car door slam out there on the highway. Lights came on; a car raced back toward town.

He remembered the soft moon of her face in the starlight, two black holes for eyes. It had been like a mask. He trudged back to the camper, his mind in turmoil. *"I love you! Stay away!"*

What do I really know about Jenny? he asked himself.

Nothing . . . except that she loved him.

Stay away?

Could that have been Jenny demanding, begging, ordering?

This speared his mind with a touch of madness. It transcended the irrationality of people in love.

"You're dangerous. We all know it."

Indeed, they must.

In the Jaspers oneness he'd experienced at the lake, they must know him for a danger. If he could stay away from the stuff, kick it—would they know him then?

How could they help but know him then? His action would be the ultimate betrayal.

He thought of Santaroga then as a deceptive curtain of calmness over a pool of violence. Olympian-like, they'd surmounted the primitive—yes. But the primitive was still there, more explosive because it could not be recognized and because it had been held down like a coiled spring.

Jenny must sense it, he thought. Her love for him would give her a touch of clarity.

"Stay away from me!"

Her cry still rang in his ears.

And this was how the other investigators had died—releasing the explosion that was Santaroga.

Voices intruded on Dasein's reverie. They came from the other side of the camper away from the road. One voice definitely was that of a woman. He couldn't be sure about the other two. Dasein stepped around the camper, stared off toward the dank pools and sand hills. It was a shadowed starlit landscape with a suggestion of a glow in it.

A flashlight came into view across the hills. It wavered and darted. There were three black, lurching figures associated with the light. Dasein thought of Macbeth's witches. They walked and slid down a hill, skirted a pool and came toward the campground.

Dasein wondered if he should call out. Perhaps they were lost. Why else would three people be out here in the night?

There was a burst of laughter from the group, vaguely childlike. The woman's voice came clearly out of the dark then: "Oh, Petey! It's so good to have you with us."

Dasein cleared his throat, said: "Hello." Then, louder: "Hello!"

The light stabbed toward him. The lilting woman's voice said: "Someone's in the campground."

There was a masculine grunt.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Just a camper," Dasein asked. "Are you lost?"

"We've just been out frogging." It sounded very like the voice of a young boy.

The trio came on toward him.

"Pretty poor place to camp," the woman said.

Dasein studied the approaching figures. That was a boy on the left—definitely a boy. He appeared to be carrying a bow and a quiver of arrows. The woman had a long gigging pole, a bulky bag of some kind on one shoulder. The man carried the flashlight and a string of bullfrogs. They stopped beside the camper, and the woman leaned against it to remove a shoe and pour sand from it.

"Been out to the pond," she said.

"Hunh!" the man grunted.

"We got eight of them," the boy said. "Mom's gonna fry 'em for breakfast."

"Petey had his heart set on it," the woman said. "I couldn't say

no, not on his first day home."

"I passed," the boy said. "Pop didn't pass, but I did."

"I see," Dasein said. He studied the man in the light reflected off the aluminum side of the camper. He was a tall man, slim, rather gawky. Wisps of blond hair protruded from a stocking cap. His eyes were as vacant as two pieces of glass.

The woman had put the shoe back on, now had the other one off emptying it. She was wrapped in a heavy coat that gave her the appearance of having been molded in a corrugated barrel. She was short, wouldn't stand any taller than the man's shoulder, but there was a purposeful air about her that reminded Dasein of Clara Scheler at the used-car lot.

"Bill's the first one in his family in eight generations didn't make it," she said, restoring the shoe and straightening. "They think it was something in his mother's diet before he was born. We were engaged before . . . Why'm I telling you all this? I don't think I know you."

"Dasein . . . Gilbert Dasein," he said. And he thought: *So this is how they take care of their own.*

"Jenny's fellow!" the woman said. "Well, now."

Dasein looked at the boy. *Petey.* He appeared to be no more than twelve, almost as tall as the woman. His face when the flashlight beam brushed it was a carbon copy of the man's. No denying parenthood there.

"Turn the light over here, Bill," the woman said. She spoke carefully and distinctly as one might to a very young child.

"Over there Pop." The boy directed the man's uncertain hand.

"That's it, love," the woman said. "I think I got the gigging hook caught in my coat." She fussed with a length of line at her side.

"Hunh," the man said.

Dasein stared at him with a cold feeling of horror. He could see himself there, Jenny "taking care" of him, their children helping.

"There," the woman said, pulling the line free and attaching it to the gigging pole. "Turn the light down toward the ground now, Bill. Toward the ground, hon."

"Down this way, pop," the boy said, helping.

"That's a love," the woman said. She reached out, patted the mans' cheek.

Dasein felt something obscene in the gesture, wanted to turn away, couldn't.

"He's real good, Bill is," the woman said.

The boy began playing with his bow, drawing it, releasing it.

"What you doing out here, Dr. Dasein?" the woman asked.

"I . . . wanted to be . . . alone

for awhile." He forced himself to look at her.

"Well, this is a place to be alone all right," she said. "You feel all right? No . . . *flutters* . . . or anything?"

"Quite all right," Dasein said. He shuddered.

The boy had nocked an arrow into the bow, was waving it about.

"I'm Mabel Jorick," the woman said. "This is Bill, my husband; our son, Petey. Petey's been . . . you know, with Doc Piaget. Just got his bill of health."

"I passed," the boy said.

"Indeed you did, love." She looked at Dasein. "He's going outside to college next year."

"Isn't he kind of young?" Dasein asked.

"Fifteen," she said.

"Hunh," the man said.

The boy had drawn the bow to its full arc, Dasein saw. The arrow tip glittered in the light from the flash.

Up, down . . . right, left the arrow pointed.

Dasein moved uneasily as the tip traversed his chest—across, back. Sweat started on his forehead. He felt menace in the boy.

Instinctively, Dasein moved to put the man between himself and Petey, but Jorick moved back, stared off toward the highway.

"I think he hears the car," the woman said. "My brother, Jim, coming to pick us up." She shook her head wonderingly. "He has awful good hearing, Bill has."

Dasein felt a crisis rushing upon him, dropped to his hands and knees. As he fell, he heard the bow twang, felt the wind of an arrow brush the back of his neck, heard it slam into the side of the camper.

"Petey!" the woman shouted. She snatched the bow from him. "What're you doing?"

"It slipped, Ma."

Dasein climbed to his feet studying these people narrowly.

"Hunh," the man said.

The mother turned toward Dasein, the bow in her hand.

"He tried to kill me," Dasein whispered.

"It was just an accident!" the boy protested.

The man lifted the flashlight, a menacing gesture.

Without looking at him, the woman said: "Point it toward the ground, hon." She pushed the light down, stared at Dasein. "You don't think . . ."

"It was an accident." the boy said.

Dasein looked at the arrow. It had penetrated halfway through the camper's wall on a level with his chest. He tried to swallow in a dry throat. If he hadn't ducked at just that instant . . . An accident. A regrettable accident. The boy was playing with a bow and arrow. It slipped.

Death by misadventure.

What warned me? Dasein wondered.

He knew the answer. It lay

there in his mind, clearly readable. He had come to recognize the Santaroga pattern of menace. The means might differ, but the pattern carried a sameness—something lethal in an apparently innocent context.

"It was just an accident," the woman whispered. "Petey wouldn't harm a fly."

She didn't believe it, Dasein saw.

And that was another thing. He was still connected by a tenuous thread to the Jaspers oneness. The warning message along that line was unmistakeable. She'd received it, too.

"Wouldn't he?" Dasein asked. He looked once more at the arrow protruding from the camper.

The woman turned, grabbed her son's shoulder in one hand, shook the bow at him. "You want to go back?" she demanded. "Is that it?"

"Hunh," the man said. He shuffled his feet uneasily.

"It was an accident," the boy said. He obviously was near tears.

The woman turned a pleading look on Dasein. "You wouldn't say anything to Doctor Larry, would you?"

"Say anything?" Dasein stared at her stupidly.

"He might . . . you know, misunderstand."

Dasein shook his head. What was she talking about?

"It's so hard," the woman said. "After Bill, I mean. You know how it is over there." She gestured vaguely with her head. "The way they keep such a close watch on you, picking at every little symptom. It's so hard having a son there . . . knowing, seeing him only at visiting hours and . . . and never really being sure until . . ."

"I'm all right, Mom," the boy said.

"Of course you are, love." She kept her eyes on Dasein.

"I wouldn't deliberately hurt anyone," Petey said.

"Of course you wouldn't, love." Dasein sighed.

"I passed," the boy said. "I'm not like Pop."

"Hunh," the man said.

Dasein felt like crying.

"You wouldn't say anything, would you?" the woman pleaded.

So Piaget had rewarding work for him here in the valley. Dasein thought. A clinic job . . . working with young people. And it was tied up with Jaspers, of course.

"Are they going to send me back?" Petey asked. There was fear in his voice.

"Dr. Dasein, please . . ." the woman begged.

"It was an accident," Dasein said. He knew it had not been an accident. The woman knew it. The arrow had been meant to kill. He said "Perhaps you'd better take the bow and arrows away from him for awhile."

"Oh, don't you worry about

that," she said. There was a deep sighing of relief in her tone.

A car pulled to a stop on the highway at the entrance to the campground.

"There's Jim now," the woman said. She turned away, her shoulder bag swinging toward Dasein. A rich armoa of Jaspers wafted across Dasein. It came from the bag.

Dasein stopped his right hand as it automatically reached toward the bag.

Mabel Jorick glanced back at him. "I want to thank you for being so understanding," she said. "If there's ever anything . . ." She broke off, noting Dasein's attention on the bag. "Bet you smelled the coffee," she said. "You want it?"

Dasein found himself unable to keep from nodding.

"Well, here." She swung the bag around in front of her. "Thermos is almost full. I just had one cup out at the pond. Spilled most of that. Petey, you run along, help your dad out to the car."

"All right, Mom. Goodnight, Dr. Dasein."

Dasein was unable to take his gaze from the woman's hands pulling a shiny metal thermos from the bag.

"Take the thermos," she said, holding it toward him. "You can return it when you come back to town. We're only half a block from the clinic on Salmon Way.

Dasein felt his fingers close around the currugated sides of the thermos. He began trembling.

"You sure you're all right?" the woman asked.

"I'm . . . it's the after effect . . . shock, I guess," he said.

"Sure. I'm so sorry." She moved behind Dasein to the camper, broke off the protruding arrow. "I'm going to give this to Petey as a reminder of how careful he should be."

Dasein tore his attention away from the thermos, looked along the sand track. Petey and his father were almost halfway to the highway. The car's lights carved out a funnel of brilliance there. A horn honked once.

"If you're sure you're all right," the woman said. "I better be gogin." She looked at the camper, glanced once more at Dasein. "If there's ever anything we can do . . ."

"I'll . . . bring your thermos back as soon as I can," Dasein said.

"Oh, no hurry; no hurry at all." She pulled her coat tightly around her, trudged off toward the highway. About twenty paces away, she paused turned. "That was real sweet of you, Dr. Dasein. I won't forget it."

Dasein watched until the car turned back toward town. Before the car was out of sight, he was in the camper, the lid off the thermos, pouring himself a steaming cup of the coffee.

His hands trembled as he lifted the cup.

All time and matter had been reduced to this moment, this cup, this Jaspers rich steam, enveloping him. He drained the cup.

It was a sensation of rays spreading out from a pinhead spot in his stomach. Dasein groped his way to his bunk, wrapped the sleeping bag around him. He felt supremely detached, a transitory being. His awareness moved within a framework of glowing nets.

There was terror here. He tried to recoil, but the nets held him. *Where is the self that once I was?* he thought. He tried to hold onto a *self* that bore some familiarity, one he could identify. The very idea of a self eluded him. It became an ear-shaped symbol he interpreted as mind-in-action.

For a flickering instant he felt he had encountered the solid ground, a core of relative truth from which he could make his decisions and justify all his experiences. His eyes flew open. In the faint starlight reflected into the camper he saw something glittering on the wall, recognized the head of Petey's arrow.

There it was—the relative truth: an arrowhead. It had originated; it had ceased.

Everything with origin has cessation, he told himself.

He sensed the stirring in his consciousness then, the ancient *thing* abiding there, the mind eater. *Sleep,* Dasein told himself. There was an *atman* pf sleep within him. It resisted awakening. It was infinite, circular. He lay spread on its rim.

Dasein slept.

Dawnlight awakened him.

The coffee in the thermos was cold and had lost its Jaspers savor. He sipped it anyway to ease the dryness in his throat.

There will be a place like a school, he thought. *A boarding school . . . with visiting hours. It will have the Santaroga difference. It will be something besides a school.*

He stared at the thermos. It was empty. The bitter taste of its contents remained on his tongue, a reminder of his weakness in the night. The Jaspers had immersed him in nightmares. He remembered dreaming of glass houses, a shattering of glass that tumbled about him . . . screaming.

Houses of glass, he thought. *Greenhouses.*

The sound of an approaching car intruded. Dasein stepped outside into chilly morning air. A green Chevrolet was bumping up the track toward him. It looked familiar. He decided the car either was Jersey Hofstedder's machine or its double.

Then he saw the beefy, gray-haired woman driving the car, and he knew. It was Sam Scheler's mother—Clara, the car dealer.

She pulled to a stop beside Dasein, slid across the seat and got out his side.

"They told me you were here and by golly you are," she said. She stood facing Dasein, a covered dish in her hands.

Dasein looked at the car. "Did you drive clear out here to try to sell me that car again?" he asked.

"The car?" She looked around at the car as though it had appeared there by some form of magic. "Oh, Jersey's car. Plenty of time for that . . . later. I brought you some hair of the dog." She presented the dish.

Dasein hesitated. Why should she bring him anything?

"Petey's my grandson," she said. "Mabel, my daughter, told me how nice you were last night." She glanced at the stub of the arrow in the side of Dasein's camper, returned her attention to Dasein. "Occurred to me maybe your problem's you don't realize how much we want you to be one of us. So I brought you some of my sour cream stew—plenty of Jaspers."

She thrust the dish at him.

Dasein took it. Smooth, warm china under his hands. He fought down an unreasonable impulse to drop the dish and smash it. He was afraid suddenly. Perspiration made his palms slippery against the dish.

"Go on, eat it," she said. "It'll set you up for the day."

I must not do it, Dasein told himself.

But that was irrational. The woman was just being kind, thoughtful . . . Petey's grandmother. Thought of the boy brought the incident of the night flooding back into his mind.

School . . . observation . . . Jaspers . . .

A whuffling noise from the green Chevrolet distracted him. A grey-muzzled old black and white border collie eased itself over onto the front seat, climbed down to the sand. It moved with the patient pain of old age, sniffed at Clara's heels.

She reached down, patted the dog's head. "I brought Jimbo," she said. "He doesn't get out in the country much anymore. Dan nigh thirty-five years old, and I think he's going blind." She straightened, nodded to the dish in Dasein's hands. "Go ahead, eat it."

But Dasein was fascinated by the dog. Thirty-five? That was equivalent to more than two hundred years in a human. He put the dish on the camper's steps, bent to stare at the dog. *Jimbo.* Going blind, she said, but its eyes carried that same disturbing *Jaspers* directness he saw in all the humans.

"You like dogs?" Clara Scheler asked.

Dasein nodded. "Is he really thirty-five?"

"Thirty-six in the spring . . .

if he lasts that much longer."

Jimbo ambled across to Dasein, aimed the grey muzzle at his face, sniffed. Apparently satisfied, he curled up at the foot of the camper's steps, sighed, stared off across the sand hills.

"You going to eat or aren't you?" Clara asked.

"Later," Dasein said. He was remembering how Jersey Hofstedder's car had figured in his thoughts—a key to Santaroga. Was it the car? he wondered. Or was the car just a symbol? Which was the important thing—the car or the symbol?

Seeing his attention on the car, Clara said: "It's still priced at $650 if you want it."

"I'd like to drive it," Dasein said.

"Right now?"

"Why not?"

She glanced at the dish on the camper's step, said: "That stew won't heat very well . . . and the Jaspers fades, you know."

"I had your daughter's coffee last night," Dasein said.

"No . . . aftereffects.?"

It was a practical question. Dasein found himself probing his own bodily sensations—head injury fading, shoulder pain almost gone . . . a bit of latent anger over Petey's arrow, but nothing time wouldn't heal.

"I'm fine."

"Well! You're coming around," she said. "Jenny said you would. Okay." She gestured toward the green Chevrolet. "Let's take a spin up the highway and back. You drive." She climbed into the right-hand seat, closed the door.

The dog raised his head from his paws.

"You stay there, Jimbo," she said. "We'll be right back."

Dasein went around, climbed behind the wheel. The seat seemed to mould itself to his back.

"Comfortable, huh?" Clara asked.

Dasein nodded. He had an odd feeling of *deja vu,* that he'd driven this car before. It felt right beneath his hands. The engine purred alive, settled into an almost noiseless motion. He backed the car around, eased it over the ruts and out the track to the highway, turned right away from town.

A touch on the throttle and the old Chevrolet leaped ahead—fifty . . . sixty . . . seventy. He eased back to sixty-five. It cornered like a sports car.

"Got torsion bars," Clara said. "Doesn't roll worth a sweet damn. Isn't she pretty?"

Dasein touched the brakes—no fading and the nose strayed not an inch. It was as though the car rode on tracks.

"This car's in better shape right now than the day it came off the assembly line," Clara said.

Dasein silently agreed with her. It was a pleasure to drive. He

liked the leather smell of the interior. The handfinished wood of the dash glistened with a dull luster. There was no distraction from it, just a tight cluster of instruments set up high to be read easily without taking his eyes too long from the road.

"Notice how he padded the dash on this side," Clara said. "Inch and a half thick and a thin roll of metal underneath. He cut the steering wheel about a third of the way back, offset it on a U-joint. Hit anything with this car and you won't have that wheel sticking out your back. Jersey was making safe cars before Detroit even heard the word."

Dasein found a wide spot at a turn, pulled off, turned around and headed back to the campground. He knew he had to have this car. It was everything this woman said.

"Tell you what," Clara said. "I'll deliver the car over to the Doc's when I get back. We'll figure out the details later. You won't find me hard to deal with, though I can't give you much for that clunker of a truck."

"I . . . don't know how I can pay for it," Dasein said. "But . . ."

"Say no more. We'll figure out something."

The track into the campground came into view. Dasein slowed, turned off onto the ruts, shifted down to second.

"You really ought to use the seatbelt," Clara said. "I noticed you . . ." She broke off as Dasein stopped behind the camper. "Something's wrong with Jimbo!" she said, and she was out of the car and across to the dog.

Dasein turned off the ignition, jumped out and ran around to her side.

The dog lay almost over on its back, feet stretched out stiff, neck curved backward, its mouth open and tongue extended.

"He's dead," Clara said. "Jimbo's dead."

Dasein's attention went to the dish on the steps. Its cover had been pushed aside and the contents disturbed. There was a splash of gravy beside the lid. Again, he looked at the dog. The sand was scratched in a wide swirl around Jimbo.

Abruptly, Dasein bent to the dish of stew, sniffed it. Beneath the heavy odor of Jaspers there was a bitter aroma that curled his nostrils.

"Cyanide?" he asked. He stared accusingly at Clara Scheler.

She looked at the dish. "Cyanied?"

"You were trying to kill me!"

She picked up the dish, smelled it. Her face went pale. She turned, stared wide-eyed at Dasein.

"Oh, my God! The paint bleach," she said. She dropped the dish, whirled away, dashed to the car before Dasein could stop her. The Chevrolet leaped to life, turned in a whirl of sand and roared out the track to the highway.

It made a skidding turn onto the highway, raced back toward town.

Dasein stared after her.

She tried to kill me, he thought. *Cyanide. Paint bleach.*

But he couldn't shake the memory of her pale, wide-eyed stare. She'd been surprised, as shocked as he was. *Paint bleach.* He stared at the dead dog. Would she have left the dish there near her dog if she'd known it contained poison? Not likely. Then why had she run?

Paint bleach.

There was contaminated food at her house, Dasein realized. She was racing back to get it before it killed anyone.

I would've eaten the stew, Dasein thought.

An accident . . . another bloody accident.

He kicked the fallen dish aside, dragged the dog out of the way, got behind the wheel of his camper. The Ford's engine was a dismal, throbbing mess after Jersey's car. He maneuvered it gently out to the highway, turned toward town.

Accident, he thought.

A pattern was emerging, but he found it difficult to accept. There was a Holmesian flavor to his thought—" . . . *when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however, improbable, must be the truth.*"

Jenny had screamed: "Stay away from me. I love you."

That was consistent. She did love him. Therefore, he had to stay away from her.

For the time being.

The road forked and he turned right, following the direction by a sign labeled: "Greenhouses."

There was a bridge over the river—an old-fashioned bridge that crowned in the middle . . . heavy planks rattling under the wheel.s The river foamed and bunched itself over the shellbacks of smooth stones under the bridge.

Dasein slowed the truck at the far side, taken suddenly by a warning sense of caution which he had learned to trust. The road followed the river's right bank. He paced the current, glanced upstream toward the bridge, found it hidden by a stand of willows.

It came over Dasein that there was something sliding and treacherous about the river. He thought of a liquid snake, venomous, full of evil energy. It contained a concentration of malevolence as it slipped down the rapids beside the road. And the sound—it laughed at him.

Dasein drew a sigh of relief when the road turned away from the river, wound over two low hills and down into a shallow. He glimpsed the glass through the trees. It was an expanse of glistening green and covered a much larger area than he'd expected.

The road ended at a paved parking lot in front of a long stone

building. More stone buildings—tile roofs, curtained windows—stepped in ranks up the hill beside the greenhouses.

A great number of cars waited in the parking lot, a fact Dasein found curious—at least a hundred cars.

And there were people—men walking between the greenhouses, white-coated figures behind the glass, briskly striding women coming and going.

Dasein drove down the line of cars looking for a place to park. He found a slot beyond the end of the long stone building pulled in to a stop and stared around.

Chanting.

Dasein turned toward the sound; it came from the ranks of buildings beyond the greenhouses. A troop of children came marching into view down a path between the buildings. They carried baskets. Three adults accompanied them. They counted a marching cadence. The troop wound out of sight down into the greenhouse level.

A tight feeling gripped Dasein's chest.

Footsteps sounded on his left. Dasein turned to find Piaget striding down the line of cars toward him. The doctor's bulky figure was accented by a long white smock. He was hatless, his hair wind-mussed.

Piaget turned into the slot beside Dasein, stopped to stand looking in the truck's open window.

"Well," he said. "Jenny said there'd be an arriving."

Dasein shook his head. There was almost meaning in Piaget's words, but the sense eluded him. He wet his lips with his tongue. "What?"

Piaget scowled. "Jenny knows rapport. She said you'd probably show up here." His voice sounded suddenly full of effort.

An arriving, Dasein thought.

It was a label for an event, a statement withholding judgment. He studied Piaget's wide, bland face.

"I saw children," Dasein said.

"What did you expect?"

Dasein shrugged. "Are you going to run me off?"

"Al Marden says the ones that run get the fever," Piaget said. "The ones that watch get the benefit."

"Count me among the watchers," Dasein said.

Piaget grinned, opened the truck door. "Come."

Dasein remembered the river, hesitated. He thought of the torn carpet in the inn's hallway, the open gas jet, the lake, the arrow . . . the paint bleach. He thought of Jenny running away from him—*"Stay away from me! I love you."*

"Come along," Piaget said.

Still hesitating, Dasein said: "Why're the children kept here?"

"We must push back at the sur-

face of childhood," Piaget said. "It's a brutal, animate thing. But there's food growing." He gestured at the expanse of greenhouses. "There's educating. There's useful energy. Waste not; want not."

Again, Dasein shook his head. *Almost-meaning.*

Push back at the surface of childhood?

It was like schizophrenic talk, and he recalled the incident in the Blue Ewe, the haunting conversation of the young couple.

How could one hear a sunset?

"You . . . you're not speaking English," Dasein complained.

"I'm speaking," Piaget said.

"But . . ."

"Jenny says you'll be an understander." Piaget scratched his cheek, a pensive look on his face. "You have the training, Dasein." Again, his voice took on that leaden effort. "Where's your Weltanschaung? You do have a world view? The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. What is it?"

Piaget's arm swept out to include the greenhouse complex and the entire valley, the world and the universe beyond.

Dasein's mouth felt dry. The man was insane.

"You contain the Jaspers experience," Piaget said. "Digest it. Jenny says you can do it. Reality shoots through her words."

The tight sensation was a pain in Dasein's chest. Thoughts tumbled through his mind without order or sense.

In a heavy voice, Piaget said: "For approximately one in five hundred, the Jaspers cannot . . ." He spread his arms, palms up. "You are not one of those few. I stake a reputation on it. You will be an opening person."

Dasein looked at the stone building, the hurrying people. All that action and purpose. He sensed it all might be like the dance of bees—motions designed to show him a direction. The direction escaped him.

"I will try to put it in the words of *outside,*" Piaget said. "Perhaps then . . ." He shrugged, leaned against the side of the door to bring his broad face close to Dasein. "We sift reality through screens composed of ideas. These idea systems are limited by language. That is to say: language cuts the grooves in which our thoughts must move. If we seek new validity forms, we must step outside the language."

"What's that have to do with the children?" Dasein nodded toward the greenhouses.

"Dasein! We have a common instinctive experience, you and I. What happens in the unformed psyche? As individuals, as cultures and societies, we humans re-enact every aspect of the instinctive life that has accompanied our species for uncounted generations. With the Jaspers,

we take off the binding element. Couple that with the brutality of childhood? No! We would have violence, chaos. We would have no society. It's simple, isn't it? We must superimpose a limiting order on the innate patterns of our nervous systems. We must have common interests."

Dasein found himself grappling with these ideas, trying to see through them to some sense in Piaget's earlier words. *Push back at the surface of childhood? World view?*

"We must meet the survival needs of individuals," Piaget said. "We know the civilization-culture-society outside is dying. They *do* die, you know. When this is about to happen, pieces break off from the parent body. Pieces cut themselves free, Dasein. Oru scalpel—that was Jaspers. Think, man! You've lived out there. It's a Virgilian autumn . . . the dusk of a civilization."

Piaget stepped back, studied Dasein.

For his part, Dasein found himself suddenly fascinated by the doctor. There was a timeless essence in the man, powerful, intrusive on everything about him. Framed in the white smock's collar was an Egyptian head, strong cheeks and jaws, a nose out of Moses' time, white even teeth behind thin lips.

Piaget smiled, a deaf smile of ultimate stubbornness, let a honeyed look flow across the landscape around them, the greenhouses, the people.

Dasein knew then why he'd been sent here. No mere market report had prompted this. Marden had nailed it. He was here to break this up, smash it.

The Santarogans were working their children here, training them. Child labor. Piaget seemed not to care how much he revealed.

"Come along," Piaget said. "I'll show you our school."

Dasein shook his head. What would it be in there? An accidental push against broken glass? A child with a knife?

"I'm . . . I have to think," Dasein said.

"Are you sure?" Piaget's words dropped on the air like a challenge.

Dasein thought of a fortress abbey in the Dark Ages, warrior monks. All this was contained in Piaget and his valley, in the confidence with which Santarogans defied the *outside.* Were they really confident? he wondered. Or were they actors hypnotized by their own performance?

"You've been a swimmer on the surface," Piaget said. "You haven't even seen the struggle. You haven't yet developed the innocent eye that sees the universe uncluttered by past assumptions. You were programmed and sent here to break us up."

Dasein paled.

"To be programmed is to be prejudiced," Piaget said. "Be-

cause prejudice is selecting and we take up with you because of our Jenny."

"I came here with an open mind," Dasein said.

"Not prejudiced?" Piaget raised his eyebrows.

"So you're contending with . . . groups outside over what's the right way . . ."

"Contending is too soft a word, Dasein. There's a power struggle going on over control of the human consciousness. We are a cell of health surrounded by plague. It's not men's minds that are at stake, but their consciousness, their awareness. This isn't a struggle over a market area. Make no mistake about it. This is a struggle over what's to be judged valuable in our universe. Outside, they value whatever can be measured, counted or tabulated. Here, we go by different standards."

Dasein sensed threat in Piaget's voice. There was no longer a veneer of pretense here. The doctor was setting up the sides of a war, and Dasein felt caught in the middle. He was, he knew, on more dangerous ground than he'd ever been before. Piaget and his friends controlled the valley. An ex-post-facto accident would be child's play for them.

"The ones who hired me," Dasein said, "they're men who believe . . ."

"Men!" Piaget sneered. "Out there . . ." He pointed beyond the hills which enclosed the valley. ". . . they're destroying their environment. In the process, they're becoming not-men! We are men." He touched his chest. "They are not. Nature is a unified field. A radical change in environment means the inhabitants must change to survive. The not-men out there are changing to survive."

Dasein gaped at Piaget. That was it, of course. The Santarogans were conservatives . . . unchanging. He'd seen this for himself. But there was a fanatic intensity to Piaget, a religious fervor, that repelled Dasein. So it was a struggle over men's minds . . .

"You are saying to yourself," Piaget said, "that these fool Santarogans have a psycheletic substance which makes them inhuman."

It was so close to his thoughts that Dasein grew still with fear. Could they read minds? Was that a by-product of the Jaspers substance?

"You're equating us with the unwashed, sandaled users of LSD," Piaget said. "Kooks, you would say. But you are like them —unaware. We are aware. We have truly released the mind. We have a power medicine—just as whiskey and gin and aspirin and tobacco . . . and, yes, LSD, just as these are power medicines. But you must see the difference. Whiskey and the other depressants, these keep their subjects docile. Our medicine releases the

animal that has never been tamed . . . up to now."

Dasein looked at the greenhouses.

"Yes," Piaget said. "Look there. That is where we domesticate the human animal."

With a shock of awareness, Dasein realized he had heard too much ever to be allowed out of the valley. They had passed a point of no return with him. In his present state of mind, there was only one answer for the Santarogans: they had to kill him. The only question remaining was: Did they know it? Was any of this conscious? Or did it only operate at the level of instinct?

If he precipitated a crisis, Dasein knew he'd find out. Was there a way to avoid it? he wondered. As he hesitated, Piaget moved around the truck, climbed in beside him.

"You won't come with me," he said. "I'll go with you."

"You'll go with me?"

"To my house; to the clinic." He turned, studied Dasein. "I love my niece, you understand? I'll not have her hurt if I can prevent it."

"If I refuse?"

"Ahhh, Gilbert, you would make the angels weep. We don't want weeping, do we? We don't want Jenny's tears. Aren't you concerned about her?"

"I've some anxiety about . . ."

"When anxiety enters, inquiry stops. You have a hard head, Gilbert A hard head makes a sore back. Let us go to the clinic."

"What kind of a death trap have you set up there?"

Piaget glared at him in outrage. "Death trap?"

Holding as reasonable a tone as he could manage, Dasein said: "You're trying to kill me. Don't deny it. I've . . ."

"I'm disgusted with you, Gilbert. When have we tried to kill you?"

Dasein took a deep breath, held up his right hand, enumerated the *accidents,* dropping a finger for each one until his hand was clenches into a tight fist. He left out only the incident with Petey Jorick—and that because of a promise.

"Accidents!" Piaget said.

"As we both know," Dasein said, "there are very few real accidents in this world. Most of what we call accidents are unconscious violence. You say you've opened your mind. Use it."

"Pah! Your thoughts are like muddy water!"

"Let the muddy water stand and it becomes clear," Dasein said.

"You can't be serious." He glared at Dasein. "But I see that you are." He closed his eyes momentarily, opened them. "Well, would you believe Jenny?"

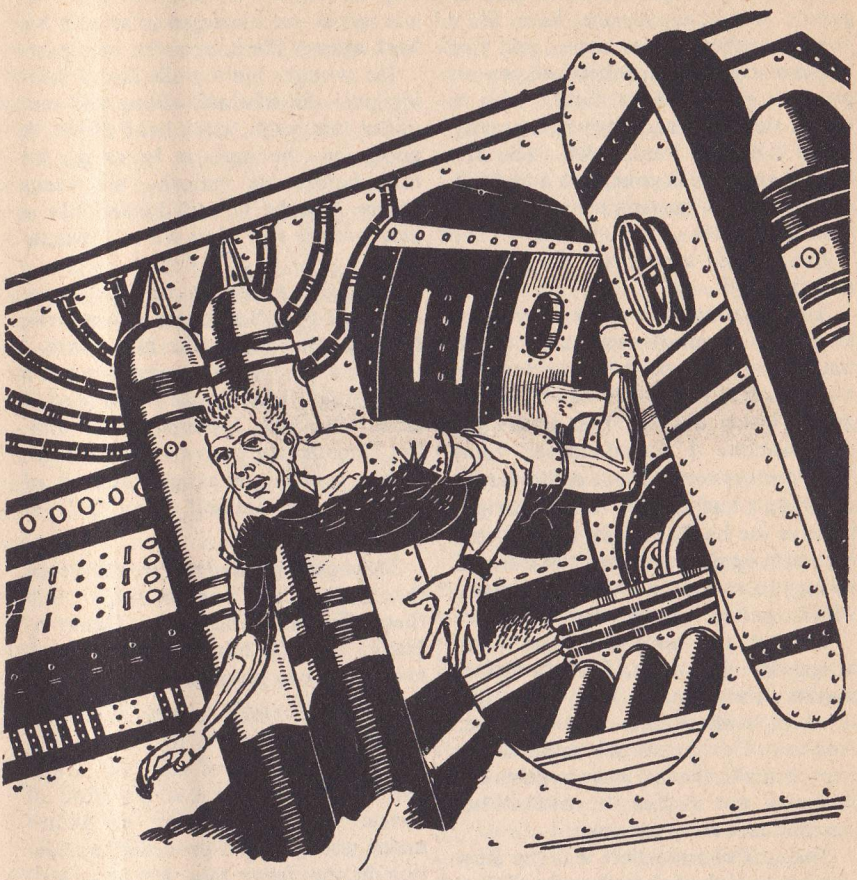
Stay away from me! I love you! Dasein thought.

"Let's go to your clinic," Dasein said. He started the truck, backed out of the parking lot and headed

(Continued on page 129)

STACKED DECK

By Lester Del Rey



We have always thought that there were only two contestants in the space race—but there could be more. The deck might be stacked, and trouble brewing, if unethical aliens became involved.

THE BRIGHT boys with their pep-talks about space and the lack of gravity should try it once! Sure, life's possible without up or down, and you can even eat, provided they feed you on gruel from a rubber bottle with a straw; there's no cooking where gravity won't hold the food down. You can live—if you stay in your bunk and don't do any sudden moving around to upset your ear-canals.

But nobody mentioned the hiccups and the itch!

As regular as clock-work, after every meal, our stomachs went crazy. With nothing to hold us down or restrain our muscles, it was like having Bikini go off inside us. The first time I got the hiccups, I found myself tumbling heave-over-hic out of the bunk; if I hadn't had another timed just right to drive me back, I might have busted my neck against the door. We found we had to strap down after every meal, which partly solved that problem.

The itch was another matter. Why no-gravity does that, I don't know; maybe it's because everything just touches, without any real pressure. Anyhow, I'd like to see some of the experts make that go away by relaxing; it almost got so bad we couldn't bet our bonuses away on poker.

Then, of course, there was the Russian ship. Nobody had thought of that, or what to do, when they were explaining all about the glories of our being the first planned Moon expedition.

We'd been swearing about that during the last meal on the rocket ship before landing. Now Major Thompson, just getting over the hiccups, tossed his straps back. He scratched all over, waited to see if his stomach would jerk again, and then jumped lightly down through the bunkroom and out into the control-room. He was good—he managed to scratch his back against the door as he went past.

He would. He's built like a fishing pole—all slim and strong and taut under that calm, dark head of his. A good joe—he had to be to get his rank before his majority, six weeks before. Maybe he still looked like a kid, but the rest of us weren't exactly old.

I waited a couple minutes more, wishing I wasn't so short and neutral-looking, but more like him. Then I wouldn't have to bank everything on a sweepstake ticket to be called a good catch. Oh, hell. I jumped after him, but I missed the door by a good three inches, and barely caught the back of a seat to pull myself down in front of the radar set.

Thompson nodded toward the screen that showed the Russian ship. "Still there, Sparks. They—ulp! Damn it, Hank, do you have to hit my neck every time you jump in here?"

The big, blond engineer grinned sheeplishly, and tried to hide himself behind the banks of controls. Hank Jerrold could figure out any kind of course in his head, but he wasn't much good at self-propelled navigation in the *Jenny Lou*. His awkwardness had almost cost him his chance at the lottery they'd used to select us out of the volunteers.

His face was envious as he watched Pete Ashford sail in, to make a perfect landing at the navigator's seat. Pete may look like a half-pint left out in the rain until his hair got rusty and his backbone washed out, but he was doggone near as smooth as Thompson.

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Then we were all looking at the screen. The Russian ship was not only still there behind, but closer. It was a nice-looking job, too, and going about the business of turning over on its gyroscopes as if it had done it a hundred times, from what we could see.

"Buzz 'em, Sparks," Thompson told me. "There's no use pretending secrecy now—they must have spotted us hours ago."

I nodded, and began shoving buttons. A little wheel started spinning in front of me, counterbalancing the turning of the radar antenna above. Then the radar made a pip on the screen, and I shoved in contact for oral communication.

"Heraus mit!" I'd picked up a little German, and figured they might know it better than English. Nobody's figured we'd need Russian in space. *"Mach' schnell fort! Wir waren zuerst hierher. Jetzt landen wir an Tycho, um den ganzen Mond fur Amerika in Besits nehmen."*

There was an amused snort from the little speaker. *"Alle Jubeljahre. Zuruck zu deinem Kindermadchen! Vielmehr nehmen wir Amerika in Besitz! Tycho is shon unser Treppenabsatz. Auf wiedersehen, Faulenzer!"*

"They don't intend moving over," I said. "They figure on landing at Tycho themselves—and they're calling us slowpokes."

Thompson grinned a bit wryly. "Yeah, so I gather. Nice tactful conversationalist you are, Sparks. 'Scram. We're first. We're landing to take all the moon for America.' Where'd you read your Dale Carnegie? No wonder he told you to go back to your nursemaid."

Damn that Thompson, always knowing things I didn't expect. Maybe I'd been a little careless, but what was I supposed to do—and with my whole body itching so much I could just hold contact down?

Then Thompson grinned, and forgot it. He's like that.

"Want I should call back and *bitte Verzeihung?*" I asked, trying to scratch three places at the same time.

He shook his head, watching the image on the screen. "Wouldn't do any good. They're under orders, anyhow, and they *have* got a faster ship, damn it. Pete, figure a landing curve to Aristarchus."

"Already got it. Made it up when we first spotted them."

"Good man. I suppose they had the jump on us in knowing we'd be coming—thanks to Gridley."

"That nut!" I'd already heard too much of Gridley. He'd been picked as volunteer to get in the first smaller ship, with no chance to come back. He showed he was crazy in trying it. Then, instead of holing in and hoping he could last out until our ship got there, he'd somehow come back to Earth with a story that came straight out of a hasheesh dream.

"Don't forget he got back," Pete put in quietly. "And he didn't have the fuel when he took off for a return. Maybe he wasn't crazy."

"It's a cinch the Russians don't think so," Thompson agreed.

Gridley had babbled about a bunch of creatures on the Moon, and some fantastic treasure in Tycho and Aristarchus craters. He couldn't give details—something about partial amnesia. He claimed *they* had refueled him and sent him back to spread

the word. Who or what *they* were he couldn't say.

He'd seemed normal enough about most things, and nobody could find any insanity in his past—except for his being a little slap-happy over the ponies; he'd even taken ten pounds of old racing magazines along, instead of microfilm novels. But plenty of people who'd rather drop a hundred on the nags than give ten cents to cancer research got by without being called nuts.

Anyhow, he'd started a commotion when he landed near Chicago just before his rockets blew up. He'd spilled the whole story to the papers before the Army could get to him to clamp down on it. Now he was locked up under observation, but the damage was done; the Russians were all set to hit Tycho and do their own checking on his story.

I turned my screen to the Moon. The Russian ship was just ahead of us, at the edge of the screen, and I could see their blasts shooting down toward the surface. It didn't look too comfortable down there. Then our own gyros began turning us over, and the scene started tipping.

I switched to the side screens, where the Russians still showed. Beside me, Pete followed their course. "They'll make a nice set-down. Hope we do—because here goes. Ready, Thompson?"

Thompson nodded, and the tubes bellowed behind us, while I went backward, with the screens sliding over my chest. The seats were set to flatten out, and their padding was good, but it was rough going. Even flat, and with training, six gravities pressure counts! It did stop the itching, though, and that was something.

Four minutes later, we were coasting over the surface of the Moon nice and easy. Those new rockets really had it. We stored pure hydrogen fluoride in our tanks, and our pile broke it down to monatomic hydrogen and fluorine. When they got together in the tubes again, they were *hot!* We'd gotten to the Moon without even an auxiliary step attachment, and we still had enough to get back.

The Russians were in Tycho, out of sight now. I tried the radar, and got a weak burp from it. Well, if Thompson wanted them mollycoddled, why not? *"Wie geht's mit Ihnen?"* I asked.

"Ganz gut, danke" The voice came through faint and rough, but plenty happy—as it should be, being still alive. *"Keine Verletzungen. 'Sist nicht so schwer!"*

That was a relief. Maybe if they were down without injuries we could do as well. Maybe I sounded a bit pleasanter when I answered. *"Gott sei dank'! Gluck auf!"*

I had just enough time to hear a quick "good luck" from him before I cut on the Luna screen again. I hoped his good wishes counted. Pete was a whiz, but this was his first landing—and Thompson's, too. The surface below was coming busting up too fast to suit me.

The seats slipped back again as the tubes let out a wash of blue fire. I waited, too scared to feel the pressure. And waited. And waited.

Suddenly, it was quiet, and Thompson was lifting his seat. "Never felt it, Pete," he said, simply. It sank in slowly. We were down! "You might call your friend, Sparks."

"Can't. This stuff works in straight lines up here." I was busy trying GHQ on Earth. The static was rotten, and there was only a whisper from the set, but I handed Thompson the mike, and he began reporting. I heard something from Earth about how we should have forced our way to Tycho—bright boys, some of the officers there; they kept thinking that a rocket was a tank with at least a .75 on its nose, instead of a hunk of magnesium-beryllium just strong enough to hold its air inside, without even a .22 pistol on board. Thompson only grinned, and finished his report.

"Okay," he told us. "Now, damn it, let's *eat!* Then we rest up from no-grav before taking chances out there. We can use some sleep without straps to hold us down."

Maybe we should have gone stumbling out for glory, but we'd come the hard way, there were no movie cameras clicking, and I could have kissed Thompson. Even this two-bit world with only one-sixth weight for us felt like heaven. We didn't even reach for the cards after supper, though Pete did try out the dice a couple of times to see whether they'd roll here. They did, but we were too tired to care much. I remember hearing Pete and Hank snoring, and seeing Thompson puttering around, but I was asleep before I could ask any questions.

It felt like plenty of hours later when I came awake with Thompson shaking me. I heard Pete and Hank up and looked over to see them stumbling into the clumsy pressure suits we had. Then it finally struck me that Thompson was wearing one—and that it was covered with fine, light dust. He'd been outside.

His face made more impression on me, though. He looked like a man who'd just been informed that he was pregnant—and couldn't afford the operation. I got out of the bunk in a hurry, with pictures of mad Russians invading us in my mind. I reached for my suit and opened my mouth to ask questions.

But Thompson cut them off. "You'll see, soon enough. Gridley was either sane, or I'm crazy. I want to find whether you see it, too. Come on."

He snapped down his helmet without saying another word. We were pulling ours down. With them on, we could communicate after a fashion by touching helmets, but nobody had dug up the little radios everyone had talked about—there'd been no room for such luxuries in a space-suit, what with all the windshield-wipers, sunshields, and assorted gizmos.

We followed him, weaving a little in the light gravity, out onto the softest, mushiest kind of top-soil I ever saw. It was more like ashes than anything I could think of. We didn't go bounding around, like some of those fantasies had it, but ploughing through it and working up a sweat. Thompson moved well enough, and Pete did almost as smooth a job, but Hank kept half-tripping and wobbling. I was too busy watching my feet to study the surroundings—until I finally almost stumbled into a door.

It was a door, all right, not three miles from the ship; a nice, shiny aluminum door, set into a building of some white stone, with a pretty brass doorknob on it. Thompson's footprints showed he'd been there before.

While the rest of us did a double-take, he reached out and turned the

knob. The door slipped sideways, opening into a small air-lock. We stumbled in, while I could almost feel moon-monsters jumping all over me. Gridley had talked about them—but he hadn't said *they* were using Yale locks!

When we finally got our helmets off, following Thompson's example, the air was fine, with just a touch of pine smell to it!

"You see all this?" Thompson asked.

Hank half nodded, Pete swore, and I swallowed my esophagus again. We saw it, all right—a nice little air-lock, equipped with standard fluorescent lights bearing a good old American trademark.

"Saw the place with the little telescope," was all Thompson would tell us, though. He opened the inner door, and began going down a flight of steps. I was trying not to think, which wasn't hard, but something kept going on in my head. "You guys want a drink?"

I was going to tell him how unfunny he was, when we came to the end of the steps and he turned into a pleasant room with red-leather chairs and a a cigarette-vending machine against one wall, a walnut and chrome contraption against another. He punched a lever on the machine and a pack of cigarettes popped out. We didn't want to ask questions then—we grabbed. Smoking was strictly forbidden on the *Jenny Lou*.

Thompson was grinning with an odd sort of amusement as we lit up. He opened the walnut-chrome gadget to show as pretty a bunch of bottles as you could want. There were other dinguses and a refrigerator, but he grabbed the nearest bottle of whiskey and turned back to us. I could see it labelled in English, though half the drinks carried Russian markings. Anyhow, it was good whiskey.

Hank finished first, and put the glass down. His apologetic voice was weaker than ever. "You know, suh, that's the *realest* whiskey I ever dreamed I was drinking."

Thompson grunted and put the bottle back. "Living quarters for about a hundred men are back there, with a stocked commissary behind them. To the right here, there's something worth seeing."

He seemed to know the place. He started down a hall, then motioned to me as he opened a door into a room. I didn't need any explanation. It held the sweetest bunch of ultra-high-frequency electronic gadgetry I've seen. Overhead, a big television screen was showing a standard color broadcast.

That got me. You can't pipe a sixty-megacycle signal all the quarter million miles to the Moon. By the time it gets there, even the electron motion in your first tube will come through stronger. Even if you got the signal, though, it wouldn't work—you'd be getting every signal of every station on that channel. But there it was, clean and clear, without any snow, and with the sound as pure as a bell when I shoved the volume up.

Thompson pointed to the console. It was a well-known projection model, unchanged except where someone had lettered Russian symbols under the English markings. There was a big box of some kind beside it, though, that probably did the real work. I looked at the other equipment. Some of it had Russian symbols with Eng-

lish painted under them, some of American make with Russian symbols added. But all had both markings.

About a quarter of the stuff had a factory-built look but never came out of any shop on Earth; it's a cinch we never built things that way.

"I've already contacted Earth," Thompson told me when I moved toward the microphone. "It's easy with this, and no static. But I didn't tell them much. I want to know some answers before I tell them we're not just exploring the surface."

I followed him out and we trekked through other rooms. There was a machine-shop that made Hank's eyes bulge. I saw him caressing a big hunk of a lathe, while he was looking fondly at something he called a set of pantograph hands. Everywhere, lettering was in Russian and English; equipment was a mixture from both countries, with stuff neither could have had, so far as I knew.

For a while, after that, we separated and began just drifting around, comparing notes when we happened to meet. It was Pete who found the fuel supply place. It was pretty automatic, from what we could see. A machine was set to dig back half a mile into the rocks and come up with a bunch of minerals. The stuff ran through some big vats and wound up being piped in to the fuel tanks.

Hank drained off a few drops under a closed hood and stuck in a hunk of glass he found. It etched the glass. Pure hydrogen fluoride, the stuff we used to harness the little atom pile in our ship—and set to make unlimited amounts.

With that, we could begin hiking some real payloads up here, since we wouldn't have to carry fuel for the return trip.

It was Hank's day to cook, and somehow he remembered it. He collected us when chow time came, and herded us into a dining room we hadn't seen before. Hank is a lousy cook, but this time it didn't matter. There was real steak, with corn and mashed potatoes with butter—there was even a pie.

"They've got about anything you'd like to name, suhs," he told us. "'Nuf to keep us going the next twenty years, most likely."

Pete asked the question I'd been trying not to think. "Yeah, fine. But who in hell are the guys who built this? How'd they get all this up here without Earth knowing? And—what happened to 'em?"

Nobody had an answer. I'd been getting one, but I didn't want to believe it. I'd be labelled nuttier than Gridley. But I'm no fool about electronic equipment. Some of the stuff I'd seen in the radio shack simply didn't fit our production methods, and wouldn't for at least another century or two.

Sure, I knew the flying saucers never turned out to be real. But something had been here that never got itself born on Earth!

"And what happens when they come a-running back and find us making ourselves so downright homey?" Hank broke into the silence.

Thompson shook his head. "They're not coming back, unless I'm as crazy as I sometimes think. Think it over. Everything in Russian and English, both. The manuals are duplicated—and some of those manuals were never printed in both languages. The com-

missary has all the delicacies for either nation's taste. This place is fixed up so either group will fit here—but not for aliens. This is a gift horse, boys—and I'd like a little closer look in its mouth. It might be the Trojan kind."

"Maybe some race outside fixed it up to reward us for reaching the Moon—maybe we're getting a helping hand," I suggested.

"Then I'd like to see who's dealing the hand and why the deck is stacked. No, Sparks, there's more than that. Gridley was fixed so he could remember just enough, and I'll bet he was supposed to blab when he got back, so the papers would get it and Russia would pick it up. Remember, his ship blew up *after* he was safe—so nobody could see any changes they'd made in it."

Thompson considered the pie again, sampled it, and decided on a piece of Roquefort instead. His face was covered with little lines of worry, but he was being cool enough. He smacked his lips and went on. "If they wanted to help, they could have announced things to us in other ways. Umm, come to think of it, maybe they did do something. Nobody ever figured how the transformer we use to break down the fuel came to be invented by an unknown mechanic who disappeared afterwards. It seems someone invented it for the Russians, too. But why set things up like this, then? Why build up Tycho and Aristarchus, for either nation? You can be damned sure the men in that other ship are drinking vodka and wondering the same things right now! Why both?"

Somehow, that hadn't occurred to me, but it made sense. Gridley had babbled about two crates. They had one and we had the other.

"Anyhow, the builders won't be back for awhile," Thompson finished. "This was built for us, by something miles ahead of us in a lot of technology. Why they gave it to us, I just don't know . . . Sparks, you'd better call Earth. Tell 'em we're still exploring, everythings the same. I'm not letting this out until we know more about it. But you might quiz them on what the Russians reported—the Army has their codes, and a beam from here won't be very tight."

I went into the radio shack, and Henry Chickering's voice came through clear as a bell in a few seconds. He was going nuts on Earth about the reception, trying to blame it on freak weather. All Earth was excited at our success, parades were being planned, when were we going to know what Gridley found?

No, nothing from the Russians that meant anything. They were exploring without any developments.

Thompson had come up in time to hear the last, and he smiled tightly as I signed off. "Thank God, the head man there has some sense, too. Hey, what's that?"

I looked where he was pointing, and opened the locker that had a wisp of paper sticking out. But it was only a racing magazine. I threw it on the desk. "Gridley, I guess. But I thought he landed on Tycho."

"God knows where he was moved. The poor devil can't remember."

Then there was a shout from down the hall and we both went toward it. Pete was waving us on. He'd gone further than the rest of us, and now he began trotting up a long tunnel to

a flight of steps. Above them, he threw open a door, and was in a room with a movable dome over it, holding a long, transparent slash. It was like an observatory, and there was something that looked like a telescope, only a lot simpler than the big ones I'd seen pictured.

"Not too big—about fifty inches. Out here even that would make an astronomer drool. But this dingus—" He tapped something attached to the telescope, pushed a button, and a screen on the far wall came to life, showing a picture of the Earth from about nine miles up. He fiddled with a knob, and the image grew larger, though clouds ruined the details. "This must be the light-amplifier the stargazers have been dreaming about. With that you've got better than any hundred foot telescope on Earth!"

It didn't mean too much to me, though I gathered it was quite something. Thompson nodded and inspected it. He picked up a piece of paper with a star map on it and pointed to a star circled in red. "And this?"

"They want us to watch there, I guess. Notice what's written below it?"

There were henscratches there that the math boys love, but Thompson seemed to make sense of it. "Ummm. Yeah. The relativity formula that shows why we can't go faster than light and why we can't get out to the stars, probably. But they've got it crossed out. This—hmmm. *Em-sub-vee equals em-sub-oh over the cube root of vee-squared over vee-squared plus see-squared.* Not much mass increase. With that we could reach the stars!"

"The rest are corrections for time and such, just as crazy," Pete said. "But notice that they've got arrows going up to that circled star. I'll bet there's something there the astronomy men can use to figure out how to crack light speed."

"See," I suggested, "they want to be helpful."

Thompson grimaced. "Sure—with a hint, when they could just as well have written out the whole formula, without our having to watch the star. Probably take us twenty years, or more. Well, at least we may get some good out of it. Maybe from here we can find whether the universe expands, contracts, or runs on alternating current!"

We went back down the steps, puzzling over it. Hank motioned to a door opposite the way back. "What's that way, Pete?"

Pete shook his head, and turned toward it. We found another tunnel, but a shorter one. It was apparently wired up to the observatory, because big cables ran down to desks along the walls, each carrying a screen before it. When I found the right button, the picture of Earth we'd seen before flashed on the little screens.

Then we saw the main room—about the size of a couple of Grand Centrals rolled together. There were machine shops all around it, but the things in the central launching racks caught our eyes first.

"Guided missiles!" Thompson really acted shocked this time, and his mouth was as wide as any. "Controlled from those desks. My God, thousands of them. If they're loaded . . ."

Hank went stumbling forward, then came back shaking his head. "Not yet, suh. They're all open where they'd be having their warheads. But from

that half-assembled one, they've got a right cute pile built into them."

It looked something like the pile that powered the *Jenny Lou,* all right. But even I knew you couldn't build a pile that small, and the monatomic reaction couldn't go on in the size gadget they used. Still, theory or not. I was betting those would work. Cute. Apparently it was up to us to supply the atmoic explosives if we wanted to use them, but they were ready and willing to blast down to Earth in every other way, along with desks for their control.

"If the Russians have the same . . ." I started. But I couldn't finish.

Thompson could, though. "They have, no question about it. This stuff is bilingual, too. And that doesn't make sense unless the race that built it didn't know who'd get which station and made both the same. But there's worse here." He picked up a diagram on the front desk. "Recognize this, Hank?"

"Sort of, suh. Deuterium—tritium fusion—uh, nope. Good Lord, suh, that's the deuterium-tritium without any need for an A-bomb to act as a starter. Super hydrogen bombs—and the moon has plenty of hydrogen!"

"Nice helpful pals, Sparks," Thompson said bitterly. "They just want to help us—help us blow ourselves up! They yank out the two powers that could go to war any day, fix them up with bases, load the bases with bombs, tell both sides how to make better bombs, and smile sweetly! With what's here, the Earth could be wiped out! But why didn't they just do it themselves? Why all this setup?"

I didn't have anything to say to that. I'm not married, and I've always been an orphan, which is part of the reason they picked me for the lottery to see who went on this trip. But there were three girls down on Earth, and I might want to marry one of them. After I'd won that day at the track, that red-head . . . Well, I didn't like to think about what all this could mean down there.

I guess we all had the same idea. The place was nice and cozy, but right then we wanted to get back to familiar surroundings and settle down for some thinking in the little *Jenny Lou.* I stopped in the lounge just long enough to get some bottles before I snapped my helmet on and followed the others. This time, I didn't even know what my feet were doing as we ploughed back through the moon dust.

When we were back in the ship and I could talk, I swung to Thompson. "But we don't *know* the Russians have the missiles, too!"

"You're a good boy, Sparks," he told me. "But you're a stinking optimist, and I don't feel optimistic. Where are those bottles?"

Hank stumbled forward hesitantly. "But, suh, we *don't* know."

Thompson considered it, while he was pulling the cork out and taking a big swallow. He passed the bottle along before replaying.

"Go ahead. And smoke, if you want—we can waste a little air, with the station supplies handy . . . No, Hank, I guess we don't. So we'll find out. We could knock the warhead door off one of those missiles, put in some plexiglass I saw, and use that—guide it from the station, maybe.

I won't risk the *Jenny Lou*, but it might be worth sending someone over inside a missile to find out what they've got. That satisfy everyone?"

It was the best we could do. Hank picked up the dice and we tried to settle down to craps. Hank's clumsy, but not with the bones, usually. I already owed him a quarter of my bonus. But this time he didn't have what it took, and I wasn't any better. We tried the cards, and that was worse. And finally we settled down with just the liquor, which worked better. But I still didn't sleep too soundly.

We were a pretty seedy looking bunch ten hours later when we started back to the station to rebuild the missile. Something like a shadow flicked over the ground, but we didn't even look up until Thompson began pointing.

Then we knew there was no need to send a missile over. The Russians had had the same idea. One of the things, exactly like ours, but with a hastily installed window, came whizzing over us, slowing down to a clumsy curve. It went over the dome of the observatory, got back toward the entrance building, and finally was over our heads again. We could see a big young man inside. He was scowling, but he lifted a hand to the glass and waved it.

Thompson pointed up toward him quickly, then down to the ground below, and nodded. The Russian's scowl deepened, but he waved again before he went streaking toward Tycho.

Thompson watched him go with no expression and headed on toward the entrance. Inside the base, he spread his hands. "I guess it couldn't do any harm to signal him we had things like his—now they know we have a big stick, too. And that tears it. We both have the same. How about your guiding angel theory, Sparks?"

I didn't feel so good. I've never believed that intelligence went with sheer cruelty, no matter what I've seen men do. I used to read the fantasy magazines and get mad when I found a vicious race making war on Earth. I went for the stories where alien life was as advanced ethically as it was mechanically. But maybe Thompson was right, and I was just an incurable optimist. All the same, cruelty didn't explain any more than kindness did.

Pete suggested breakfast—it was his day to cook. I wasn't interested. I turned toward the radio shack where I could slump down, suck on a cigarette, and try not to think how much I wanted to puke. I sat there, tearing strips off the racing magazine and rolling them up into little balls, not even bothering to swear.

"Here!" Thompson had come in, and was shoving a cup of black coffee under my nose. "Drink that—it's laced with brandy, and you need it. Any chance of reaching Tycho base on this set-up?"

I gagged over the first swallow, but it seemed to hit bottom and make me feel a little better. I was looking the rig over as I swallowed again. "Yeah. At least, they've got a connection here marked for Tycho Crater. Want me to try it?"

"No." He thought it over, settling down slowly and reaching for the switches I'd indicated. "No, I'll call them. I know enough Russian to get by. Maybe it's all crazy. But they've been holding back stuff from Earth

just as we have. Maybe they don't want the planet blown up, either. Maybe they're thinking how little would start things. After all, damned fools—and that includes fanatics—aren't the men for a trip like this. Maybe I can talk to them."

"Yeah. And what good will it do?"

He shrugged wearily. "So you're a Pessimist now, eh? But you're right—it won't do a damned bit of good, probably. We can't keep it secret—there'll be other ships. But at least we can start acting like human beings while we're here, until we get back and the politicians find out. Anyhow, let's see what happens."

He shoved in the switch, and began saying something over and over. Two seconds later, there was a sound from the speaker, and words spilled out. It looked as though someone on the other end had been trying to make up his mind about calling us and we'd found him all ready and waiting. But I couldn't make any sense from the words, not knowing the language, and both Thompson and the other were being darned careful not to let their voices say anything the words didn't.

I picked up the racing magazine and started to tear off more strips. Then something caught my eye, and I noticed a page all covered with writing in the margins—some in English, some in Russian, and some in the strangest hen-tracks I've ever seen. There was something alike in the way the writer had done the job in all three, though.

That made it just too chummy—our aliens busy working out stuff on races that had been run months before. I checked up on one race, where I happened to remember what happened because I'd bet on it.

The alien hadn't done badly in his handicapping. He must have been a smart boy. He'd managed to get place and show right most of the time, though he was wrong about three winners—including one twenty-to-one shot. That was the one I'd bet on, with my last two bucks. It had paid for a date with each of the three girls I knew, and left enough over for a sweepstakes ticket. If I'd won that, maybe I wouldn't have been on this crazy trip.

Thompson was still talking. I started to turn to another page, but I couldn't keep interested in what some alien might dope out from the form sheets about long-gone races. I tossed the magazine aside and kicked it out of my way when it fell to the floor. I started to kick at a piece of paper that fell out. Then I noticed it was all in English, and picked it up. It was in the same writing as that on the margins—like somebody had done a good job of learning script, but hadn't had enough practice with his hands to make it quite smooth.

I read it three times, slower each time. Then I put it down, thought it over, and read it again. But it hadn't changed.

I heard Thompson sign off, but I didn't look up. I couldn't take my eyes off the slip, even to find the cigarettes I wanted.

Thompson sounded tired. "We've agreed, Sparks. The Russians are sending two men back in their ship to report, and I'm sending you back with Pete. Hank and I are staying After that, it's up to the higher brass . . . Sparks! What's up with you?"

I looked at him while I was handing

him the slip, but I didn't see him reading it. I was thinking about men who were willing to bet their last two bucks on a long shot or shirk suppers to buy a lottery ticket. I was thinking of racehorses, good for only one thing, and game-cocks, bull-pits, and a lot of other things. We've always spent more on racetracks and gambling houses than we have on our national health, and I guess we always will spend that way.

But we always thought other races from other worlds would be either cruel or kind to us. We never figured they'd come all the way from the stars to study us and to set us up as a better lottery!

Thompson had put the note down again where I could see it: *"Any life form that bets on horse racing is insane,"* it said. *"Quite as insane as we are. Well, the smart money says you'll blow your world up in six years. But if you get to the stars instead, in thirty, and if I'm lucky in the draw, I'll be waiting to split my winnings with you. Hope we win!"*

Thompson fingered it and dropped it again. He stood up slowly, finally putting it in his pocket. "Just in English this time," he said slowly. Then he shrugged. "Well, it doesn't change anything. We still have to try. You and Pete will take off for Earth in six hours."

I shook my head, reaching for a cigarette. When I looked up again, Thompson was gone. He had the answer to his questions, because some alien had a whim or decided to try a little cheating on the lottery by tipping us off.

I went out of the radio shack and the base, across the emptiness of the Moon's surface, and back to the old *Jenny Lou*. I'd rather have the hiccups and itches of space a hundred times over than stay another minute in the station *they* built for us. I wanted to get back to one of those girls on Earth while there was still time enough to enjoy it.

If I can enjoy anything! Maybe I'm young, but I've lived long enough not to like drawing the death—and from a stacked deck. I don't like being the booby prize in a cosmic lottery. And that's all the whole human race is now, I guess.

Only I wish I knew whether the Russians found a note in their language exactly like the one I found!

The End

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LUVVER

By Mack Reynolds

A defense has been perfected for every defensive weapon ever devised. So far. But what about dewy-eyed, all-engulfing love? Could there be any truth in the old expression about being loved to death?

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APPROACHING A RESTRICTED ZONE. LANDING FORBIDDEN.

Donald Macbride continued to fight the controls of the sport cruiser, his facial muscles were less tense now, his eyes had lost some of the hopelessness. They were going to make it.

The radio blared again.

APPROACHING A RESTRICTED ZONE. LANDING FORBIDDEN.

Macbride grimaced wryly. "It's like telling a man who's just come through a desert not to drink." He wrenched hard at a control lever. "The worst part's over, we'll make it, honey." He wiped perspiration from his forehead. "I didn't tell you back there, but I was convinced we were goners."

She shivered. "You didn't have to tell me, father. Actually. Looking at you was enough . . ."

The televisor screen lit up and an angry-faced, red-headed young man was pictured.

He spoke curtly. "Haven't you received our warnings? You're entering a restricted zone. For security reasons it's forbidden . . ."

Macbride flared back. "You young fool. Can't you see we're in distress? It's all I've been able to do to wrestle this blasted thing through the last half million miles. And you tell us we can't land!"

The face in the televisor scowled worriedly. "Can't you make it to some other port? Only an extreme emergency . . ."

The older man glared at him. "We'll by lucky if we make it to your field. This *is* an extreme emergency. My daughter and I are fortunate to have made it this far."

"Daughter?" The young man's eyes went back over Macbride's shoulder and widened when they took in the trim blonde. "I'll be a *makron*, a girl!" He caught what he'd said, began to redden. The screen suddenly went dead.

Patricia Macbride laughed. "Why, he blushed, father. Actually. I didn't know it happened anymore."

Her father scowled at her, still fighting his controls. "Didn't it ever occur to you that there were still some young fellows raised with the old common decency to be ashamed to swear before a lady?"

She giggled. "Not any more."

He snorted and began to answer, but the televisor screen brightened again. The face was that of a newcomer. His expression was somewhat startled, and his Space Forces cap and his tie gave the impression of having been hurriedly located and donned. His voice was formal, but his eyes were wide, and although he spoke to Macbride, he kept them on Patricia.

"Lieutenant Steve Benton, sir. Officer in command of Security Base 1645R. I must warn you that only in extreme emergency can you be permitted to land, and that if you do land there is a possibility that you may never leave."

The owner of the crippled space craft growled indignantly. "Nonsense. Climb down off your military high horse. Can't you see what we are? A man and his daughter in a sport cruiser that's gone haywire. We must land. It'll be easy enough to check my credentials. Do we look like spies or something?"

The Lieutenant stiffened slightly under the tongue lashing. "You don't understand, sir. It's unsafe for human beings. This is not a military base. We're here to warn off all spaceships. You might say that this is the equivalent of a lighthouse."

Macbride was impatient. "Whatever it is, we're coming in for a landing. Stand by."

"Just one thing, sir. After landing, don't leave your ship and don't look out your ports. You'll be in considerable danger every moment you're on this planet. We'll do what we can to protect you."

Half an hour later, the small cruiser had safely landed on the tiny planet's sole field. Now that the strain of bringing the damaged craft through so many miles of space was over, the reaction set in. The middle-aged Macbride slumped into an acceleration chair, dragging away at a cigarette.

"Where the devil are they? Don't land! Don't leave the ship! Don't look out the ports! The place is probably populated by the insane, and I'm about ready to join them."

Patricia giggled. "They didn't look insane. The red-headed one was cute. Actually."

They heard a tapping at the inner door of the space lock, and with a grunt Macbride went to open it. The visitors had already closed the outer lock and the view beyond them couldn't be seen.

They were correctly arrayed in Space Force uniform, but it obviously was strange to them. Lieutenant Benton's collar was too tight, his tie askew. The other wore regulation tunic but it looked as though it had been packed away in a musty trunk for many a year while its owner had gone in less formal attire. Both of them seemed ill at ease.

Lieutenant Steve Benton was stiff. "May I present Lieutenant Dave Malone, my assistant?"

Macbride rumbled, "I'm Donald Macbride, of Terra; this is my daughter, Patricia. I must say, our treatment thus far on the part of representatives of my planet's Space Forces has been cavalier, to say the least."

The eyes of the two lieutenants were on the daughter, not the father, but Benton managed to fumble through an answer. "More than sorry, sir . . . but, er, orders. I'm afraid that this is an extremely dangerous place to land."

Patricia giggled. "It's monstrously thrilling. So adventurous. Actually."

Her father snorted. "Undoubtedly, the Space Forces have sufficient strength to protect any civilians present on the planet. Lieutenant, I assume you've the mechanics and repair facilities to patch up this cursed cruiser of mine?"

Benton dragged his eyes back to Macbride. "Lieutenant Malone and I are alone here. However, both of us have had considerable experience on space craft. We should be able to have your sporter in space again within a few days. Unfortunately, you'll have to spend the full time cooped up in our quarters . . . I'm afraid it won't be too comfrotable."

Patricia bubbled, "You mean the air here can't be breathed? You must stay inside all of the time? How utterly dreadful. You must become dreadfully bored. Actually!"

Lieutenant Dave Malone finally found his tongue. He'd been standing almost open-mouthed, looking at this luscious product of earth's most expensive beauty salons. "It's not that, Miss Macbride. The air's all right. It's just that we can't let you be exposed to the animal life here."

She giggled. "But, Lieutenant, I'm sure you could protect us."

Her father snorted. "If these animals are so dangerous, why is it that you men don't find it necessary to carry weapons?"

Benton took over. "You don't understand, sir. The danger isn't of the type from which a gun could protect you." He shivered slightly, as though they very idea was repugnant. "At any rate, the thing to do now is get you to our quarters where you can rest. Lieutenant Malone and I will look over your ship and see what is needed. I'm afraid you'll have to wear blindfolds for the short walk to our place."

They ran into protest on that but Lieutenant Benton was adamant. Blindfolds must be worn. Regulations. Finally, they submitted and were led carefully from the space cruiser, across what seemed to be a grassy field, to the residence of the two Space Forces officers. A moment later the blindfolds were removed and they were free to examine their surroundings.

The quarters were ample in size, and seemingly the two men had all they needed in their lonely exile, but it could be seen that the isolated life had seduced them from army trimness. The place was a bachelor shambles.

"What you need around here is a woman," Patricia giggled.

"You ain't just a-whistlin' Dixie," Malone breathed.

Macbride crushed him with a stare.

"To keep the place neat," the redhead added quickly. "Let's see, it's been nearly six years since anybody's been here but us."

"Six years!" Macbride protested. "Do you mean to say that you men haven't been relieved in six years? Why that's unbelievable."

"Its been more than ten years for Steve," Malone said wryly.

"That's enough, Dave," Steve Benton rapped. "You've said too much."

"He hasn't said enough," Macbride retorted belligerently. "I know the Space Forces. Put three years in myself during the Martian war. And leaving men alone at an isolated base for six years, not to mention ten, without relief, is unnecessary hardship. You boys are being called upon for sacrifices beyond the call of duty."

Steve Benton walked wearily over to a portable bar and pressed various buttons. Four frosted glasses emerged. He motioned the others to chairs and handed around the drinks.

"You'll recall, Mr. Macbride, that just before you landed I warned you that possibly you would never be able to leave. That's the position in which Lieutenant Malone and I find ourselves."

The older man's face reddened, "You mean we'd be forced to remain on this unknown, unpopulated, planet for a lengthy time?"

Dave Malone grinned and took a sip of his drink. "Not for a lengthy time, sir. Forever."

Macbride turned his glare from Benton to Malone. "What kind of a fantastic threat is that?"

Benton raised his hand. "Don't misunderstand, Mr. Macbride. We have no desire to force you to remain here. And, if proper precautions continue to be maintained, there will be no reason for your staying. Just remember, you must stay inside this building until your craft is repaired and you are ready to leave.

"I might also add that Lieutenant Malone seems to have given you an incorrect impression. The Space Forces haven't forced us to remain here. We stay of our own will. Twice a year a transport is sent to drop us our requirements." He pointed out the portable bar and various other conveniences usually not seen in a military establishment. "We receive a good deal more than commonly comes under the head of rations. Our life is quite comfortable."

"I think it's all perfectly mysterious. Actually," Patricia giggled. "You forbid us to land, claiming it is too dangerous, but when we do we find nobody here except you boys. You make us wear blindfolds so we can't see anything, and tell us you've been here six years without any relief. You even draw the curtains so we can't see out your windows. Actually. It's so *mysterious.* I just know I'll love staying for awhile—really I will."

Dave Malone was gazing at her with the worshipful eyes of an adoring puppy. Steve Benton looked over at him and snapped, "Come on Dave. We'd better take a look at the cruiser. I hope we have all the materials necessary for its repair."

He turned back to the two civilians. "You'll find everything you need. Food, drinks, books, phonograph—movies, if you want. Make yourselves at home. We'll be back shortly. I'm afraid I must ask your word that you won't either leave the building nor look out its windows."

"All right," Macbride snorted.

"Miss Macbride?"

"I promise," Patricia giggled.

When they found themselves in the open and walking toward the damaged ship, Steve Benton eyed the other worriedly. "You'd better watch yourself, Dave, or you'll be in an emotional mess. You know she can't say here and you can't leave."

Malone answered quickly. "Why not? Why couldn't she stay? It's not so bad here. We get along fine, don't we? Why not fix it so they'd have to remain too? We'd have company, Steve. Why it's even be a relief to have the old man around. Somebody new."

The muscles twitched in the senior officer's face. "You know better than that, Dave. Being stationed here means more than just doing the usual spaceman's duty. We've got a trust. In a way, the race depends on us. If we start letting down on the job just a fraction, it'll be a precedent that'll make it that much easier next time."

"There'd never need be another time. And nobody would have to know we did it deliberately, not even them."

Steve Benton's grin was wry. "I see. When you get this girl for yourself that ends it. Suppose I want one later on? And suppose that Macbride decides he wants a wife to share his exile? It could pile up, Dave, until the whole project would be a failure."

The redhead was depressed. "I suppose you're right, Steve." They walked in silence for a moment and his natural exuberance reasserted itself.

"Maybe she'll see a *luvver* by accident," he said hopefully.

At the beginning, dinner that night was pleasant enough. For the two exiles, Macbride's crusty nature and snorting comments were more than counterbalanced by his daughter's accentuated feminine charm. It evidently hadn't occurred to either of them that her giggling would lose its charm given a period of years—if not months. It was obvious that they thought her wonderful.

"What's the report on the ship?" Macbride growled. "How soon can we leave?"

"Perhaps late tomorrow," Benton told him. There was an air of hopefulness in his reply.

"Why, I never," Patricia objected. "You actually sound as though you're in a hurry to have us leave. Actually. I'll bet Lieutenant Malone doesn't feel that way." She turned her limpid blue eyes on that lovesick worthy.

The redhead gulped. "Golly, no. But Steve doesn't mean it that way, Miss Macbride . . ."

She giggled, "Call me Patricia."

He gulped again. "Er . . . Patricia. It's just that it isn't safe for you to stay. Every hour is as dangerous as the last and neither of us will be able to rest until we get you safely away."

Donald Macbride grunted skeptically. "I think this is a farce. You continually talk of danger, but both of you go unarmed. You hint at something terrible and refused to let us look out of the windows. Something strange is going on here. You two are hiding something."

Steve Benton got to his feet, the muscles of his cheeks working. He tossed his napkin to the table. "That is exactly what we are doing, sir. That is why the Space Forces left us here—to hide something. Now, I am afraid it would be better if we refrained from discussing the subject. You must be tired. Lieutenant Malone will show you to your rooms."

"Aw, Steve," the redhead protested, "it might be years before we have another chance to talk to someone."

Benton was curt. "Unfortunately, Mr. Macbride seems unable to refrain from objecting to the strict regulations that must be enforced here. I think it would be preferable if the conversation was ended. We'll finish repairs on the ship tomorrow and have our guests back into space as soon as possible."

"Young man," Macbride rumbled, "You're insufferable. When we arrive home I shall be forced to report you."

Steve Benton laughed bitterly. "You do that, sir. It'll be interesting to see what kind of punishment the Space Forces can figure out for a man who is permanently assigned, without relief, to this two-by-four planet."

Dave Malone grinned at the idea. "Maybe you'll be demoted, Steve."

It hadn't been any easier for Steve Benton to resist Patricia Macbride's charms than it had for Dave Malone. Benton was as normal as the next man; and the next man was pretty normal seeing that he was the red-headed Malone. Ten years without feminine companionship of any sort hadn't been easy to bear, nor did it help matters for him to realize that a similar ten years stretched ahead, and another ten beyond that. Exile! Perpetual exile and nothing else.

He tossed in his bed, knowing that under the same roof, a few score yards away, slept a beautiful, desirable woman. He'd almost forgotten that they were more than characters in the endless number of novels he read to while away the years. Almost . . .

He was unable to sleep and finally threw back the covers, got to his feet and searched for and finally found a cigarette on the small table beside his bed. The window was open and the coolness of the night air touched him. He idly looked out, hoping that the strangers would obey his orders to leave *their* windows closed and shades drawn. Not that there was as much danger at night, but, still, you never knew when a *luvver* might choose to stroll near the base.

A glimpse of white drew his attention. It seemed to be moving. He frowned, not being able to place it and peered out trying to pierce the night's gloom.

Suddenly, he was on his feet and dashing for the door. He banged into several pieces of furniture, not taking the time to switch on a light.

A sleepy-eyed Malone stared bewilderedly at him from the doorway of another bedroom. He mumbled, "What goes on?"

Benton yelled back over his shoulder as he dashed through the front entrance. "She's out there! Patricia's gone outside. You stay here. Watch her old man . . ."

The redhead was instantly awake. "I'll be a *makron*. It's happened. We should've locked them in."

Steve Benton dashed across the field, searching the shadows with his eyes as best he could, as he ran. So far, so good. Not a *luvver* in sight.

He reached her side and grasped her arm roughly. She was dressed in a white, semi-transparent negligee. She should have looked like Cleopatra to him, but she didn't. He had no time nor patience for her femininity.

He shook her. "You fool. What are you doing out here? Get back into the house immediately. What have you seen?" he added anxiously.

She tried to shake off his hand with impatience as he hurried her toward the building but he hustled her along, still darting his eyes into every shadow, nervously, alertly.

"Oh, Lieutenant . . . Steve . . . don't be so rough. It was so stuffy in there. I couldn't sleep. Please, my arm . . . Besides, what is there to see? You were so mysterious, but there's nothing out here except an old landing field with the usual hanger and repair shop."

He grunted. "Maybe you're safe. They don't come out very often at night." He increased their pace, almost dragging her toward the house. "What got into you? Didn't I tell you that under no circumstances . . ."

She giggled. "I was going to keep very quiet and if you caught me I was going to pretend I was sleepwalking . . . Why, look!"

He darted his eyes at her. "Look at what? *What do you see?*" He tried anxiously to make out what she was staring at. She'd been in the dark longer than he; her eyes were better adjusted to the night. He shook her roughly. *"What do you see?"*

She answered impatiently, still trying to free her arm. "Don't be silly. It's nothing. Just an adorable little

animal, a cute little thing about the size of a fox terrier, something like a tiny monkey. Why, look at those big, sad eyes. Steve . . . it's *lovable.*"

He groaned, "A *luvver.*"

He swung her around sharply so that she faced him, and lashed out cruelly with his fist to the point of her jaw. She slumped forward and he caught her up into his arms.

He carried her to the door and kicked on it, swearing under his breath as his bare foot struck the metal.

"Let me in, Dave," he yelled. "There's a *luvver* out here. Be sure the old man doesn't see it, and by all means don't let it in! Use all your will power, Dave. *Even if it wants in,* don't let it in!"

Malone's voice was muffled through the door but the strained quality could be felt. "All right, Steve, I'm opening up. Come in quick."

The door opened wide enough for Benton to slip through with his burden and was slammed immediately after him. The redhead stood with his back to it, sweat on his forehead. "Thank God, I didn't see it! It would have been hell if I had and it felt like coming into the house."

Steve Benton took the girl to a couch and tried to make her comfortable. He ran his hand through his hair quickly, nervously, as though he wanted to tear out a handful. He stared at her desperately.

Donald Macbride came hurrying from his room, shrugging into a night robe. His face was drawn. "What's happened? Why's Patricia here?"

Steve ignored him and snapped at Malone, "She barely got a glimpse of it. Get the lethe drug, Dave. It's her only chance."

The redhead tore from the room and returned in seconds, a hypodermic needle and a small medicine bottle in his hands.

Macbride stared at them. "What's the matter with my daughter? What are you doing? Why is she unconscious . . . or, is she . . ."

Steve Benton was rapidly filling the hypodermic. "She's not dead if that's what you mean. I knocked her out. She saw a *luvver* out there. Our only chance is to try and wipe the memory from her mind." The hypodermic needle filled, he bared her arm and bent over her to make the injection.

Her father reached his side and roughly caught his arm. "Just a minute. I want to know more about this. I don't understand at all. What's in that needle?"

Malone pushed him aside. "Stand back, you old fool. Do you want your daughter ever to leave this place? If you do, shut up and pray. If we'd known she was such a spoilt, headstrong brat, we'd have locked her in her room."

"But . . . but . . ."

Steve Benton rapidly finished making the injection. He threw the hypo needle wearily to the table and went over to the automatic bar to return with three stiff brandies. He handed drinks to the others and motioned them to chairs.

He gulped half of his own drink and waited a long moment before saying anything. Then he looked at the now pale father of the unconscious girl.

"You'll have to know this now, I guess, in spite of all regulations."

I . . . I don't understand."

Steve Benton sighed. "No, of course, you don't. Only a score of men in the whole system do." He paused for another spell, then went on. "The last time this happened was six years ago. Dave was the victim at that time. The circumstances were quite similar; the ship he was on put in for emergency landing. As in your case, I made all efforts to prevent its crew from going outside. The mystery was too much for our red-headed friend and he slipped away and saw a *luvver*. From then on he had to share my exile. Neither of us will ever leave this isolated planet." He ran his hand over his mouth. "I hope the measures we've taken with your daughter will save her from the same destiny."

Macbride sputtered. "Fantastic! Just the sight of this ridiculous animal? What horrible . . ."

Benton finished his drink and accepted the fresh one Dave Malone handed him. The redhead had been standing at the bar, downing one after another.

Steve Benton shook his head. "Have you ever considered, Mr. Macbride, how many different methods animal life uses as a means of defense? Consider, for a moment, the animals you find on earth. One runs fast, the deer for instance; another, the snake, it's poisonous. The skunk repels enemies with its scent; the wart-hog with its repulsive appearance. The bird flies away from danger, the chameleon camouflages itself by changing its color to blend with its surroundings. The great cats are fierce, the elephant is large as a fortress, the bee has its sting, the turtle its armor, the porcupine, its quills.'

The older man looked worriedly at his daughter. "I fail to see what it has to do with Patricia, but if I must listen to this, at least let us make her comfortable."

Dave Malone said, "She's all right. She'll be dead to the world for at least three days."

"Three days!"

"Let me go on," Steve Benton pursued. "Your daughter is the victim of the natural defense of the *luvver*, an animal peculiar to this planet. It's the only life-form known that uses an ability to create affection as its defensive mechanism."

Macbride was indignant. "You mean to tell me that the only thing this fearful animal does is inspire affection?"

"That's right. All it does is inspire affection. *Everything*, not just everybody, loves a *luvver*. Nothing would dream of hurting one. In fact, it has difficulty keeping other animals away. They'll follow a *luvver* in droves, adoringly. Omnivorous, like man, it never had trouble securing all the meat it wants. Its animal victims just come close and lovingly let themselves be killed and eaten. Its ability to create affection is actually stronger than the instinct of self-preservation."

"You mean that Patricia would have let the creature kill her without fighting, or, at least, running?" There was an edge of horror in the man's voice.

"Happily, we aren't faced with that problem. The *luvver* doesn't seem to care for human flesh. Its danger to your daughter is the fact that it inspires *undying* love."

"I can't see that as such a danger, after all, man has loved his cats and dogs for centuries . . ."

"I said *undying love.* Irresistible love, unthinking love. Picture the possibilities. Suppose one was taken to earth and placed in a zoo. Every person who ever saw it would find himself unable to say away from the *luvver.* Millions of persons would pack the zoo trying to be near it. Hundreds, thousands, would scheme, steal, fight, in efforts to try to take it home for their exclusive affection. In short, Macbride, the *luvver* exerts a stronger force than the most vicious narcotic.

"We are going to place your daughter on your ship tomorrow and let you blast off. I warn you, never mention the *luvver* to her. If you are fortunate, we will have been successful in wiping its memory from her mind. When she revives, observe her. If she demands to be brought back here, then bring her back. Nothing can be done. She'd die of melancholy if kept indefinitely from seeing a *luvver.*"

Macbride seemed suddenly old. His face was ashen. His hair, formerly but streaked with gray, now seemed white. He was comprehending slowly.

"But why has the Space Forces left you two here to keep off ships? Why not just kill them? Destroy them utterly.

Dave Malone shuddered at the blasphemy. "You can't kill a *luvver.* You wouldn't let yourself. All we can do is prevent others from seeing them, and keep them from spreading to other planets. Can you see the danger that some ship might land here and unknowingly take several of the things aboard for pets? Wherever they went people would follow like the rats followed the Pied Piper."

Macbride was able to blast off shortly before dusk of the next day. He'd been led to the little spacer blindfolded, as before. Steve Benton carried the drugged girl and deposited her in her bunk.

Afterwards the two exiles stood and watched as the cruiser disappeared into the sky.

"Perhaps we got the drug into her in time," Malone said. "She didn't really see the *luvver* very well or for very long."

Steve looked at his companion wryly. "I thought you were so anxious to have her stay."

His companion shrugged irritably. "I'm not so sure. To tell you the truth, Steve, it got to be a burden having strangers here so long and being away from *them* . . ."

They approached the house again, their eyes brightening.

"There's one of the little darlings now." Steve Benton squatted down on his heels and held out a piece of sugar in his hand. "Here sweetheart, here precious . . ."

A *luvver* detached itself from the shade of the building and stared at them wistfully. They both smiled in adoration.

It strolled over languidly.

The End

On Your Newstands Now-

THE MOST THRILLING SCIENCE FICTION EVER TOLD

SUB-SATELLITE

CHARLES CLOUKEY

How large must a satellite be? The size of a grain of sand? Or of an orange? Or, perhaps, as the murderous Duseau discovers, a satellite can be any size at all, given enough velocity and mass to orbit a given celestial body!

I LOOKED up from my book. My friend and roommate, C. Jerry Clankey, in his big easy-chair across the room, was gazing intently at the ceiling and talking out loud to himself. This was a peculiar and often annoying habit of his, but this time I could not help being interested in what he was saying.

"It behaved precisely according to the laws of celestial mechanics," he was saying, "exactly as a satellite. Perhaps once could call it a sub-satellite. And then there was the matter of the Doctor's will. The diamonds!

"It was marvelous," he continued to the ceiling, "one chance out of thousands. Duseau swore he would have his revenge. I wonder if he was satisfied. And Jacqueline—"

Jerry stopped suddenly as he noticed that I was looking at him curiously. He became embarrassed.

"Pardon me," I said, "but if you don't mind, I'd like to know what in the world you are talking about. I'm not particularly dense, but I entirely fail to see any connection between celestial mechanics, satellites, diamonds, and revenge. And who is Jacqueline? Would you mind—"

He interrupted me, smiling slightly. "I suppose," he said, "that even in this enlightened era of the twenty-first century, there are portions of Tibet where news travels rather slowly. As you, Kornfield, have only returned to New York today, you are perhaps still ignorant of the fact that Dr. D. Francis Javis actually succeeded with his plans for reaching the moon."

"I heard a man in Paris mention it yesterday," I informed him, "but I don't know the details. After our plane was forced down in the Dangla Mountains, and Basehore had accidentally broken the only radio with the expedition, we were cut off from civilization

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for four and a half months. Tell me about the moon trip. What did he find there? And what has that to do with the Doctor's will? And who is Jacqueline?"

"All right," said Jerry, leaning back comfortably in his chair, "I'll tell you. Even the newspapers didn't get it all, though I suppose the reporters thought they did. Listen, and I'll tell you the whole story":

As you know, Kornfield, (said C. Jerry Clankey), I was the chief radio engineer on Javis' staff. I designed the transmitter, and the receiver, too, that he took to the moon, and by means of which he was able to communicate with my installation at Albany. I also supervised the construction of a simplified television outfit, which Javis discarded in the last hour before he left, in order to make room for an additional supply of concentrated food.

But I should start at the beginning. Perhaps you remember that Javis discovered, about ten years ago, how to produce artificial diamonds, of greater hardness, size, brilliance, and beauty than the genuine stone. After he had manufactured almost two billion dollars' worth, he destroyed his invention. Since then, many scientists have tried to rediscover his secret, but without success.

He sold half of the diamonds to secure capital with which to make his moon trip, and deposited the rest in a specially constructed vault here in New York. He also made a will, in which, for some reason of his own, he left his entire fortune to his elder son, Donald, cutting off the younger, Jack, without a cent. Then he started to work on his project of reaching the moon.

I've often wondered why he wanted to reach the moon. One would hardly think that the love of knowledge would be so great that a man would be willing to work ten years, spend a billion dollars, and finally risk his life in an attempt to reach the moon, merely to satisfy that love. But Javis was a queer man. The money meant nothing to him. Neither, apparently, did the risk. He prepared for his journey and he went, regardless of consequences.

You know, of course, the type of vehicle he chose—a projectile-shaped rocket, of the type proposed by Dr. Goddard over a century ago, propelled, once it was out of the earth's atmosphere, by explosive gases. But I won't go into that. You understand the principle. While in the atmosphere, it was flown as an ordinary plane, by propellers.

The unique feature of the Doctor's rocket, however, was the ingenious construction of the wings, which allowed them to be withdrawn into the body of the rocket, after the atmosphere had been left behind.

This feature had been designed by R. Henry Duseau, the French scientist and engineer, who was one of Javis' most able assistants. Just why they quarreled will probably never be known. They were both hot-tempered. So when Javis paid Duseau off, and discharged him, the impulsive Frenchman swore revenge.

It had been generally understood, though it appears that there was no written contract or agreement, that Duseau was to be the one to accompany Javis in his attempt to reach the moon, because Duseau had once been an air mail pilot in France, and

could attend to the navigation of the craft while it was in the atmosphere. The rocket was, in spite of its great size, only designed to carry two passengers, because the rest of the available space had to be utilized to carry food, fuel, the radio equipment I had designed, the Doctor's scientific instruments, and various other necessary objects.

To be discharged after almost nine years of work was a great disappointment to Duseau. He had a natural craving for adventure, and also, I believe, for fame. He wanted to achieve great celebrity by his part in the moon trip. He was exceedingly temperamental, and perhaps this characteristic, together with his persuasion that he had been treated unfairly by Javis, was responsible for the attitude of jealous enmity he held for the Doctor after his discharge. Just how far he was destined to carry his bitter hate, the world was soon to learn.

To take Duseau's place, Javis hired Richard C. Brown, the famous stunt-flier and dare-devil, paying him in advance a flat sum of one million dollars. Men have risked their lives for less.

Dick Brown was a curious character. He was a happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care kid, game as they make 'em, reckless and foolhardy, only about twenty years old, and had the reputation of bearing a charmed life.

Brown made several test flights in the rocket. He was able to see on all sides by means of an ingenious arrangement of periscopes. As an airplane, the great craft functioned perfectly, having a maximum speed of about 350 miles per hour, and a ceiling of approximately 41,000 feet. How it would behave as a rocket remained to be seen.

After the trouble with Duseau, came the trouble with Donald, the Doctor's oldest son. I had always considered him more or less of a good-for-nothing vagabond. I don't know exactly what happened, but it seems that in an insane moment of drunken anger, he had drawn a revolver and fired, point-blank, at his father. Because he was drunk, he missed completely. The Doctor tried to hush up the affair, but in some way, news of the attempted parricide leaked out, and caused a lot of unpleasant publicity.

Javis told me, in a moment of confidence, that he intended to revise his will before he left, to give his entire fortune, including the diamonds, to his other son, Jack, who was a well-known banker and business man, in spite of his youth. Javis also intended to completely disinherit Donald, but he never changed the will. He went off to the moon without attending to the matter. He didn't have time, I suppose.

He and Brown left for the moon just ten days after his last experimental rock had burst upon the moon, proving the existence of some, though very little, atmosphere on our satellite. This small rocket he sent to the moon contained a chemical compound which could not explode without oxygen. As it was observed by many astronomers to explode upon hitting the moon, it was obvious that our satellite possessed an atmosphere, however rare.

Javis had another purpose also in sending out these small rockets. By observing them, he could form an idea of the way the large one would act in

space. When he had obtained all the data he desired, he made his preparations to depart.

For a week his whole establishment was in an uproar. The food, fuel, radio, and scientific instruments were put aboard, while Brown tuned up his motors to perfection. When I saw Javis dismantling and packing a lightweight Marvite machine gun, I ventured to make an inquiry.

"Surely," I said, "you don't expect to have any use for that on the moon, do you?"

"I hope not," Javis replied, "but we know that there is air upon the moon, so it is highly probably that there is some form of life there. I'm taking this gun because it is the most powerful weapon in the world for its size, and we might meet some monsters." He smiled, and finished packing the shining, deadly little weapon. Yet it seemed to me that there was no necessity for such a powerful gun. But he was taking no chances. If there were monsters on the moon, he would be prepared.

The next day they left. I will never forget it. As dozens of cameras and televisors clicked and buzzed on every side, Javis and Brown entered the rocket. Brown was smiling. It was an adventure to him. If he realized what slim chances he had of ever returning to the earth again, he gave no indication of the fact. But the face of Javis was grave. It was more than a mere adventure to him. This trip meant the realization of his life's ambition.

The field was cleared. The massive air-tight door was closed. Suddenly the three enormous propellers burst into action. With the incomparable skill of the born airman, Brown took off. Quickly he took the great plane as high as the motors would carry it. To the observers on the ground, it was only a speck in the cloudless sky.

Then those who were watching it with binoculars saw a brilliant green flash appear at the tail of the rocket. It darted suddenly upward. It was necessary to develop a speed greater than seven miles a second in order to leave the earth, and it was apparent that Javis was gradually attaining this tremendous velocity.

Through the rarefied upper strata of the atmosphere shot the great rocket. It left the earth.

Jerry was silent for awhile. I waited as patiently as I could for him to resume his narrative. But when his silence grew prolonged, I ventured to speak.

"I think," I said, "that I can guess now what you meant by a sub-satellite. I gather that the rocket, obeying the laws of celestial mechanics was captured by the attraction of the moon, revolving around it as a satellite, or sub-satellite, rather."

"Kornfield," said Jerry, "never jump at conclusions. I noticed that you were reading that remarkable story by Verne, 'A Trip to the Moon.' When you stop to consider that it was written almost two centuries ago, the amount of scientific prophecy and foresight in it is amazing. It's interesting to note how famous that story has become during the short time that has elapsed since Javis' great accomplishment. Before his tragic trip, the story was known to only a few learned men who had made a study of nineteenth

century literature. But now it is famous, as an example of dreams coming true, of imagination becoming reality. Yesterday's impossibilities are today's facts. And tomorrow—what? But I am digressing.

"In that story, the author's imaginary projectile is deflected from its course by the moon's attraction. But this didn't happen to Javis. He could steer his rocket, you remember, by exploding his gases at any one of fifty different points on its exterior. He landed all right. When they were within a couple of thousand of miles of the moon, he checked their speed by exploding a charge at the end of the rocket nearest the moon. As it began to fall toward the surface of our satellige, he checked it again in the same manner.

"He had to repeat this process several times. Finally the rocket was only a few hundred feet above the broad summit of a lunar peak. So Javis let it fall. Owing to the elaborate shock-absorbing system, and the inferior force of lunar gravity, no damage was done.

"After working nine years, and spending almost a billion dollars, Javis had succeeded in reaching the moon. He landed on the summit of an exceedingly tall mountain near the Mare Tranquilitatis."

"But, then," I protested, "to what were you referring when you spoke about a sub-satellite? And you haven't told me yet who Jacqueline is."

"Be patient, Bob, be patient," he admonished, "I have not yet concluded my narrative." He smiled quizzically. "All in good time, my lad," he said. "control your impatience and all your questions will be answered." Then he plunged once more into his story:

I have, continued C. Jerry Clankey, gone ahead of my story. I've told you of the landing on the moon. But several very important events occurred before the rocket reached its destination.

The greatest danger, perhaps, that confronted the extra-terrestrial pioneers was the danger from meteors. These meteors are by no means scarce. There are uncounted millions in this solar system alone. Nor are they all as small as you might assume. Many weigh dozens, and some weight hundreds of tons. Nor are they slow. Most of them are hurtling many miles through space every second. Nor are they visible, until they enter the earth's great protecting blanket of atmosphere, where they become ignited by friction, and are usually entirely consumed before they reach the ground.

So you can see that to devise an apparatus that would enable Javis to avoid these unseen obstacles was no easy task, though, of course, Javis made his attempt in February, in which month the earth meets comparatively few meteors.

Gibson and I took two years to complete the marvelous apparatus. This work was mostly detail, as the principle is not new. Radio waves, like light waves, and sound waves, reflect upon striking various objects. When any meteor large enough to be dangerous came within fifty thousand miles of the rocket, it reflected the radio signal sent out by the special transmitter at five second intervals. The time which elapsed between the sending and the receiving of the reflected signal was measured by a new German instrument of extreme accuracy.

Because of the remarkable advances that have been made in the last fifty years in the manufacture of automatic calculating machines, the distance of the meteor could be ascertained, and its course atuomatically plotted on the celestial chart which Javis had prepared. As the course of the rocket was also electrically plotted on this chart, Javis could determine several minutes in advance if there were any danger of a collision. Then he had merely to press the button which exploded his gases at the right point on the rocket to sent it off in a new direction, avoiding the meteor.

Of course, Kornfield, you understand that this description I have just given you of the apparatus which enabled Javis to avoid large meteors, is necessarily incomplete, inadequate, and faulty, and perhaps it was stated rather poorly. You cannot describe in two minutes a wonderful piece of mechanism which took two years to construct. But perhaps you can form some idea of the unbelievable complexity of the instrument from what I have told you. It performed its functions perfectly.

The huge rocket had left the earth. Though Javis was strapped in his seat, controlling the gigantic vehicle's course with light touches of his finger on the numerous electric push-buttons which surrounded him, Brown had unstrapped himself, and was roaming around the rocket's interior, enjoying the almost complete absence of gravity. Being thirsty, he obtained a drink of water from the watertank, but he had to suck it through a straw, as without gravity, liquids would not flow. When the two travelers became tired, they took their injections of stimulant, as they did not intend to lose any time by sleeping.

Seven hours after leaving the earth, Brown reported over the radio that all was well. Ten minutes later he found Duseau.

The dam' fool had somehow managed to get aboard the rocket before the take-off. Perhaps he did it by bribing one of the guards. He had concealed himself between the two tanks which contained the motor fuel intended for use when the rocket should return to the earth's atmosphere.

He must have been insane. I can account for his actions in no other way. He had become a monomaniac, and his one thought was to do all possible injury to D. Francis Javis. And he did not intend to stop at murder. When discovered, he drew an automatic and fired.

The bullets were poisoned. If Brown or Javis had merely been scratched by one of them, the wound would have been fatal. But Duseau missed although one bullet went through Brown's coatsleeve. He escaped death by less than two inches. The same bullet demolished the radio receiver. Then, as the gun jammed for lack of proper oiling, Brown leaped upon the cursing stowaway, knocking him over. As there was practically no gravity, Duseau didn't exactly fall, but Brown's blow to the jaw caused his head to strike the protruding valve of an oxygen tank with sufficient force to render him completely unconscious for thirty-five minutes. Brown tied his hands and feet with a piece of rope that had been left aboard the rocket when it was being loaded. When Duseau regained consciousness, he

started such a tirade of abuse that Brown gagged him also.

Then Brown reported the whole affair over the radio, adding that it was useless for us to try to reply, as Duseau's bullet had rendered their receiver totally useless.

On the earth, Gibson and I recorded with telegraphones every word received from the moon party. My station at Albany was packed with reporters from newspapers and radio news services, eager for the latest details. The whole world gasped when it heard of Duseau's unsuccessful plan to capture the moon rocket and kill the two men whom he hated. Every nation waited impatiently for more news.

Nothing else of importance, except three narrow escapes from meteors, took place until they reached the moon. I have already told you of their extraordinary landing upon the summit of a lunar peak. After they landed, they ate a hurried meal, and then ventured out upon our satellite's untrodden surface.

I have here, Kornfield, a large composite photographic chart of the moon. Here you se the Mare Tranquilitatis, or "Sea of Tranquillity." What a name for such a scene of violence! You see the jagged mountains, the enormous craters! Dead *volcanoes!* But are they volcanoes? No one knows positively. If they are, how terrible must have been the eruptions, in the days when the moon was young! Consider the size of those stupendous craters. Many exceed fifty miles in diameter—Theophilus is sixty-four miles! And the largest known terrestrial crater, which is Aso San, in Japan, is less than seven miles in diameter. But I am digressing again.

This peak that I have marked with red ink is the one upon which they landed. You observe that it is not crateriform in shape. It is a mountain, not a volcano. Its summit is remarkably level, and is roughly twelve hundred feet square. On this miniature plateau the moon rocket finally landed and came to rest. The mountain is almost ten miles high.

When Javis and Brown emerged from the rocket, several facts were brought to their attention. One was the inferior gravity. They could leap thirty feet with the greatest ease. Another was the contrast between sunlight and shadow. The rare lunar atmosphere does not diffuse the light to any appreciable degree. It is, of course, entirely too rare to support human life. Javis and Brown were equipped with oxygen masks.

They found no form of life. The moon is dead. Its day of splendor is past. What secrets it still holds, no man can guess. The two explorers were only able to investigate an extremely small portion of the moon's surface, because of their limited food supply, and also because they landed about forty-eight hours after the lunar dawn, and intended to stay for the equivalent of ten earth-days, leaving a couple of days before the lunar sunset. You cannot carry on a very extensive exploration in ten days.

During the seventy-two hours after their landing, they thoroughly explored the peculiar truncated peak upon which they landed. They took many photos, and also collected several samples of the rocks for later analysis. Of course, men found out many

years ago, by means of polarization photometers and various other instruments, that the surface rocks of the moon are mostly pumice and other stone high in silica. But Javis intended to bring his samples back to the earth to find out exactly what they contained. Perhaps he had hopes of rare minerals. I do not know.

They returned to the rocket frequently and Brown reported their discoveries over the radio.

The kept Duseau bound. When they ate, they fed him. He remained sullen, silent, brooding over his misfortune, and planning revenge. The longer he was kept bound, the greater grew his maniacal unreasoning hate.

When Javis was satisfied with his investigation of the mountain upon which they had landed, which he had whimsically named "Mount Olympus," he decided to undertake a similar exploration of the nearest neighboring peak, which was west of "Mount Olympus" and about the same height as it. I think Javis named this other mountain "Mount Parnassus," but I am not sure.

Javis and Brown took another shot of stimulant apiece, and set out. Brown carried the concentrated food and the portable radio sending equipment which I had designed, while the Doctor burdened himself with a spare oxygen apparatus for each of them, a very limited water supply, and a few of his scientific instruments, including a couple of recording thermometers.

Although they intended to be away from the rocket at least seventy-two hours, they left Duseau bound, without food. They could not trust him loose. Javis did not intend to give up his chance to explore "Mount Parnassus" out of consideration for the man who had tried to murder him. Brown didn't want to be left out of the adventure either. So they left Duseau bound. He would have to get along without food.

The two explorers reached their destination in a remarkably short time. Even though they were burdened with large packs, they could jump many feet with the utmost ease. They descended "Mount Olympus" by leaps and bounds, and ascended "Mount Parnassus." Even though they were greatly fatigues after many hours of steady jumping, they kept on. They reached the summit, and a bullet passed between them.

How Duseau escaped from his bonds is not known. Perhaps in a moment of desperation, he had summoned enough strength to burst them. Or perhpas he wore them through by steady rubbing against some sharp edge.

He escaped, and set up the machine gun. When his two enemies reached the summit of the neighboring peak, he fired, using the telescopic sights. Javis and Brown took refuse in a large crevice between two enormous boulders, set up the radio, and reported the matter to the earth. A quarter of a million miles away, my sensitive detectors picked up the signals. Soon the whole world knew of Duseau's triumph.

I've often wondered why he went to so much trouble in order to try to kill Javis and Brown. He was familiar with the operation of the rocket. He could have taken it and departed, leaving them stranded without a possibility of rescue, and his

purpose would have been accomplished. Perhaps the idea never occurred to him. Or perhpas it did not agree with his ideas of a fitting revenge. I suppose he was entirely demented. No one can account for the actions of an insane person. The fact remains that instead of taking his opportunity to escape with the rocket, leaving the others to starve, or to freeze to death in the cold of the lunar night, he set up the Marvite gun with the purpose of killing them first, and then returning to the earth with the rocket.

Javis and Brown soon discovered that they could not emerge from their refuge without exposing themselves to Duseau's vision. Whenever either of them even showed his head. Duseau fired. Usually his shots came close. You will remember that the Marvite gun was equipped with very accurate telescopic sights.

. I wonder if a queerer situation was ever conceived by the most scatterbrained writer of imaginative fiction. A madman on a mountain of the moon, with an ultra-modern machine gun, attempting to kill two men whom he considered his enemies, who had taken refuge in a crevice between two boulders on the summit of another lunar mountain, from which crevice they dared not emerge.

Yes, it was a curious situation. It was tragic, too. What would Javis have said, had he known, when he performed what he considered the trivial action of discharging an insubordinate assistant, that it would lead to the dire straits in which he now found himself?

Emerging from the station at Albany one day, for the purpose of snatching a bite or two of lunch, I was accosted by a young girl of about eighteen, I should say, who seemed greatly troubled about something, and expressed a desire to speak with me privately. I invited her to lunch with me, and this, briefly, is what she told me.

She was engaged to be married to Jack Javis the following June. But her fiance had recently suffered very severe financial losses, perhaps because he had less experience in Wall Street than the men who were against him. Jack Javis had foolishly borrowed right and left in a vain attempt to avoid the impending crash, and he had been wiped out. Now he was penniless, and about three million dollars in debt. His creditors were pressing him. His assets were nil.

The girl had come to me to ask if there were any possible way I could get in touch with Dr. Javis, and ask him to lend his son enough money to pay off his debts. She also mentioned the will, saying that the huge fortune in diamonds should really have been left to Jack, not to the worthless Donald, and asking me, if I should succeed in communicating with the Doctor, to suggest that he change the will.

It was with the utmost regret that I was forced to explain to the almost hysterical girl that there was nothing that I could do. The moon explorers had no receiver. There was no possible way for me to get word to them. When I had told her this, the girl asked me to permit her to be at the receiver with me. Of course I granted the request, although it was against the regular rules.

I suppose you can guess now, Korn-

field, who Jacqueline is. The fact that she had been crying, did not detract from her loveliness. I caught myself envying Jack Javis as we walked the short distance back to the station. Not always will a rich man's sweetheart remain loyal to him after he has lost all his money and three million dollars more.

When we reached the station, Gibson met us at the door. The peculiar expression I saw upon his long, lean, intellectual countenance made me start.

"It's the beginning of the end, Clankey," he said. "Javis has gone crazy, too.

I ran to the receiving room. From the instrument I heard distinctly Javis' voice, a quarter of a million miles away. What he was saying confirmed Gibson's statement. He was raving incoherently, cursing Duseau, cursing himself for a fool for having brought the machine gun, begging that if Duseau should return to the earth he would be punished for murder, and much more along the same line. It was terrible.

In one corner of the room the silent, efficient, never ceasing telegraphone recorded every word permanently, electromagnetically.

To make a long story somewhat shorter, let me say that Javis continued to rave like a maniac for many hours. Then suddenly his brain cleared.

"We have food for only a day more," said his voice, emerging from the most sensitive radio receiver in the world, "and our oxygen apparatus will not function for more than thirty-six hours more. I am saying good-bye to the world.

"Duseau has beaten me. If the fates will have it thus, so it will be.

"It is my wish that my entire personal fortune, including the diamonds in the vault at 198th Street and Fifth Avenue, New York, be left to my younger son, Jack, as he has always—"

The receiver fell silent. So ended the last message ever received by the great station at Albany.

For several minutes the utmost silence reigned in the receiving room. Finally Jacqueline—perhaps I should refer to her as Miss Bowers—who was with me at the receiver at that time, broke the stillness.

"He left them to Jack," she said very slowly, "but can we prove it? How?"

"We can," I said. "Under the new inheritance laws of the State of New York, we have merely to prove that Javis expressed a desire to change his will so that Jack would be his heir. We have his exact words rerecorded on that telegraphone in the corner. In case there is the slightest doubt upon the part of the authorities that Javis was the man who said those words, I will have one of my associates, Dr. Robert Haines, who happens to be the greatest living expert on phonophotographical processes, take a photograph of the vibrations of Javis' voice as he said those words. This photo can then be compared with photos taken of the vibrations of other parts of our telegraphone record which are known to have been uttered by Dr. Javis, and the identity of the speaker of those words which give the second greatest fortune in the world to your sweetheart can be established beyond the possibility of a doubt. Fingerprints can be forged, but the vibrations of the voice cannot be forged,

even though the voice may be disguised. No two human beings have exactly the same voice."

After I had explained this, Jacqueline left me to carry the news to her fiance. I sat in silence a long time, wondering what had interrupted Javis' last message, wondering how the two explorers must feel, waiting for death to overtake them on their mountain. It must be a terrible sensation, Kornfield, to wait for death, without hope, without a chance, knowing that your enemy has triumphed. I sat in silence a long time, and then went home for some much-needed sleep, leaving Gibson at the station, in the vain hope that some further message might be received.

Two days later, Professor John P. Hauser, of Yerkes Observatory, reported that the rocket had left the moon. The newspapers and broadcast stations of every nation informed the people of the world that Duseau was returning. Every minute of every day either Gibson or I or one of our capable assistants was at the receiver, but the moon rocket was silent, as we expected.

Then some one pointed out that if Duseau should succeed in returning to the earth, he could not be punished. Neither the United States nor any other nation could lawfully punish Duseau for a murder committed on the moon. If he returned, he could go free, said the most eminent legal authorities.

Three days after Professor Hauser's announcement, the telegraphonic records I had made were stolen, doubtless by some crook in the employ of Donald Javis. I should havs foreseen that he would not give up the enormous fortune without a fight. I should have put the record in the safest safe-deposit vault in Albany, but I left it in the unprotected radio-room, and it was stolen.

Of course I hired the best detectives I could get, and promised them an enormous reward if they could recover the little spool of wire that meant so much to Jack Javis, but I was secretly sure that Donald had totally destroyed it, so that there would be no chance of its recovery. Without it there was nothing but the unsupported word of Jacqueline and myself to prove that Javis had desired to change the will. This would be quite decidedly not sufficient.

I have never seen anybody as depressed as Jack Javis was in the nerve-racking, disappointing days that followed. The court of New York City, after one of the shortest cases in its history, awarded the fortune to Donald. Jack's creditors began stripping him of every bit of personal property. Though he said nothing, I knew that he secretly blamed me for his misfortune. I offered him my entire fortune, a matter of about a quarter of a million dollars, but he refused it. It would only have been a drop in the bucket, anyhow.

Then the rocket came down at Chicago Field. As it entered the atmosphere, something seemed to go wrong. It seemed to hesitate, to wobble. It was evident that it was not under control. Then it fell.

It fell, three hundred thousand feet. Those who were watching saw it become red-hot as it entered the denser layers of the atmosphere. They heard the terrible hissing scream it made, as it plunged, ever faster and faster, to

the waiting earth. They heard the horrific, cataclysmic swan song of the super-airship, diving with ever-increasing speed to its doom. For it fell, three hundred thousand feet. It crashed.

The terrible concussion was recorded by every seismograph in the world. It is truly remarkable that the rocket fell in the only open space in the densely populated region around Chicago, the Chicago Flying Field. Had it fallen anywhere else in the vicinity, it would have been the cause of many deaths, and incalculable damage to property.

The fire department arrived quickly, and drenched the red-hot, flaming wreckage with floods of water. Then the police began to search for Duseau's body. As they were giving up the search as hopeless, somebody looked up.

High above was a parachute, drifting with the breeze. It supported a limp, unconscious figure, clad in an exceedingly thick flying suit. It came to earth. Someone tore the leather helmet from the tired, haggard face. A thrill of the most intense amazement spread through the crowd.

The man was D. Francis Javis.

Gibson, sitting in his apartment in New York, manipulated a dial. His face assumed a satisfied expression as he tuned in Station WEBQD, the New York station of a world-wide chain of broadcasters that had a television news-service as a daily feature. Adjusting another dial, he gazed at the scene which appeared on the screen of his receiver.

It was Chicago Field. He heard the excited news-announcer's voice telling of Javis' return. He saw the unconscious form gently placed in an ambulance and rushed to the nearest hospital.

Then he called me on the 'phone. The two of us took off in my plane less than ten minutes later. We reached Chicago in a few hours, landed on the Illinois Hotel landing platform, left the plane with the mechanics, dropped two hundred stories in the express elevator, and were soon at Javis' bedside. He had just regained consciousness, and he told us what had happened.

In the hour of his triumph, Duseau had been killed. Consider the tremendous power of the Marvite gun. Long ago men calculated that a bullet shot from a gun with a muzzle velocity of 6,500 feet a second would, if there were no obstacles in its path, completely encircle the moon! And that is what happened! One of the bullets Duseau shot from the summit of "Mount Olympus" traveled all the way around the moon, and hit him in the back! And that, Kornfield, is what I was thinking about when I spoke of a sub-satellite.

Perhaps you may consider it a rather silly comparison, but I can't help thinking of that tiny projectile as a satellite, faithful to the laws of celestial mechanics, following unerringly its orbit around the moon, and returning to its starting point. I wonder how many other bullets are still circling the moon now!

Brown, exposing his head, saw Duseau fall. He and Javis were so excited by this occurrence that they returned to the rocket without the radio! They reached it less than thirty minutes before their oxygen mask apparatus ceased to function. They had used their reserve supply of compressed air com-

pletely during their return journey.

"And that," concluded C. Jerry Clankey, "is about all there is to the story. Because a maniac on the moon was so unfortunate as to stand in the orbit of a minute sub-satellite which he himself had launched, Jack Javis was able to pay off his debt. The Doctor lent him the necessary cash, and has just made a new will. So everything is going to be all right."

"Pardon me, Kornfield, but I didn't quite hear that question. What happened to Brown? Oh, yes, I told you that the lucky fool has a charmed life. He was unable to start the motors when the rocket was entering the atmosphere. Duseau had apparently done something to render them useless. When the rocket fell, Brown and Javis jumped. The wind separated the two men.

"Brown landed almost a hundred miles from Chicago. His chute ripped slightly as he fell, and let him down too rapidly. But he landed in an apple tree, and broke thirteen bones.

"A couple of modern surgeons patched him up, and in less than a month the incurable dare-devil was doing outside loops at six hundred miles an hour in his special monoplane, and making a fortune by recommending and endorsing various makes of spark plugs, motor fuel, cigarettes, and so on.

"By the way, I almost forgot that today is the fifteenth of June. It's too bad, Kornfield, that you're scheduled to speak to the Explorers' Club this evening about your discoveries in Tibet. If you weren't I'd take you to Albany with me to attend the wedding of Jacqueline Bowers and Jack Javis. I must leave at once. I almost forgot that today is the fifteenth of June."

I accompanied C. Jerry Clankey to the roof. He entered his waiting plane. The mechanic touched a button. The powerful catapult shot the streamlined flyer into the air. Jerry zoomed gracefully, and the little red biplane soon disappeared in the northern sky.

The End

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In memory of the late Hugo Gernsback who founded AMAZING STORIES in 1926, we present this, the last "article" he penned for the magazine. In it "Mr. Science Fiction" takes a long term look at the field he fathered.

SCIENCE FICTION THAT ENDURES

HUGO GERNSBACK

AS we look back over the vista of modern science fiction, we are struck by the fact that the outstanding stories in the field—the ones that endure—are those that almost invariably have as their wonder ingredient true or prophetic science.

It is these stories that arouse our imagination and make a lasting impression on us which succeeding years do not seem to obliterate.

Let us take only two authors, Jules Verne (1828-1905) and H. G. Wells (1866-1946), as an example. Both authors had a considerable output of true *science* fiction, with the accent on science. In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, top billing is given to only these Verne stories: *Voyage to the Center of the Earth* (1864); *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865); *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1869); *The English at the North Pole* (1870); *Around the World in 80 Days* (1872). All of these highly imaginative tales concern themselves with science, and, as the *Britannica* says: "The novels of Jules Verne are dreams come true, dreams of submarines, airplanes, television; they look forward, not backward. Therefore they are still the books of youth."

Wells' best and most enduring stories, too, were comparatively few of a large list. To quote the *Britannica* once more: "He was to clothe scientific speculation in

the form of fiction." Here are some of Wells' outstanding science fiction efforts, both novels and short stories: *The Time Machine* (1895); *The Stolen Bacillus* (1896); *The Invisible Man* (1897); *The War of the Worlds* (1898); *The Sleeper Awakes* (1899); *Tales of Space and Time* (1899); *The First Men in the Moon* (1901).

Both Verne and Wells wrote a large variety of other stories, yet in my opinion, and that of many authorities it is the science fiction content that makes them enduring and historic—deservedly so.

Both of these illustrious authors had succumbed to the phenomenon of science fiction fatigue—the creative science distillate of the mind had been exhausted. New prophetic visions could no longer be generated.

Science fiction exhaustion is well known to every author of the genre; some succumb to it early, others late in their careers. It is a phenomenon only too well understood by all editors and publishers, who must cope with it. Nor is it any wonder that the science fiction output of nearly all authors who have ever tried it is so limited. Only those who have attempted it can know how difficult and exhausting the subject can become.

Verne and Wells continued writing until advanced ages, after they had written themselves out in science fiction themes. They then went into many other avenues of literature. To mention only one: Wells' famous *The Outline of History* (1920).

The true science fiction author must have a high order of inventiveness; he must have constant inspiration, intuitive and prophetic insight of the future; and, above all, he must know his science. No wonder that there are only a handful of first-rate science fiction authors.

When I brought out AMAZING STORIES monthly in 1926, I had accumulated considerable experience in science fiction. I had been publishing what I called "Scientifiction" in my various earlier magazines off and on, but not in a periodical entirely devoted to it.

In 1911 for my pioneer magazine MODERN ELECTRICS, I wrote a serial, *Ralph 124C 41+*. Then came *The Scientific Adventures of Mr. Fosdick*, by Jacque Morgan, who lasted for five stories. Later, in the ELECTRICAL EXPERIMENTER magazine, I wrote *Baron Münchhausen's New Scientific Adventures*, which went through 13 installments. Very good authors in the same magazine were George Frederic Stratton, Charles M. Adams, Charles S. Wolfe, all of whom wrote occasional stories.

Next to arrive was the celebrated Clement Fezandié, a most talented French-American who invented the famous humorous science fiction stories under the all-encompassing title of *Dr. Hackensaw's Secrets,* each with a fresh scientific concept. The first one, in the ELECTRICAL EXPERIMETER for July, 1920, was entitled *My Message to Mars.* This titan of science fiction ended his output with story #43—a four-part serial which he called *A Journey to the Center of the Earth,* in my former magazine, SCIENCE AND INVENTION, September, 1925, issue. Fezandié avowedly was an idea genius. In the color-powder-pigment business, he wrote for fun *only* and religiously sent back all checks in payment of his stories! He also wrote two more stories for AMAZING STORIES in 1926. I doubt if any science fiction author today can match his voluminous output for pure science fiction stories and unusual ideas.

There was also a nine-part serial, *Tarrano the Conqueror,* by Ray Cummings, in the same magazine, as was *The Metal Emperor* by A. Merritt, which ran from 1927 to 1928 through eleven installments.

Finally, we printed the *Ark of the Covenant,* by Victor MacClure, a serial published in 15 parts in PRACTICAL ELECTRICS from Nov. 1924, to Jan. 1926.

From the short history above it will be seen that the concept of AMAZING STORIES in 1926 was not a haphazard undertaking. Its groundwork had been well prepared for 15 years! Few modern magazines that have endured were rehearsed so well and so long!

What is the future of science fiction in this country? For one who has been closely allied with it for 50 years, I would venture the opinion that, like the stock market, it has its ups and downs, its peaks and its valleys—yet, it, too, for the long pull, advances steadily over the years.

Because of the present unusual interest in science by our young generation, it would seem certain that there will be far more science fiction authors in the future than there ever were in the past. Hence there should be more and better stories, too.

I was much encouraged last October when, invited to speak on science fiction at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I noted the profound interest of the students in the subject. My talk lasted only 30 minutes, but the question and answer period took nearly 2 hours!

But what impressed me most was that a university of the calibre of M I T took science fiction so seriously. If now all other

(Continued on page 144)

(Continued from page 87)
down the road toward town.

"Trying to kill you," Piaget muttered. He stared out at the landscape rushing past them.

Dasein drove in silence . . . thinking, thinking, thinking. The instant he headed toward Jenny, the old fantasies gripped him. Jenny and her valley! The place had enveloped him in its aura—crazy, crazy, crazy! But the pattern was emerging. It was going together with its own Santaroga kind of logic.

"So not everyone can take your . . . power medicine?" Dasein asked. "What happens to the ones who fail?"

"We take care of our own," Piaget growled. "That's why I keep hoping you'll stay."

"Jenny's a trained psychologist. Why don't you use her?"

"She does her tour of duty."

"I'm going to ask Jenny to leave with me," Dasein said. "You know that, don't you?"

Piaget sniffed.

"She can break away from your . . Jaspers," Dasein said. "Men go into the service from here. They must . . ."

"They always come home when it's over," Piaget said. "That's in your notes. Don't you realize how unhappy they are out there?" He turned toward Dasein. "Is that the choice you'd offer Jenny?"

"They can't be all that unhappy about leaving," Dasein said. "Otherwise you clever people would've found another solution."

"Hmmph!" Piaget snorted. "You didn't even do your homework for the people who hired you." He sighed. "I'll tell you, Gilbert. The draft rejects mos of our young men—severe allergy reaction to a diet which doesn't include periodic administration of Jaspers. They can only get that here. The approximately six percent of our young people who go out do so as a duty to the valley. We don't want to call down the federal wrath on us. We have a political accommodation with the state, but we're not large enought to apply the same technique nationally."

They've already decided about me, Dasein thought. *They don't care what they tell me.*

The realization brought a tight sensation of fear in the pit of his stomach.

He rounded a corner and came parallel with the river. Ahead stood the clump of willows and the long, down-sweeping curve to the bridge. Dasein recalled his projection of evil onto the river, stepped on the throttle to get this place behind him. The truck entered the curve. The road was banked nicely. The bridge came into view. There was a yellow truck parked off the road at the far side, men standing behind it drinking out of metal cups.

"Look out!" Piaget shouted.

In that instant, Dasein saw the

reason for the truck—a gaping hole in the center of the bridge where the planks had been removed. That was a county work crew, and they'd opened at least a ten-foot hole in the bridge.

The truck sped some forty feet during the moment it took Dasein to realize his peril.

Now, he could see a two-by-four stretched across each end of the bridge, yellow warning flags tied at their centers.

Dasein gripped the steering wheel. His mind shifted into a speed of computation he had never experienced. The effect was to slow the external passage of time. The truck seemed to come almost to a stop while he reviewed the possibilities—

Hit the brakes?

No. Brakes and tires were old. At this speed, the truck would skid onto the bridge and into the hole.

Swerve off the road?

No. The river waited on both sides—a deep cut in the earth to swallow them.

Aim for a bridge abutment to stop the truck?

Not at this speed and without seat belts.

Hit the throttle to increase speed?

That was a possibility. There was the temporary barrier to break through, but that was only a two-by-four. The bridge rose in a slight arc up and over the river. The hole had been opened in the center. Given enough speed, the truck could leap across the hole.

Dasein jammed the throttle to the floorboards. The old truck leaped ahead. There came a sharp cracking sound as they smashed through the barrier. Planks clattered beneath the wheels. There came a breathless instant of flying, a spring-crushing lurch as they landed across the hole, the "crack" of the far barrier.

He hit the brakes, came to a screeching stop opposite the workmen. Time resumed its normal pace as Dasein stared out at the crew—five men, faces pale, mouths agape.

"For the love of heaven!" Piaget gasped. "Do you always take chances like that?"

"Was there any other way to get us out of that mess?" Dasein asked. He lifted his right hand, stared at it. The hand was trembling.

Piaget reflected a moment, then: "You took what was probably the only way out . . . but if you hadn't been driving so damn' fast on a blind . . ."

"I will make you a bet," Dasein said. "I'll bet the work on that bridge wasn't necessary, that it was either a mistake or some sort of make-work."

Dasein reached for his door handle, had to grope twice to get it in his hand, then found it took a conscious surge of effort to open the door. He stepped out, found his knees rubbery. He stood a moment, took several deep

breaths, then moved around to the front of the truck.

Both headlights were smashed and there was a deep dent stretching across both fenders and the grill.

Dasein turned his attention to the workmen. One, a stocky dark-haired man in a plaid shirt and dungarees, stood a step ahead of the others. Dasein focused on the man, said: "Why wasn't there a warning sign back there around the corner?"

"Good god, man!" the fellow said. His face reddened. "Nobody comes down that road this time of day."

Dasein walked down the road toward a pile of planks, dirt and oil on them testifying that they'd been taken from the bridge. They looked to be three-by-twelve redwood. He lifted the end of one, turned it over—no cracks or checks. It gave off the sharp sound of an unbroken board when he dropped it back to the pile.

He turned to see the workman he'd addressed approaching. Piaget was several paces behind the man.

"When did you get the order to do this work?" Dasein asked.

"Huh?" The man stopped, stared at Dasein with a puzzled frown.

"When did you get orders to repair this bridge?" Dasein asked.

"Well . . . we decided to come up here about an hour ago. What the hell difference does it make? You've smashed the . . ."

"You decided?" Dasein asked. "Aren't you assigned to jobs?"

"I'm the road crew foreman in this valley, mister. I decide, not that it's any of your business."

Piaget came to a stop beside the man, said: "Dr. Dasein, this is Josh Marden, Captain Marden's nephew."

"Nepotism begins at home, I see," Dasein said, his tone elaborately polite. "Well, Mr. Marden, or may I call you Josh?"

"Now, you look here, Dr. Das . . ."

"Josh, then," Dasein said, still in that tone of calm politeness. "I'm very curious, Josh. These appear to be perfectly sound planks. Why'd you decide to replace them?"

"What the hell diff . . ."

"Tell him, Josh," Piaget said. "I confess to a certain curiosity of my own."

Marden looked at Piaget, back to Dasein. "Well . . . we inspected the bridge . . . We make regular inspections. We just decided to do a little preventative maintenance, put in new planks here and use the old ones on a bridge that doesn't get as much traffic. There's nothing unusual about . . ."

"Is there any *urgent* road work in this valley?" Dasein asked. "Is there some job you put off to come to this . . ."

"Now, look here, Mister!" Marden took a step toward Dasein.

"You've no call to . . ."

"What about the Old Mill Road?" Piaget asked. "Are those pot holes still on the curve by the ditch?"

"Now, look, Doc," Marden said, whirling toward Piaget. "Not you, too. We decided . . ."

"Easy does it, Josh," Piaget said. "I'm just curious. What about the Old Mill Road?"

"Aw, Doc. It was such a nice day and the . . ."

"So that work still has to be done," Piaget said.

"I win the bet," Dasein said. He headed back toward his truck.

Piaget fell into step beside him.

"Hey!" Marden shouted. "You've broken county property, and those boards you landed on are probably . . ."

Dasein cut him off without turning. "You'd better get that bridge repaired before somebody else has trouble here."

He slid behind the wheel of his truck, slammed the door. Reaction was setting in now: his whole body felt tense with anger.

Piaget climbed in beside him. The truck rattled as he closed his door. "Will it still run?" he asked.

"Accident!" Dasein said.

Piaget remained silent.

Dasein put the truck in gear, eased it up to a steady thirty-five miles an hour. The rear view mirror showed him the crew already at work on the bridge, one of their number with a warning flag trudging back around the blind corner.

"Now, they send out a flagman," Dasein said.

A corner cut off the view in the mirror. Dasein concentrated on driving. The truck had developed new rattles and a front-end shimmy.

"They *have* to be accidents," Piaget said. "There's no other explanation."

A stop sign came into view ahead. Dasein stopped for the main highway. It was empty of traffic. He turned right toward town. Piaget's protestations deserved no answer, he thought, and he gave no answer.

They entered the outskirts of town. There was Scheler's station on the left. Dasein pulled in behind the station, drove back to the large shed-roofed metal building labeled "Garage."

"What're you doing here?" Piaget asked. "This machine isn't worth . . ."

"I want it repaired sufficiently to get me out of Santaroga," Dasein said.

The garage doors were open. Dasein nosed the truck inside, stopped, climbed out. There was a steady sound of work all around—clanging of metal, machinery humming. Lines of cars had been angled toward benches down both sides of the garage. Lights glared down on the benches.

A stocky, dark-skinned man in

stained white coveralls came from the back of the garage, stopped in front of the truck.

"What the devil did you hit?" he asked.

Dasein recognized one of the quartet from the card game at the inn—Scheler himself.

"Doctor Piaget here will tell you all about it," Dasein said. "I want some headlights put on this thing and you might have a look at the steering."

"Why don't you junk it?" Scheler asked.

The truck door slammed and Piaget came up on the right. "Can you fix it, Sam?" he asked.

"Sure, but it isn't worth it."

"Do it anyway and put it on my bill. I don't want our friend here to think we're trying to trap him in the valley."

"If you say so, Doc."

Scheler turned around, shouted: "Bill! Take that Lincoln off the rack and put this truck on. I'll write up a ticket."

A young man in greasy blue coveralls came around from the left bench where he had been hidden by a Lincoln Continental lifted halfway up on a hoist. The young man had Scheler's build and dark skin, the same set of face and eyes: bright blue and alert.

"My son, Bill," Scheler said. "He'll take care of it for you."

Dasein felt a twinge of warning fear, backed against the side of his truck. The garage around him had taken on the same feeling of concentrated malevolence he had sensed in the river.

Scheler started through the space between the Lincoln and an old Studebaker truck, called over his shoulder: "If you'll sign the ticke over here, Dr. Dasein, we'll get right at it."

Dasein took two steps after him, hesitated. He felt the garage closing in around him.

"We can walk to the clinic from here," Piaget said. "Sam will call when your rig's ready."

Dasein took another step, stopped, glanced back. Young Bill Scheler was right behind him. The sense of menace was a pounding drumbeat in Dasein's head. He saw Bill reach out a hand to guide him between the cars. There was no doubt of the innocent intention of that hand, the smiling face behind it, but Dasein saw the hand as the embodiment of danger. With an inarticulate cry, Dasein sprang aside.

The young mechanic, caught off balance with nothing ahead of his thrusting arm, lurched forward, stumbled, fell. As he fell, the hoist with the Lincoln on it came crashing down. It rocked twice, subsided. Bill Scheler lay half way under it. One of his legs twitched, was still.

A pool of red began to flow from beneath the car.

Piaget dashed past him shouting for Scheler to raise the hoist.

A compressor began thumping

somewhere in the background. The Lincoln jerked, began to rise. It exposed a body, its head smashed beyond recognition by one of the hoist's arms.

Dasein whirled away, ran out of the garage and was sick. *That couldn've been me,* he thought. *That was meant for me.* He grew aware of a great bustle of activity, the sound of a siren in the distance.

Two mechanics emerged from the garage with a pale-faced, staggering Sam Scheler between them.

It was his son, Dasein thought. He felt that this was of the deepest significance, but his shocked mind gave no explanation for that feeling.

He heard one of the mechanics with Scheler say: "It was an accident, Sam: Nothing you could do."

They went into the station with him.

A siren began giving voice in the distance. Its wailing grew louder. Dasein backed off to the edge of the station's parking area, stood against a low fence.

His truck, nosed into the garage, lurched into motion, was swallowed by the building.

The ambulance droned its way into the parking area, turned, backed into the garage. Presently, it emerged, drove away with its siren silent.

Piaget came out of the garage. He was an oddly subdued man, indecisive in his walk—short strides, soft of step. He saw Dasein, approached with an air of diffidence. There was a smear of blood down the right side of his white smock, black grease at the hem, grease on the left arm.

Blood and grease—they struck Dasein as an odd combination but things out of which an entire scene could be reconstructed. He shuddered.

"I . . . I need a cup of coffee," Piaget said. He closed his eyes briefly, opened them to stare pleadingly at Dasein. "There's a cafe around the corner. Would you . . ." He broke off to take a deep, trembling breath. "I brought that boy into the world." He shook his head. "Just when you think you're the complete doctor, immune to all personal involvement . . ."

Dasein experienced a surge of compassion for Piaget, stepped away from the fence to take the doctor's arm. "Where's this cafe? I could use something myself."

The cafe was a narrow brick building squeezed between a hardware store and a dark little shop labeled "Bootery." The screen door banged behind them. The place smelled of steam and the omnipresent Jaspers. One of Scheler's station attendants—dark green jacket and white hat—sat at a counter on the left staring into a cup of coffee. A man in a leather apron, horn-calloused hands, gray hair, was eating a

sandwich at the far end of the counter.

Dasein steered Piaget into a booth opposite the counter, sat down across from him.

The station attendant at the counter, turned, glanced at them. Dasein found himself confronted by a face he knew to be another Scheler—the same set to the blue eyes, the same blocky figure and dark skin. The man looked at Piaget, said: "Hi, Doc. There was a siren."

Piaget lifted his gaze from the tabletop, looked at the speaker. The glaze left Piaget's eyes. He took two shallow breaths, looked away, back to the man at the counter.

"Harry," Piaget said, his voice was a hoarse croak. "I . . . couldn't . . ." He broke off.

The man slid off the counter stool. His face was a pale frozen mask. "I've been sitting here . . . feeling . . ." He brushed his hand across his mouth. "It was . . . Bill!" He whirled, dashed out of the cafe. The door slammed behind him.

"That's Scheler's other son," Piaget said.

"He knew," Dasein said, and he recalled the experience at the lake, the feeling of rapport.

Life exists immersed in a sea of unconsciousness, he reminded himself. *In the drug, these people gain a view of that sea.*

Piaget studied Dasein a moment, then: "Of course he knew. Haven't you ever had a tooth pulled? Couldn't you feel the hole where it had been?"

A slender red-haired woman in a white apron, lines of worry on her face, came up to the booth, stood looking down at Piaget. "I'll bring your coffee," she said. She started to turn away, hesitated. "I . . . felt it . . . and Jim next door came to the back to tell me. I didn't know how to tell Harry. He just kept sitting there . . . getting lower and lower . . . knowing really but refusing to face it. I . . ." She shrugged. "Anything besides coffee?"

Piaget shook his head. Dasein realized with a sense of shock the man was near tears.

The waitress left, returned with two mugs of coffee, went back to the kitchen—all without speaking. She, too, had sensed Piaget's emotions.

Dasein sighed, lifted his coffee, started to put the mug to his lips, hesitated. There was an odd bitter odor beneath the omnipresent Jaspers tang in the coffee. Dasein put his nose to the mug, sniffed. Bitter. A plume of steam rising from the dark liquid assumed for Dasein the shape of a hooded cobra lifting its fanged head to strike him.

Shakily, he returned the mug to the table, looked up to meet Piaget's questioning gaze.

"There's poison in that coffee," Dasein rasped.

Piaget looked at his own coffee.

Dasein took the mug from him, sniffed at it. The bitter odor was missing. He touched his tongue to it—heat, the soothing flow of Jaspers . . .coffee . . .

"Is something wrong?"

Dasein looked up to find the waitress standing over him. "There's poison in my coffee," he said.

"Nonsense." She took the mug from Dasein's hand, started to drink.

Piaget stopped her with a hand on her arm. "No, Vina—this one." He handed her the other mug.

She stared at it, smelled it, put it down, dashed for the kitchen. Presently, she returned carrying a small yellow box. Her face was porcelain white, freckles standing out across her cheeks and nose like the marks of some disease.

"Roach powder," she whispered. "I . . . the box was spilled on the shelf over the counter. I . . ." She shook her head.

Dasein looked at Piaget, but the doctor refused to meet his gaze.

"Another accident," Dasein said, holding his voice even. "Eh, doctor?"

Piaget wet his lips with his tongue.

Dasein slid out of the booth, pushing the waitress aside. He took the mug of poisoned coffee, poured it deliberately on the floor. "Accidents will happen, won't they?" He paused. "Vina?"

"Please," she said. "I . . . didn't . . ."

"Of course you didn't," Dasein said.

"You don't understand," Piaget said.

"But I *do* understand," Dasein said. "What'll it be next time? A gun accident? How about something heavy dropped from a roof? Accidentally, of course." He turned, strode out of the cafe, stood on the sidwalk to study his surroundings.

It was such a *normal* town. The trees on the parking strip were so normal. The young couple walking down the sidewalk across from him—they were so normal. The sounds—a truck out on the avenue to his right, the cars there, a pair of jays arguing in the treetops, two women talking on the steps of a house down the street to his left—such an air of normalcy about it all.

The screen door slapped behind him. Piaget came up to stand at Dasein's side. "I know what you're thinking," he said.

"Do you, really?"

"I know how all this must look to you."

"Is that so?"

"Believe me," Piaget said, "all this is just a terrible series of coincidences that . . ."

"Coincidence!" Dasein whirled on him, glaring. "How far can you stretch credulity, doctor? How long can you rationalize be-

fore you have to admit . . ."

"Gilbert, I'd cut off my right arm rather than let anything happen to you. It'd break Jenny's heart to . . ."

"You actually don't see it, do you?" Dasein asked, his voice filled with awe. "You don't see it. You refuse to see it."

"Dr. Dasein?"

The voice came from his right. Dasein turned to find Harry—Scheler's other son — standing there, hat in hand. He looked younger than he had in the cafe—no more than nineteen. There was a sad hesitancy in his manner.

"I wanted to . . ." He broke off. "My father said to tell you... We know it wasn't your fault that . . ." He looked into Dasein's eyes, a look that pleaded for help.

Dasein felt a pang of rapport for the young man. There was a basic decency at work here. In the midst of their own grief, the Schelers had taken time to try to ease Dasein's feelings.

They expected me to feel guilt about this, Dasein thought. The fact that he'd experienced no such feeling filled Dasein now with an odd questing sensation of remorse.

If I hadn't . . . He aborted the thought. *If I hadn't what? That accident was meant for me.*

"It's all right, Harry," Piaget said. "We understand."

"Thank's, Doc." He looked at Piaget with relief. "Dad said to tell you . . . the car, Dr. Dasein's truck . . . The new headlights are in it. That's all we can do. The steering . . . You'll just have to drive slow unless you replace the whole front end."

"Already?" Dasein asked.

"It doesn't take long to put in headlights, sir."

Dasein looked from the youth to Piaget. The doctor returned his stare with an expression that said as clearly as words: *"They want your truck out of there. It's a reminder . . ."*

Dasein nodded. Yes. The truck would remind them of the tragedy. This was logical. Without a word, he set off for the garage.

Piaget sped up, matched his pace to Dasein's.

"Gilbert," he said, "I must insist you come over to the house. Jenny can . . ."

"Insist?"

"You're being very pig headed, Gilbert."

Dasein put down a surge of anger, said: "I don't want to hurt Jenny any more than you do. That's why I'm going to direct my own steps. I don't really want you to know what I'm going to do next. I don't want any of you waiting there in my path with one of your . . . accidents."

"Gilbert, you *must* put that idea out of your mind! None of us wants to hurt you."

They were on the parking area between the station and the garage now. Dasein stared at the gaping door to the garage, over-

come suddenly by the sensation that the door was a mouth with deadly teeth ready to clamp down on him. The door yawned there to swallow him.

Dasein hesitated, slowed, stopped.

"What about the bill?" Dasein asked, stalling for time.

"I'll take care of that," Piaget said. "Go get your truck while I'm settling up. Then we'll go to . . ."

"I want the truck driven out here for me," Dasein said. He moved to one side, out of the path of anything that might come spewing from that mouth-door.

"I can understand your reluctance to go back in there," Piaget said, "but really . . ."

"You drive it out for me, Harry," Dasein said.

The youth stared at Dasein with an oddly trapped looked. "Well, I have some . . ."

"Drive the damn' car out for him!" Piaget repeated. "I've had as much of this as I can stomach!"

Hesitantly, the youth turned toward the garage door. His feet moved with a dragging slowness.

"See here, Gilbert," Piaget said, "you can't really believe we . . ."

"I believe what I see," Dasein said.

Piaget threw up his hands, turned away in exasperation.

Dasein listened to the sounds from the garage. They were subdued in there—voices, only a few mechanical noises, the whirring buzz of some machine.

A door slammed. It sounded like the door to the truck. Dasein recognized the grinding of his starter. The engine caught with its characteristic banging, was drowned immediately in a roaring explosion that sent a blast of flame shooting out the garage door.

Dasein ran diagonally past him to look into the garage. He glimpsed figures rushing out a door at the far end. His truck stood in the central traffic aisle at the core of a red-orange ball of flame. As he stared at the truck, a burning something emerged from the flames, staggered, fell.

Behind Dasein, someone screamed: "Harry!"

Without consciously willing it, Dasein found himself dashing through the garage door to grab into the flames and drag the youth to safety. There were sensations of heat, pain. A roaring-crackling sound of fire filled the air around him. The smell of gasoline and char invaded Dasein's nostrils. He saw a river of fire reach toward him along the floor. A blazing beam crashed down where the youth had lain. There were shouts, a great scrambling confusion.

Something white was thrown over the figure he was dragging, engulfed the flames. Hands eased him aside. Dasein realized he was

out of the garage, that Piaget was using his white smock to smother the fire on Harry.

Someone appeared to be doing something similar to both Dasein's arms and the front of his jacket, using a coat and a car robe. The coat and robe were pulled away. Dasein stared down at his own arms—black and red flesh, blisters forming. The sleeves of his shirt and jacket ended at the elbows in jagged edgings of char.

The pain began—a throbbing agony along the backs of both arms and hands. Through a world hazed by the pain, Dasein saw a station wagon screech to a rocking stop beside him, saw men carry the smock-shrouded figure of Harry into the back of the wagon. More hands eased Dasein into the seat beside the driver.

There were voices: "Easy there." "Get 'em to the clinic, Ed, and don't loiter." "Give us a hand here." "Here! Over here!"

There was a sound of sirens, the pounding throb of heavy truck engines.

Dasein heard Piaget's voice from the rear of the station wagon: "Okay, Ed. Let's get going."

The wagon slipped into motion, dipped onto the street, turned, gathered speed. Dasein looked at the driver, recognized one of the station attendants, turned to peer into the back.

Piaget crouched there working over the injured youth.

"How bad is he?" Dasein asked.

"He was wearing long johns," Piaget said. "They helped. He seems to've protected his face by burying it in his cap, but his back is bad. So're his legs and arms and his hands."

Dasein stared at the injured youth.

"Will he . . ."

"I think we got to him in time," Piaget said. "I gave him a shot to put him out." He looked at Daseins arms. "Do you want a needle?"

Dasein shook his head from side to side. "No."

What made me rush in there to save him? Dasein asked himself. It had been an instinctive reaction. Saving Harry had precipitated him into a semi-helpless situation, needing medical attention himself, caught in a car with two Santarogans. Dasein probed at his embryo *Jaspers awareness,* the sixth sense which had warned him of danger. He found nothing. The threat appeared to have been withdrawn. *Is that why I acted to save Harry?* Dasein wondered. *Did I hope to propitiate Santaroga by saving one of their own even while they were trying to kill me?*

"Another accident," Piaget said, and his voice carried a questioning tone of self-doubt.

Dasein met the doctor's probing gaze, nodded.

The station wagon turned onto a tree-lined street, and Dasein recognized the broad, brown-

shingled front of Piaget's house. They drove past it and onto a gravelled driveway that curved around to the rear through a tall board fence and under a portico jutting from a two-story brick building.

In spite of his pain, Dasein realized this building lay concealed from the street by the fence and a border planting of evergreens, that it must be a part of the complex which included Piaget's house. It all seemed hazily significant.

White-coated attendants rushed a gurney out of the building, eased the burned youth from the rear of the station wagon. Piaget opened Dasein's door, said: "Can you get out under your own power, Gilbert?"

"I . . . think so."

Dasein held his arms out in front of him, slid from the car. The pain and the motion required all his attention. There was a beginning ache along his forehead now and down the right side of his face. The brick building, a pair of swinging glass doors, hands gently guiding him—all seemed rather distant and receding.

I'm blacking out, he thought. He felt it might be extremely dangerous to sink into unconsciousness. With a start, he realized he had been eased into a wheelchair, that it was speeding down a green-walled hallway. The surge of awareness sent his senses crashing into the pain. He felt himself recoiling toward the blessed relief of unconsciousness. It was an almost physical thing, as though his body was bouncing between limiting walls—unconsciousness or pain.

Bright lights!

The light was all around him. He heard scissors snipping, looked down to see hands working the scissors. They were cutting the sleeves of his jacket and shirt, lifting the fabric away from seared flesh.

That;s my flesh, Dasein thought. He tore his gaze away from it.

Dasein felt something cool at his left shoulder, a pricking sensation, a pulling. A hand holding a hypodermic moved across his plane of vision. The important thing to Dasein in this moment was that his vision was limited to a plane. There was light, a foggy glittering out of which hands moved and faces appeared. He felt himself being undressed. Something cool, soothing, sliding was being applied to his hands and arms, to his face.

The've given me a shot to put me out, he thought. He tried to think about danger then, about being totally helpless here. Consciousness refused to respond. He couldn't push his awareness through the glittering fog.

There were voices. He concentrated on the voices. Someone

(Continued on page 144)

THE FUTURE IN BOOKS

by Harry Harrison

Aside from the quality of the current volume—or lack of it—there are subtle pressures operating on the critic every time he picks up a new book. Has it been written by an old friend, or enemy? Is it the fifth book with the same plot that he has read in a week, so that his throat closes at the thought of one more miniaturized submarine trip down the ascending colon? Or, as in the present case, it is an anthology from the very magazine in which the review is to appear?

I will admit that it was with considerable wariness that I ap proached THE BEST OF AMAZING selected by Joseph Ross. (Doubleday, $4.50.) Yet it was with a sigh of happiness that I closed the last page and put it down. Mr. Ross has prepared an excellent and imposing anthology that is both a readable and long overdue volume. May it be only the first of many. He was faced with a staggering problem. Just how do you take a magazine that has been published steadily for over 40 years—and do a 'best of' in a mere 222 pages? At a rough estimate, of about 50,000 words an issue, that is 24 million words. Mr. Ross has solved this problem by going back to the beginning for most of the stories. One half of the stories are dated up to 1932, while one quarter of the stories are from 1939, obviously a vintage year. Only two stories are from the 1960's. This is as it should be—if the earlier stories are enjoyable to the modern reader. Happily, they are.

I particularly enjoyed Murray Leinster's THE RUNAWAY SKYSCRAPER which—and the fact is a bit staggering—is copyright 1919. It appeared in ARGOSY first, and Hugo Gernsback picked it out for reprint in his 'new' magazine, as an example of the kind of story he wanted. The Old Master, who

has forgotten more than most of us will ever learn, is in perfect form. He tells the story of an entire skyscraper, filled with people, that is bodily whisked into the past. It is told with the love and acceptance of science, the sense of wonder, that is missing from almost all SF today. As a bonus it also contains the only hydraulically operated time machine I have ever heard of!

Jack Williamson's THE METAL MAN dates from 1928. It has that blend of fantasy and science that Williamson has been famous for, with descriptions that approach the purple but never quite topple in. And, I really loathe this kind of comparison, it is possible that Ballard could have been influenced by this story during the genesis of his CRYSTAL WORLD.

Here is THE WORM by David H. Keller, M.D. (M.D., Ph.D.—how they did throw around the titles in the early days, as though to put some stamp of respectability on the lurid and wonderful contents. Now, when we no longer need it, there are unseen degrees galore among the writers.) Pure fantasy, and horror, but the lines were not drawn so carefully then. An evocative and shuddery story, one of Keller's best.

I must resist the temptation to dwell on each story. In this volume you will find John Wyndham writing his best in his early, real-name, John Beynon Harris persona. Nelson S. Bond and Edmond Hamilton—two names to conjure with—both have excellent stories. While Isaac Asimov is represented by two stories, the second being a sequel written 20 years after the first. The final entry is the thought-stirring TRY TO REMEMBER by Frank Herbert. This was first printed in 1961 and will, I sincerely hope, not only close this volume but will lead into the next one in the series. If Mr. Ross keeps his standards this high, he will not only chronicle the history of a magazine, but the development of the field of science fiction as well.

Since I have already spoken well of the pseudonymous Mr. Jenkins, I hope that he will forgive me for being slightly unkind to his latest novel. SPACE GYPSIES by Murray Leinster (Avon, 50¢). This is a rollicking good interstellar adventure that has been fleshed out from a novelette. That is all that is wrong with it: it goes on too long for what it contains. It contains wonderful ideas, as well as the keen application of science and mechanics. The destructive capacity of the molecular garbage disposal unit is apparent *pages* before it is finally revealed—but it is a fine concept for all of that. I suppose I should not complain. Even well-padded Leinster is better than 90% of the stuff that passes for SF these days.

It is nice to see the pros at

work. Kingsley Amis and Robert Conquest, men of enviable attainments in other fields, know their SF. They can see the multicolored patches in its underdrawers, but they do not love it the less. In their latest Spectrum anthology, SPECTRUM V (Harcourt, Brace & World, $4.50) they have assembled an excellent and enjoyable volume. I particularly enjoyed CRUCIFIXUS ETIAM by Walter M. Miller, and once again the classic GRANDPA by James H. Schmitz. It is indicative that all of the stories are from the 1950's, and mostly the early 50's, and all except one (from GALAXY), are from ASTOUNDING. These were indeed that magazine's golden years.

NON-FICTION DEPARTMENT

My favorite publisher is ADVENT: PUBLISHERS of Chicago. I'm sure it would be an advent for them if they made a profit from their ventures. But as long as they remain in business they perform an invaluable function in publishing critical SF books. Taking a quick look at my shelf I see THE ISSUE AT HAND, James Blish's critical writings, and two symposia; THE SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL and OF WORLDS BEYOND. Their latest release is THE UNIVERSES OF E. E. SMITH by Ron Ellik and Bill Evans. ($6.00) This is a concordance of all the Lensman and Skylark novels. This is a reference book, pure and simple, and makes no pretences otherwise. It is professionally done and accurate as far as I can determine—and may it be only the first of many more to come.

Highly readable, yet still an excellent reference volume, is AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE HORROR FILMS by Carlos Clarens. (Putnam's, $6.95) Mr. Clarens not only transcribes a chronological history of horror films, but makes some attempt to understand the psychological motivations of the horror film fan. He devotes a great deal of space to the science fiction film, since the two overlap so often. And I shall be eternally grateful for the large number of beautifully printed stills. Recommended in every way, and a must for any library.

DEPARTMENT OF FIRST NOVELS

CHTHON by Piers Anthony (Ballantine 75¢). The author has stuffed this book chockablock full and seems to have gotten away with it. As the main theme develops on—or rather in—the caves of the prison planet of Chthon, flashbacks and flashforwards fill in the story of the protagonist, Aton. At times this can be confusing, but whoever said that a reader shouldn't work a bit to enjoy a book? Mostly, the device is a success, as is the writing. And

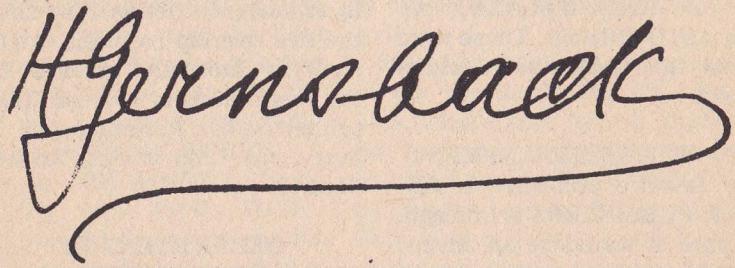
the concepts, large, larger than we have seen since the planet-busting days. And mature, we rarely see that at all. The book has its faults which I shall not list, since they are far outweighed by its virtues. It is entirely too ambitious for a first novel, yet the more impressive for trying and succeeding. It is Mr. Anthony's next book that I really am looking forward to reading.

SCIENCE FICTION THAT ENDURES

(Continued from page 128)

seats of learning will inaugurate science fiction societies, I can see only a vast and steady increase in this, the most exciting facet of literature in modern times.

And now a thought from our a-pun-sor. It may NOT be welcomed in certain quarters: There will come the future amazing day —now don't all laugh at once— when AMAZING STORIES will be *composed,* or perhaps outlined in detail, not by human authors, but by an *electronic biocomputer-menograph* (*menos*-mind). I also predict that this *Autocerebration* wonder is not likely to suffer from Science Fiction Fatigue nor Exhaustion.



(Continued from page 140)

said: "For the love of heaven! He was carrying a gun." Another voice: "Put that down!"

For some reason, this amused Dasein, but his body refused to laugh.

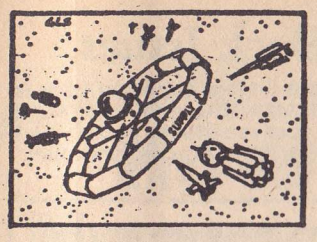
He thought then of his camper as he'd last seen it—a ball of orange flame. All his records had been in there, Dasein realized. Every bit of evidence he'd accumulated about Santaroga had gone up in that fire. *Evidence?* he thought. *Notes . . . speculations . . .* It was all still in his mind, subject to recall.

But memory is lost at death! he thought.

Fear galvanized a miniscule core of selfdom in him. He tried to shout. No sound came. He tried to move. Muscles refused to obey.

When darkness came, it was like a hand that reached up and seized him.

To Be Concluded



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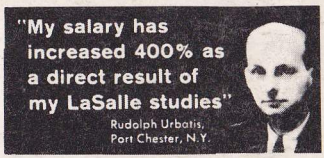

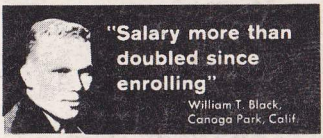

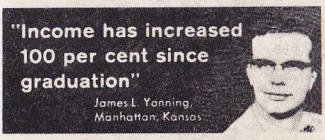

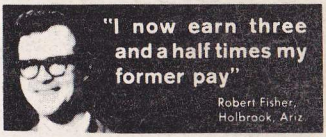

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